

## The Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor

The final development frontier on Jersey's Gold Coast

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**A** coastal city denying access to the water is wasting land, potential tax revenue and vital outdoor space that could draw residents and tourists. The city of Bayonne could use all of that.

A longtime industrial powerhouse with the highest per-capita population of building trade union members in New Jersey, Bayonne hasn't had recreational or residential use of its waterfront since World War II.

It hasn't had the best reputation, either. With one route in and out of town via car or the Light Rail, you have to want to go to Bayonne to be there. Strangers to the family-oriented, working-class city see tired streets with old retail and rows of houses with small front lawns. They see the maritime industry from the highway — big cranes, containerships and cruise lines.



A typical street near downtown Bayonne

They don't see one of the safest cities in the state with a leading public school program. They don't see the friendly smiles on the people whose families have lived there for three generations or more. They

certainly don't place the waterfront as a viable place to live — or haven't, until now.

In one of the region's largest coastal redevelopment plans, the city of Bayonne looks to revitalize its peninsula, the last raw parcel of land jutting out into New York Harbor. When it's done, the Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor will include 100 new buildings, 7,000 residential units, 58 acres of parkland and 17,000 new residents.

“This is a new adventure for the city, developers and residents.”

John P. Clarke

“This is the most valuable piece of real estate on the entire East Coast,” says Mayor Mark Smith, a second-generation Bayonne police officer who spent 26 years on the force. “We're a 5-minute ferry ride from the capital of the world. The peninsula has all the potential imaginable for residents, entertainment and job creation. This project is important for the entire region.”

On land commandeered by the Army as a supply staging and troop departure point for World War II and later conflicts, the area known as Military Ocean Terminal at Bayonne (MOTBY) sticks out 2 miles into New York Harbor. It is three times the size of New York's Battery Park, with views of Manhattan, the Statue of Liberty, Staten Island and Red Hook, Brooklyn. Light Rail service to nearby PATH stations can help take peninsula residents to Fifth Ave. and 23rd St. in little more than a half hour. A ferry, set to begin operation in September, will travel to Wall St. in less than 10 minutes.

Master-planned by Trenton-based **Clarke Caton Hintz** — arguably New Jersey's top architecture

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firm, with experience in revitalizing communities — the project is intended to turn MOTBY into a thriving waterfront community with five new neighborhoods connected to inland Bayonne by new bridges and roads.

It also adds a harborfront walkway and allows for an industrial section on the peninsula's northern side, serving cruise and containerships.

“With construction and maritime jobs, the peninsula project could create anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 jobs,” says Christopher L. Patella, executive director of the Bayonne Local Redevelopment Authority, the state agency overseeing the project. “This is a town where plumbers were born to plumbers and steelworkers born to steelworkers. The waterfront is part of the fabric of the city. The peninsula will not be a separate area. It will be Bayonne's greatest asset.”

The stalled economy will likely slow building down. Currently, the public has access only to a 9/11 memorial park at the end of the Peninsula with a sculpture given to the U.S. by Russia. Patella hopes all five new neighborhoods will be done within a decade.

Work on the industrial Maritime District is underway. Investing more than \$15 million, the Ports America company will manage a terminal that will handle most of the used cars entering and leaving the United States. Cape Liberty Cruise Port will be the launch and return point for Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, which will pay the city of Bayonne \$140 million over 35 years.

This is big business for the city of 60,000 middle-class people where the average family income hovers around \$51,000. According to Patella, each cruise ship that docks at Bayonne represents \$1.5 million in revenue for the city.

The focal point of the project is the coming residential corridor along its southern side. Architects envision the Landing as a retail and entertainment district where ferries come and go.

Akin to DUMBO, the Loft District would see warehouses transformed into eco-friendly lofts. The Point, the end of the peninsula, will be a mixed-use neighborhood of skyscrapers combining high-rise condominiums and office buildings. Like Jersey City's Newport, the area will have unparalleled views of lower Manhattan.



A rendering of the Harbor Station neighborhood

“This is a new adventure for the city, developers and residents,” says **Clarke Caton Hintz** partner **John P. Clarke**, whose firm also master-planned Asbury Park and the area surrounding Ikea in Elizabeth. “At community meetings, people said they wanted to have a place for their children to feel good about Bayonne. That was one of our objectives. The people who live and build here are pioneers. The challenge was to provide them with a framework to succeed.”

Texas company Trammell Crow, the largest builder of market-rate rental properties in the United States, is the peninsula's first developer, with a 544-unit luxury community known as Alexan CityView. Originally planned as condos, it is built with top materials and amenities.

A 9,000-square-foot clubhouse with a gym, business center, swimming pool, lounge, bar, 22 flat screens and indoor basketball court has already attracted the first round of renters. With offers of one or two months' free rent and \$1,000 bonuses to renters who refer friends, more than 75 leases have been signed in 10 weeks. A one-bedroom rents for \$1,695 per month. Two-bedrooms with more than 1,100

square feet go for \$2,205. Each unit gets one free parking spot.

"I wouldn't call early renters pioneers," says Richard G. Murphy, a managing director of Trammell Crow Residential, which acquired the 7 acres of land from Bayonne for \$18 million in 2007. "I would call them smart shoppers. This is simply a better product than our competition can offer, at better prices. We know how to build, and we want this project to set the tone for what the peninsula can become."

Janine Santoro noticed the property while going over the Bayonne Bridge. The former Battery Park City resident, who moved after her rent was raised by \$1,000, was looking in Jersey City. A single mother of two teenage daughters who works on 26th St. in Manhattan, Santoro liked Alexan's value, quality construction and proximity to work.

"I can get to my office in less than 35 minutes via public transportation," says Santoro, who works sales for a New York construction company that has done business with Trammell Crow. "Plus, I know how these guys build. They're sticklers for quality, and that meant a lot."

Lawrence Scarpa moved from Jersey City. The real-estate agent with Century 21 Viewpoint first saw the property on an agent tour. Scarpa and his wife, who sold their house at Port Liberté, like the value they get for their new three-bedroom. Plus, he feels safe in Bayonne.

"Before, I sometimes worried when my wife went out alone," says Scarpa, who looks forward to the peninsula build-out. "This is a real family town. I never look over my shoulder here."