

So, what actually happened at the Kingsbridge Armory?

Start here to find out how it went down.

The City Issued an RFP

In 2006, a City-appointed task force put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for developers to come up with a plan for the Armory. It aimed to bring in new businesses without driving out existing ones, and asked developers to include a living wage in their plans.

The Community Responded

The Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance (KARA) was formed by the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition; the Retail, Wholesale, and Dept. Store Union; and others to voice community concerns over the Armory's future.

Developers Responded

In 2008, three developers responded to the RFP with plans. Only one was good enough to be considered. It was from the Related Companies.

KARA Said Hold On

KARA tried to negotiate a CBA with Related before their plan got approved through the ULURP process, which can take years.

Want a CBA?

In 2009, KARA met with Related and asked for living wages as part of the CBA.

CBA Rejected

When Related refused the CBA, KARA tried to convince the City Council to vote the project down.

The Plan was Killed

In late 2009, City Council voted the project down in the ULURP process. The mall would not be built.

Do-over!

In 2010, the City assembled a new task force to draft another RFP. The process is starting over...

Get Legal!
"New York City is struggling to come up with a set of rules for how to do CBAs. Right now there are no rules. There should be a contract with provisions on how to enforce it. If you don't do something you were supposed to do, there should be a penalty. You should pay a fine if you don't perform."
Jesse Masyr
Lawyer specializing in CBAs, represented Related

Have Follow-ups
"Once the CBA is done, the community has to create an oversight group that will monitor the CBA. The first five years, everybody's watching to make sure it works. But five years out is when the CBA can fall down, folks start not paying attention. We need to keep tabs!"
Desiree Hunter
Community advocate, KARA

Have Outside Negotiators
"None of the people negotiating with the developers should get to decide how to spend the money from the agreement. That way, you're truly negotiating for the community, and not your self-interest. Money changes people, and not for the good."
Jesse Masyr
Lawyer specializing in CBAs, represented Related

Don't Involve Living Wages
"The City should pass its own living wage law. It shouldn't be that one developer has to pay a living wage and not another. Then the developer would just say, 'You know what, I'd rather build in DC or London,' or any other of the cities that NYC competes with."
Vicki Been,
Co-author of law report on CBAs

Be Part of ULURP
"We believe CBAs should be part of the ULURP process. With the power of ULURP behind it, the developer would have to sign the CBA. But it has to be a conversation with the community, because I cannot trust other folks to negotiate that."
Desiree Hunter
Community advocate, KARA

Don't Be Part of ULURP
"The City and the Economic Development Corporation believe that the ULURP process is where any community benefit negotiation should take place. ULURP is a legal process that is designed to take input from the local community. ULURP is not perfect, but it's the right place for it."
David Lombino
Economic Development Corporation

Represent (Really)!
"The problem with CBAs in New York is that they haven't been undertaken on behalf of the communities in all their diversity. They've been used in the most narrow ways by small groups. I don't think the Armory falls in this category, that was a broader process. But it's the only one. It's probably the best example we have for the way CBAs should work in NYC."
Tom Angotti
Member of Comptroller's panel on the future of CBAs

How should it work next time?
We asked experts what they would do differently next time around. Here's what they told us about their ideal CBA...

Hey, developers!

Check out our RFP!

"We saw that we kept fighting the powers that be but didn't have something strong enough to threaten them."

"The plan gets a vacant building put back to life."

"For the Armory, we asked that any retailers in the space had to pay workers a living wage; at least \$10 an hour with benefits. Without that, it would have been a poverty wage center."

"Related proposed a mixed use facility with retail, entertainment, and community space that would provide 1,200 jobs."

"KARA wanted to impose a different wage scale on workers at the Armory than would apply anywhere else in the City. We would never agree to that because it would make the project unbuildable. Retailers would just go somewhere else."

"The mall was going to increase the amount of traffic, noise, and air pollution. Related said 'We're going to have those impacts, and there's nothing we can do about it.'"

NO LIVING WAGES = NO MALL PLAN

WHO BENEFITS FROM COMMUNITY BENEFIT AGREEMENTS?

CBAs...

(or Community Benefit Agreements) are unofficial agreements between a real-estate developer and a community. When a developer proposes a large-scale project, sometimes people from the affected neighborhood try to negotiate some sort of benefit to make up for the trouble they think the new development might cause. They'll ask for things like job training, local hiring, new parks, community facilities, or just money, and in return they promise not to protest and delay the development. CBAs are not part of the official New York City process of approving new developments, a.k.a the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). But these days it seems that large projects can't be proposed without these controversial CBAs coming into the picture. There are a lot of questions about how CBAs should work in NYC, and who really benefits from them. A group of students in the College Now program at Hostos Community College looked for answers at the Kingsbridge Armory.

Armory Back Story



The Bronx's Kingsbridge Armory was completed in 1917 to hold the National Guard's tanks, weapons, and soldiers. It's probably the biggest armory in the world. In 1974 it became a City Landmark, which means it cannot be torn down. In 1996 it stopped being used, and the State gave it to the City. Pretty soon it started to fall apart. The City wanted to put it back to use and bring badly needed jobs to the neighborhood. So, with help from the Economic Development Corporation, it kicked off a redevelopment process.

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About CUP
The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) uses art, design, and visual culture to create projects that improve the quality of public participation in urban planning and community design. To learn more about CUP, visit www.anothercupdevelopment.org

College Now at Hostos Community College. Students: Joel Baque, Constance Barfoe, Amanda Dalley, Tykel Eddy, Taylor Feliciano, Nicholas Flores, Yanica Garcia, William Hamilton, Orlando Ixcoy, Deshaun Jefferson, Sekou Keita, Julia Martinez, Luis Peña, Tyreek Watson, Brandon Welsh. Program Coordinators: Elizabeth Wilson, Amaros Matos, Christine Coronado.

