

# Op-ed: Driving economic growth in the Bronx

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## Op-ed: Kingsbridge Armory redevelopment is an engine for Bronx economic growth

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Getty Images

Cross Bronx Expressway

The Bronx is home to what is one of the largest adaptive reuse and preservation projects currently in the United States, the renovation and repurposing of the immense Kingsbridge Armory.

Mayor Eric Adams and Governor Kathy Hochul recently announced approval of a redevelopment plan, based on extensive community input. They selected the development and design team led by Madd Equities and Joy Construction to

reprogram and renovate the Armory and build 450 adjacent units of much needed permanently affordable rental housing. My firm, in collaboration with FX Collaborative, serves as executive architect.

Superlatives abound for the Kingsbridge Armory. It's the largest Armory in the country. Its main drill hall has approximately 180,000 square feet of floor space free of columns, with a ceiling over 115 feet high. Opened in 1917, the Kingsbridge Armory has been closed for nearly three decades. In that time several different concepts were proposed for its use. None proved viable nor could attract financing for development.

That's changed.

The first phase of the Kingsbridge Armory mixed use redevelopment project features 25,000 square feet of dedicated community space, state of the art event venue space, sports fields for local youth academies, cultural and commercial space and a workforce development educational facility. Prioritization of these new facilities reflects the extensive, thoughtful input in the "Together for Kingsbridge Vision Plan." This ambitious project that defines the future of the Kingsbridge Armory will be transformational for the Bronx.

The redevelopment of this historic and long-underutilized site is also aspirational for the borough, and New York City as a whole. It holds the potential for new and unprecedented economic opportunities. It can be an engine for economic development through direct industrial investment in advanced technologies, bringing 21st Century jobs to Bronx residents.

The renovated Kingsbridge Armory site would offer appealing facilities and resources for large US and international companies seeking an R&D, training and manufacturing presence in an accessible location offering a sizeable, enthusiastic workforce.

US government industrial policy now calls for greater domestic self-sufficiency and less reliance on overseas sources for semiconductors used in everything from consumer products to defense systems. As a result, we're seeing a proliferation of new microprocessor manufacturing sites throughout the country. These include upstate New York locations with inexpensive industrial space and access to ample electrical power. But these thinly populated rural counties don't have sizeable workforces. Finding qualified staff is a challenge in small towns.

These large companies should bring their jobs to where the workers are, by establishing semiconductor and possibly pharmaceutical manufacturing and other high-tech facilities in the Bronx, where they will find abundant space at the renovated Kingsbridge Armory.

The site also offers reliable electrical power that's required for chip production, as well as extensive public commuter transportation at the door.

Combined with the major community cultural, recreational and educational facilities, the repurposed Kingsbridge Armory has the potential to draw significant clean, high-tech industrial investment to the Bronx, strengthening the economic and social fabric of the community.

Employment opportunities in the Bronx will be expanded to a broader range of well paying, high-tech industry jobs, enabled by new educational and job training facilities at the Armory.

The Bronx is the only New York City borough that's part of the mainland US, not separated by a river or harbor on an island. That physical connection to America should also be manifest in the participation of the Bronx in the transformation of the national economy and industry creating technologically advanced employment opportunities.

Kingsbridge Armory will generate positive perceptions of the Bronx as a smart and desirable place to establish state of the art high tech R&D and manufacturing sites among US and multinational technology companies.

*Ariel Aufgang is principal of Aufgang Architects.*