

Key Challenges of the South Ave Development the BJ's Retail Project

October 10, 2017

Opposition Testimony Prepared by an Alliance of Small Business Owners in Mariner's Harbor
L.U. Nos/ 759 & 760 (C160174ZSR & C150359MMR)

Amrik Chawla

South Ave Retail Alliance

Staten Island, NY

Summary of South Ave Development Challenges

Overlooked Challenges

Traffic Load Underestimated w/ Ineffective Safety Mitigations

- FEIS Traffic underestimated by at least 15% given that trip generation for a member only gasoline facility was not estimated
- Several key intersections have major pedestrian crash risk, Forest and South, Forest and Richmond/Morningstar, Forest and Grandview, Forest and Maple, Forest and Barbrant. This will only be exacerbated with traffic increases
- The FEIS incorrectly measures these risks and provides basically ineffective traffic and safety mitigations that nominally restripe lanes or change traffic light timing by one second
- See Fournier Robson Traffic Study and Testimony for additional details

Extensive Environmental Risk to the Community has Been Overlooked

- Storm water management and Flood Risk has increased since super storm sandy by extensive development across Mariner's Harbor
- Regal and City homeowners associations estimates for flood insurance signal certain bankruptcy
- Given proximity to wetlands, how can the DEC, City Planning, and City Council approve the underground storage of approximately 100,000 gallons of gas especially with nearby spill numbers causing contamination of the willow brook aquifer
- Mariner's Harbor residents have a challenging history of Environmental issues, including lead and industrial contamination
- See testimonies by the North Shore Waterfront Conservancy of Staten Island (NSWCSI) and the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) for more details

This will unleash economic havoc and at best be job neutral while creating more retail vacancies

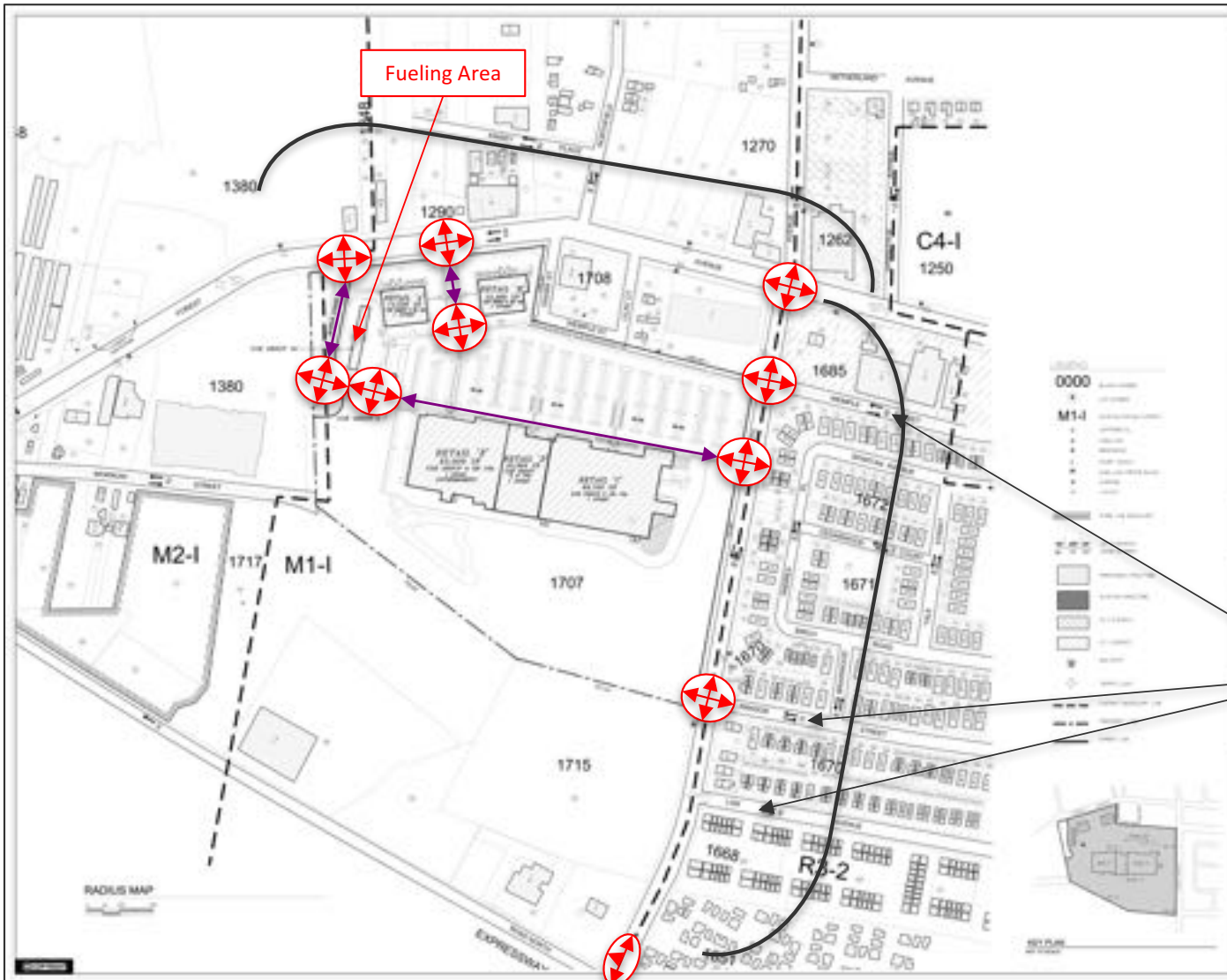
- Existing vacancies on Forest Ave. face vandalism and tenancy challenges (8 current large vacancies between South Ave and Richmond/Morningstar
- *Several well publicized studies and reports have shown that large discount centers such as Walmart and BJs drive local small businesses out and hurt the local community via monopolistic pricing power*
- *BJ's gas alone will uproot 10-12 local gas stations operated by small business owners, sacrificing approx. 100 jobs and increase vacancies*
- *As a corollary, Costco gas on Richmond Ave has driven all of the three local small business gas operators to sell their businesses for pennies on the dollar after being unable to compete with Costco; including the Gulf on Richmond Ave, Mobil on Richmond and Arthur Kill, and the Sunoco on Arthur Kill which is currently up for sale due to a 35-40% drop in business*
- *Other Forest Ave businesses will suffer as well, the 2 existing supermarkets (Western Beef and Shop Rite) and multiple small businesses on Forest Ave at risk for another 100 jobs*

We request that City Council help facilitate a better Win Win for Everyone . . .

- In numerous attempts with councilwoman Rose's office and via the Staten Island borough president's office the community has not been able to establish any material mitigations to the challenges listed above
- The local Community board and Land Use Committees did not approve of this project either, meanwhile both the Councilwoman and Borough President's offices have supported the developer without facilitating any material compromises on behalf of the local community
- We humbly request that If City Council is unwilling to disapprove of this project in its entirety, that City Council allow for the detailed study of these overlooked challenges as well as facilitate working sessions between the community and the developer to achieve a middle ground

FEIS Underestimates Traffic and Provides Basically Ineffective Risk Mitigations

- FEIS traffic underestimated by at least 15% given that trip generation for a member only gasoline facility was not estimated
- Several key intersections have major pedestrian crash risk, including: Forest and South, Forest and Richmond/Morningstar, Forest and Grandview, Forest and Maple, Forest and Barbrant.
 - This will only be exacerbated with traffic increases
- The FEIS incorrectly measures these risks and provides basically ineffective traffic and safety mitigations
- See testimony and traffic study by Fournier Robson for additional details



Map Key / Legend

- ↔ Proposed site access / egress roadways
- ⊕ Projected locations where traffic load will severely intensify

Can Forest & South Ave. Safely Handle approximately 300,000 more cars per month?

What about Wemple, Amador and Lisk Streets? Will these residential neighborhoods become overrun by road raged drivers stuck on South and Forest Avenue?

Are we Doing the Right Thing for Our Community and the Environment?

Storing 100,000 Gallons of Fuel Underground Risks Environmental Contamination

Overdeveloping Nature's Sponge for Storm Water May Increase Flood Risk

Contamination Risk

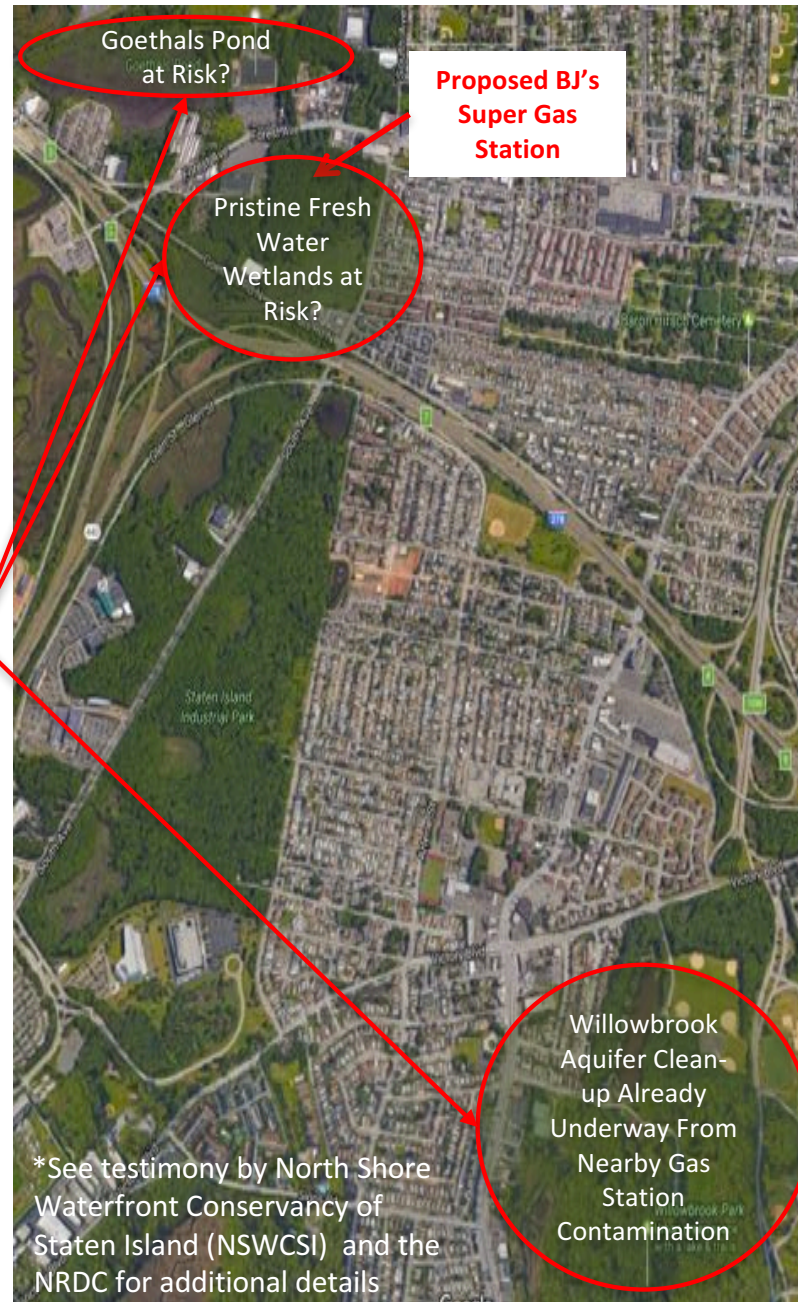
The **New Super Gas Station Location** will have approximately **100,000 gallons of fuel stored underground**

This amount of **fuel storage is adjacent to the Goethals Pond** and is **on top of the Pristine Fresh Water Wetlands**

Historical DEC Spill Numbers nearby **Willowbrook Park** suggest an **active cleanup for Aquifer contamination** that has been ongoing for **over 5 years**

DEC was forced to approve this development by a judge ruling even though they were opposed to any development

Do we need really need an 11th Super Gas Station among Mariner's Harbor residents?



Storm Water Management

During Hurricane Sandy and other less severe storms, the **Fresh Water Wetlands, Goethals Pond** act as a sponge to prevent flooding

Overdevelopment of these natural preserves, which take over 300 years to evolve, substantially increases flood risk even from lighter storms than Sandy.





Neighboring housing (incl. City West and Regal Walk Condos) are economically fragile. Flood insurance requirements would bankrupt their associations.

How has the City protected the interest of existing residents?

BJ's Will Unleash Economic Havoc Upon Local Businesses

- BJ's prices gasoline 10-20 cents-per-gallon below independent small businesses
- BJ's competitive approach is to initially open with even more aggressive pricing in order to train local competition and customers
- Of the 10 local gas station operators, 9 are independent small business operators that will not survive, eliminating approx. 100 jobs
- Other local and major businesses will be affected as well, including Western Beef and Shoprite which employ well over 100 employees
- In the very best case, this will be job neutral, moving employees from one location to another while creating more retail vacancies
- Mariners Harbor economics are fragile; already existing vacancies on Forest Ave. will become worse – increasing crime and vandalism
- We are pleading with City Council members that they protect the interest of small businesses

Map Key / Legend

-  Proposed BJ's Gas - **Zero new jobs from BJ's Gas**
-  Independently operated gas stations at risk - **Est. 75-90 jobs lost**
-  Retail Already Vacant
-  1.5 mile to 2.0 mile range



The Vast Majority of Wholesale Warehouses in the NY Metro Area* Operate Without Gas For Good Reason

Wholesaler locations in metro areas are highly profitable even without gas given population densities:

- Out of 12 NY Costco Locations in the Metro Area, Only 3 have gas
- Out of 22 NY BJ's locations in the Metro Area, Only 3 have gas
- Out of 2 NY Sam's Club locations in the Metro Area, neither have gas

A Majority of Locations Such as Flushing, Rego Park, Coney Island, Pelham, Riverdale, the Bronx, Canarsie, Lawrenceville, Westbury, Levittown, Melville, and others do not have gas operations for similar reasons, including:

- Severe traffic congestion
- Environmental protection and Tidal/Flood Zone issues
- Environmental proximity risk to parks and waterways
- Balancing negative economic Impact on local businesses and saving jobs

Mariner's Harbor has many of the same issues facing our community, do we really need an 11th Gas Station in the neighborhood that would create significant traffic stacking, sacrifice approximately 100 jobs, and potentially risk the environment?

Can we remove the gas facility from the project?

* Defined as the 5 boroughs, Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties

Recommended Next Steps

- ***Further research and studies into the challenges addressed in this report need to be investigated prior to approving the project***
 - *The Fournier Robson Traffic study identifies critical deficiencies in the traffic study as well as effectively useless mitigation that do not resolve the increased safety issues for drivers and pedestrians alike*
 - *NRDC and NSWCSI testimonies provide environmental evidence that is counter to the EIS report*
 - *The EIS must consider demographics of the population and the economic impact of the project to local small business and quantify the impact*
 - *More time is required to analyze environmental studies and traffic studies that provide different conclusions than the EIS and we request that City Council allow for an additional 6-12 months to consider these reports and make a well rounded decision*
- ***Develop alternative options to the development that find a better middle ground between traffic, environmental, and economic impact concerns***
 - *Could eliminating the gas station reduce traffic congestion and eliminate an environmental hazard to the protected wetlands?*
 - *Could we reduce the overall footprint of the development to reduce the negative impact to storm water management and the ecosystem of the natural preserve?*
 - *No other options have been presented nor have the concerns identified in this report been addressed by Staten Island City Council members or the Borough President's office.*

We request that City Council ask the developer to consider alternative options that are represent a better middle ground that resolved the issues cited in this presentation and review these options with the community – which has not happened . . .

Thank you

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