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Medical Facility Finally Gets Started

BY KATIE MCFADDEN / 22 NOVEMBER 2016

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Demolition crews arrived this week to make way for the future medical arts complex at the old Keyfood site on Beach 105th Street. After about a year of delays, the project is underway and the future of Rockaway's healthcare looks promising.

As with any project that is subject to approval in New York City, red tape has held back the start of a much-needed medical facility, but the project, initiated by ophthalmologist Dr. Mark Gelwan, has officially begun. "We've had our challenges and problems dealing with the city of New York," Dr. Gelwan said. "This was extremely complicated to navigate through all the regulatory requirements of New York City because the project is directly adjacent to an MTA structure, so we had to get MTA approval, environmental approvals and Department of Buildings approvals. The city doesn't make it easy to build a project," Bill Colgan, Managing Partner for Community Healthcare Associates, the developer of the project, said. However as of Tuesday, November 22, demolition is underway, construction is expected to start immediately following and the project is expected to be complete around this time next year.

The 60,000 square foot elevated building will be four stories high and will have three floors, two of which will be reserved for a surgery center that will offer a wide variety of specialty surgeries. The complex is expected to attract patients from on and off the peninsula, so there will be sufficient parking. It will have plenty of parking with 120 spots, half of them under the building and the rest adjacent to it. It will also have a food court to accommodate patients, families and staff.

Although the project is spearheaded by Dr. Gelwan, it will have several partners including 10 private doctors and there will be opportunity for other groups to come in and rent space in the facility if they offer a specialty service that is not covered. Dr. Gelwan said that he expects that a major hospital will be involved as well.

The facility will have an on-site lab, imaging center, primary care and specialty services like ophthalmology, gynecology, orthopedics, oncology, urology, pain management, physical therapy, general surgery and more. Dr. Gelwan says that some doctors that were formerly on the peninsula and have since relocated to places like the Five Towns after Hurricane Sandy, will once again find a home within this new facility. "This is going to be like a healthcare mall and it will be quality care. It's like a one-stop shopping deal. Someone may come here for diabetes treatment but can also get cataract surgery or vascular surgery and can see all these specialists here

that can do the procedures for them, plus prep-work and lab testing. There will be a lot of people getting a lot more and better care without having to stay in a hospital," Dr. Gelwan said, adding that they aim to accept all insurances on the peninsula.

Colgan says the facility will not only add more healthcare options, but will create jobs. "The benefit to the community is two-fold. It will bring quality healthcare, which is needed in the community, and it will create good quality, high-paying jobs," he said. Dr. Gelwan expects the facility to create 125 full-time positions. "My goal for the facility is to make sure 90 to 100 percent of jobs go to people from the community," Dr. Gelwan said.

How will the development of this facility impact the peninsula's only hospital, St. John's Episcopal Hospital? "You're still going to need St. John's, but you may need a different St. John's. This facility will give patients the ability to get care and go home and that will eliminate unnecessary admissions. St. John's will need to focus more on emergency services and cut down on beds and overhead to be successful," Dr. Gelwan said.

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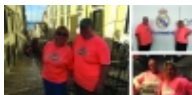
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