

Cuomo to extol Javits redevelopment

Crain's Insider, January 4, 2012

Gov. Andrew Cuomo will talk about the future of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center as part of today's State of the State speech's focus on economic development.

It's unclear how much detail the governor will give, but observers believe his administration has an interest in the Regional Plan Association's idea to tear down the approximately 1 million-square-foot convention hall on the West Side after building a much larger one in Queens.

Razing Javits would leave a multi-block, \$4 billion piece of waterfront property that could be parceled off and developed alongside the Hudson Yards. The redevelopment could be modeled after Battery Park City, where the state leases the land to developers in exchange for a percentage of their rental income. Revenue for the state would increase along with apartment values.

A 3.8 million-square-foot international convention and exhibition center was a component of the city's Regional Economic Development Council plan submitted to Cuomo last year. Willets Point is a possible site because of its proximity to La Guardia Airport and the infrastructure improvements that are under way. But the Aqueduct site developed by Malaysian firm Genting has clear advantages, according to one observer: Genting could build a convention center on one story and, perhaps most important, finance it. An insider familiar with the issue said a constitutional amendment allowing casino gambling would not be a necessary incentive for Genting to build the convention center.

Infrastructure improvements, however, might be. Observers have discussed upgrading subway access to Aqueduct and possibly building an AirTrain spur to connect JFK airport to the site. Cuomo controls the authorities that manage those systems—the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey.

An Albany insider believes Javits will serve to highlight Cuomo's focus on job creation rather than legislative priorities, such as pension reform, mandate relief and redistricting.

“It's going to be interesting to see whether he can generate excitement with this approach,” the insider said. “There are such high expectations after last year.”

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