

**ALBANY OFFICE**  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 415  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247  
T: (518) 455-2528  
F: (518) 426-6909

**DISTRICT OFFICE**  
32-37 JUNCTION BOULEVARD  
EAST ELMHURST, NEW YORK 11369  
T: (718) 205-3881  
F: (718) 205-4145

**NEW YORK  
STATE  
SENATE**  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247



**SENATOR JOSE PERALTA**  
13<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

**MINORITY WHIP  
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER  
ON LABOR**

---

**COMMITTEES:**  
CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME  
& CORRECTION  
FINANCE  
HEALTH  
INSURANCE

**MEMBER:**  
NYS BLACK, PUERTO RICAN, HISPANIC & ASIAN CAUCUS  
NYS ASSEMBLY/SENATE  
PUERTO RICAN HISPANIC TASK FORCE

May 21, 2013

Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg  
Mayor of New York City  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Honorable Christine C. Quinn  
City Council Speaker  
250 Broadway, Suite 1856  
New York, NY 10007

Honorable Helen M. Marshall  
Queens Borough President  
120-55 Queens Boulevard  
Kew Gardens, NY 11424

Dear Mayor Bloomberg, Speaker Quinn, and Borough President Marshall:

I write to you today to express my position that the apparent decade-plus delay in the construction of affordable housing at Willets Point is simply unacceptable. As you may know, despite reservations I had over issues including increased traffic congestion and environmental fallout, I was a supporter of the original 2008 plan, in large part because of the affordable housing it would bring to our community. Given recent developments, however, I believe this once-promising project is moving in entirely the wrong direction.

The Willets Point development plan originally agreed to by the City Council included the construction of 820 homes for families making \$38,400 a year or less; 330 homes for families earning between \$38,400 and \$46,080; and 770 units for families earning from \$46,080 to \$99,840. Construction of these 1,920 units was to begin at the outset of the development process or after the initial remediation.

Under the revised Willets Point development plan, construction of 875 “affordable” units will not begin until at least 2025. Adding insult to injury for a community in desperate need of more affordable housing is the addition of an enormous mall to the early stages of construction.

These bait-and-switch tactics cannot be tolerated. I will be urging community boards that approved the original plan to reconsider their support in light of the significant changes made to it. I urge the City Council to do the same.

It is imperative that the Council, community boards and all of the public receive from the city and the developers rock-solid assurances that the number of affordable units originally called for in the plan be built and made available in a timely manner. As it stands now, there may be no affordable housing ever constructed as part of the Willets Point development.

That's because, as I understand the contract language, the building of housing units may not begin until the City completes construction of additional exit ramps off the Van Wyck Expressway.

In a vacuum, this is not only reasonable, but necessary. However, there are four enormous problems with this condition: 1) The City appears to have no intention of completing such construction before 2024, delaying the construction of affordable housing until at least 2025 if not later; 2) If construction is not completed by December 1, 2025, Sterling and Related are under no obligation to build any affordable housing; 3) Even if the ramps are built in a timely fashion, Sterling and Related may buy their way out of their affordable housing obligation for a penalty that is not tied to inflation, the payment of which may represent a sound business decision; and 4) Sterling and Related have explicit control over when the ramps are built should they agree to undertake the construction themselves.

These conditions put the construction of any affordable housing units in serious doubt. I know that as our City leaders, you take our affordable housing crisis seriously. Mayor Bloomberg, you have touted the position that “no other City does as good a job as New York in crafting creative policies for building and preserving affordable housing for our citizens.” Speaker Quinn, you have recognized that “the creation of affordable housing is the challenge of our time.” Borough President Marshall, you have declared that “the need for affordable housing is not a new idea, but an old one that needs to be brought to fruition.”

I call on you to continue your leadership on this vital issue by making sure that affordable housing at Willets Point is built and built soon. My community and other communities affected by the Willets Redevelopment simply can't afford to wait or rely on conditional promises. We need answers and we need results.

Thank you for your consideration and your leadership. I look forward to working with you to resolve this issue and to help move the borough of Queens and the City of New York towards a brighter future.

Respectfully,



Jose Peralta  
New York State Senator, 13<sup>th</sup> District