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## Hutch Metro sets expansion

By Jaime Williams

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The Bronx is building.

Simone Development recently announced that it will develop a mixed-use commercial endeavor on the currently state-owned property south of the Hutch Metro Center.

The 33-acre site at 1500 Waters Place is part of the Bronx Psychiatric Center campus, which is being consolidated by the New York State Office of Mental Health into a smaller 43-acre campus by mid-2015.

Empire State Development put out a request for proposals for the development in late 2013 and Simone Development submitted the winning bid.

According to ESD, the agreement with the state—which is subject to a due diligence period and public approval process—is for approximately \$16 million.

The company is excited to continue developing in the neighborhood, said Guy Leibler, president of Simone Healthcare Development.

“We have seen success here,” said Leibler. “And we believe in the Bronx.”

Much of the development will comprise of office space for healthcare tenants, as well as other businesses and government agencies, similar to the Hutch Metro Center.

“We believe there is an established infrastructure and need for continuing growth of the medical industry, in addition to business and government,” said Leibler.

Plans for the site also include a retail plaza, a 150-room hotel, and space for higher education—although agreements with tenants have not been finalized.

“We’re very excited that we think we can expand educational opportunities in the area,” said Leibler.

Another component of the campus will be recreational fields for community use.

The developers will replace the baseball diamonds currently on the site with a new one, and will construct a full-length football field.

Lehman High School would finally have a regulation-size field to host home games.

Those fields will be built sooner rather than later, said Leibler.



Courtesy of Simone Development

*A rendering of the future development proposed for 1500 Waters Place, currently part of the Bronx Psychiatric Center campus.*

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“We want to see these ball fields available for the community early on,” he said.

The developers are also keeping the community in mind when it comes to transportation. The second campus will also be served by shuttles to the subway, as is the case currently at the Hutch Metro Center.

They hope to get MTA bus service expanded in to the new development as well.

“We will continue to add transportation infrastructure,” said Leibler. “We’re very aware that these kinds of developments generate car [traffic].”

The developers are also hoping that plans for the new commuter train station in Morris Park are realized in the coming years, allowing workers easy access from the north and south.

“Having a Metro North station within walking distance is going to be spectacular,” he said.



The developers estimate that more than 6,000 jobs will be created by the development of the second campus, similar numbers to the first Metro Center. ESD estimates that 1,900 construction jobs will result from the project.

Simone hopes to start phase one of construction in spring 2016, said Leibler.

That first phase will involve turning the psychiatric center's existing 500,000 square foot Betty Parker Building into business or medical offices, and the existing John W. Thompson Building will also be redesigned to include a business hotel and a community college. Phase one will also include construction of two one-story retail buildings as well as the athletic facilities.

Phase two of the project will comprised of four 10-story buildings for business and medical offices, as well as an adjacent parking garage.

Ultimately, the project is likely to take more than five years, said Leibler. But for now, the project is still in the approval process, and Simone Development will need to work with the local community board, city and state.

"We look forward to the dialogue with the community," said Leibler.

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