

# Have A Great Stay-cation In Queens

BY ASSEMBLYMEMBER  
MICHAEL GIANARIS

**A**ward-winning restaurants. Major movie studios and great cultural institutions. Sprawling public parks with scenic views. A first place major league baseball team. The perfect recipe for a fantastic summer vacation, right?

With sky-rocketing fuel costs threatening to eat up half your vacation fund before even reaching your destination, I have good news: All of these places are right here in Queens, within walking distance or just a short trip on public transportation. This summer, leave your suitcases at home and take advantage of what Queens has to offer!

When it comes to dining, Queens is known for both the diversity of its restaurants and its affordability. Whether you are looking for a causal meal at a sidewalk café or for a sophisticated night out at a Michelin star-winning restaurant, Queens has a number of great places that take your palate to destinations all over the world without ever getting on a plane.

Western Queens is home to major motion picture studios, earning it the nickname "Hollywood East." People are often surprised to learn

that many of their favorite TV shows and movies are filmed right here at either Kaufman Astoria Studios or Silvercup Studios, which have developed into major forces in the film industry. Ugly Betty, the Sopranos, Sex in the City, Sesame Street, 30 Rock, and Gossip Girl are just a few of the shows that have been taped in our backyard.

In fact, the neighborhoods surrounding these studios are embracing their own roles in movie making to become cultural destinations in their own right. The Museum of the Moving Image, currently undergoing a major expansion while remaining open to the public, is a great place to learn about the history of film making and participate in interactive exhibits. The Frank Sinatra School for the Arts, currently under construction just across the street from the museum, will provide state-of-the-art performance space and enhance this rapidly developing cultural hub in Queens.

Queens' many parks have a lot to offer, as well. Just in my own neighborhood, Astoria Park's pool provides a place to cool off on a hot day, while Socrates Sculpture Park and Athens Square Park offer outdoor movie nights, concerts, cultural performances and child-oriented shows throughout the summer. Other

Queens parks offer acres upon acres of open space to enjoy a beautiful summer day.

And, let's not forget, baseball season is in full swing. Here is no better time to see the Mets continue their run towards a pennant and enjoy a hotdog or two at Shea Stadium in its final year.

If the heat gets to be too much, there are plenty of cultural attractions to visit. In addition to the Museum of the Moving Image, Queens is home to dozens of great venues like the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Queens Theater in the Park, Queens Museum of Art, New York Hall of Science, Queens County Farm Museum, and the Noguchi Museum, just to name a few.

For the thrifty "stay-cationer," the MTA has made touring these Queens locations a great bargain. Its discount program allows visitors of these Queens institutions to receive a special discount by simply showing their MetroCard when purchasing tickets.

There are so many different events going on in Queens. This summer, make sure to save some money and take advantage of everything your borough has to offer!

*Michael Gianaris is the representative of the 36th Assembly District.*



**Michael Gianaris**

# It's Time To Develop Willets Point

BY ASSEMBLYMEMBER  
NETTIE MAYERSOHN

As the Assemblymember representing Willets Point, I am strongly supporting the long-overdue redevelopment of the area. The creation of this Urban Renewal Area is a much-appreciated signal of the city's commitment to improving the "Iron Triangle." This mixed-use plan improves the environmental conditions in the area, creates much needed affordable and market rate housing and expands the Flushing Meadows Park destination by including a hotel and convention center.

For too long, this valued area has been a source of grief to the surrounding communities. The negative impact of the environment has been substantial. The junk yards, garbage and stagnant water have made Willets Point one of the most undesirable locations in the borough. The proximity to the waterfront and Flushing Meadows-Corona Park only exacerbates the very serious negative environmental impacts.

I think it is important to the entire area and the borough that we work to revitalize this location. Its close proximity to several major roadways and public transportation make it ideal for future development. We have an oppor-

tunity to turn this blight on our environment and community into a development, which provides jobs for area residents and enhances the neighboring recreational and cultural facilities.

The Willets Point Urban Renewal Area presents an opportunity to make significant improvements in a long, underutilized area. These improvements will not only create a significant windfall for the city, but it has the potential to positively impact the lives of thousands of Queens residents.

This development plan provides 5,500 new units of housing, new retail, recreational and school spaces and creates 20,000 new construction jobs and 6,100 permanent jobs in the retail, convention and hotel portions of the plan. Speaking as someone who was fired from my first job at Alexander's department store in the Bronx for trying to organize a union and drawing upon my lifetime ties to organized labor, I must congratulate the city on their recent agreement with the unions ensuring reasonable wage and benefit standards for all jobs created, thereby enabling working families to remain in our communities and not force them to flee to the more affordable suburbs.

I believe that if the overall plan is examined in the context of the surrounding Flushing, College Point and

Corona communities, the benefits of this project will be enormous.

I am therefore hopeful that this redevelopment will move forward quickly. But let me say this, we also need to be mindful of the existing businesses in the Willets Point community. These 250 businesses should be treated fairly, and the city must do everything possible to ensure their relocation is as smooth and painless a transition as possible. I am much encouraged by the creation of a dedicated Business Relocation and Workforce Assistance Plan for the area businesses, and I commend the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) for all that they have done so far to assist these businesses. I am sure they will continue to work with the business community to get them relocated.

I look forward to continuing to work with Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Borough President Helen Marshall, EDC and former Borough President Claire Shulman to ensure that this very, very important project is successful.

*Nettie Mayersohn represents District 27 in the Assembly, which covers Willets Point.*



**Nettie Mayersohn**