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City lawmakers voted on Northwell Health's redevelopment plan for the Upper East Side's Lenox Hill Hospital Wednesday | Upper East Site

City Council Takes Action On Lenox Hill Hospital's Controversial Expansion Plan

Northwell Health's plan to redevelop the Upper East Side's Lenox Hill Hospital into a massive tower, and its necessary zoning changes — with a few modifications — are now steps away for reality, much to the outrage of a group of neighbors long opposed to the effort, after the City Council's Land Use Committee voted unanimously in favor of the application, **Upper East Site** has learned.

“We’re just kind of flummoxed as to how this just kind of keeps passing along, because they’re not listening to the people,” Stacy Krusch, a member of the [grassroots organization](#) Committee to Protect Our Lenox Hill Neighborhood, told **Upper East Site** of the vote. She and other locals have long fought the project, citing concerns regarding its size and construction timeline. “It’s shocking how this is just falling on deaf ears in the Council.”



Northwell Health’s sought-after zoning changes are one step closer to becoming reality, as the City Council’s Land Use Committee unanimously approved them Wednesday, with modifications | Upper East Site

As **Upper East Site** has [reported](#), Northwell has been working to redevelop Lenox Hill Hospital, which sits between East 76th and 77th Streets framed by Lexington and Park Avenues, since 2019, when its first proposal drew neighbors’ ire.

The [healthcare giant](#) plans to replace many of the hospital’s 10 patchwork buildings with a tower measuring 436 feet — equivalent to 43 stories — along Lexington Avenue and 210 feet toward Park in one design option, or 395 feet, or 39 stories, on the avenue and 360 feet, or 36 stories, at the mid-block in the second. Both will require a change in zoning regulations, which do not currently allow for construction that large in the area.



Northwell proposed two versions of the tower, one 436 feet along Lexington Avenue (left), the other 395 feet (right), both seen here in renderings designed as if the viewer were standing on East 79th Street | Northwell Health

“I want to [assure] everyone that Northwell and folks working on this were held accountable at every step,” City Council Member Keith Powers, who represents part of the Upper East Side, including Lenox Hill Hospital, said at Wednesday’s Land Use Committee [meeting](#). He referenced the initial 2019 proposal, which topped out at 516 feet, and the height reductions made since then. “That’s why we’re able here to announce a final plan to decrease the size of the footprint and the construction timeline without reducing healthcare capacity or beds.”

Northwell’s plan will only add 25 new hospital beds despite the expansion’s enormous proportions compared to other buildings in the area, and nearly decade-long timeline.



City Council Member Keith Powers questioned Northwell representatives last month when the proposal first came before the Council | New York City Council

In a Wednesday morning meeting of the Subcommittee on Zoning & Franchises, a list of recommended modifications to the plan was put forth, including the elimination of design option two and the shortening of design option one to 370 feet, or 37 stories, along Lexington Avenue, and a maximum of 235 feet at the mid-block.

Among the other recommendations were a through-passage in the planned ambulance bay, allowing the emergency vehicles to enter on East 77th Street, drop off patients and exit on East 76th Street to ease congestion, and the relocation of the mother-baby entrance from Park Avenue to East 76th. However, the lack of dedicated parking in the plan does not prevent Northwell from parking ambulances along Lexington Avenue.



Local residents have long complained about congestion caused by ambulances parking or even double-parking along Lexington Avenue | Upper East Site

“It is not acceptable to the community,” Krusch said. “They should renovate their hospital, but not at this size and scale. And this [alteration], 66 feet, is a throwaway.”

Zoning expert George Janes, who is also a consultant for the CPOLHN, explained that when modifications are put forth and approved, as in this case, they return to the City Planning Commission, which has 15 days to determine whether the changes fit within the scope of the application’s environmental review. If the CPC finds everything in order, the plan moves forward to a full City Council vote.



Northwell seeks to modernize Lenox Hill Hospital, and convert all patient rooms to a single-occupancy model | Rendering via Northwell Health

“There are obviously reasonable concerns about living in a construction zone, the noise, the dust and the disruption in a quiet residential neighborhood,” said Powers, a lame duck set to vacate his seat at the start of the new year. “That’s why it was important that we continue to focus as well on the construction timeline, and to continue to compress that timeline from 11 years to now, five and a half external and two and a half internal, with less audible work.”

The project has previously been expected to take nine years to construct, something those living nearby have decried for months.



Both design options would tower over surrounding buildings, which many neighbors worry may impact their quality of life, especially amid years of construction | Dashiell Allen/Upper East Site

“People have ulterior motives, running for some other offices or whatever, and are afraid of standing up to a hospital’s wish list versus what’s needed in the community,” Krusch fumed, noting that the Upper East Side is already saturated with hospitals. “And comparing it to what they proposed in 2019 is embarrassing. That was a pie in the sky at 516 feet.”

“We still believe that a 12.5 FAR build at the site violates every principle of NYC zoning law,” Community Board 8 chair Valerie Mason said, noting the proposed floor area of the redevelopment. “No one has convinced us that the modernization of Lenox Hill Hospital, which we and Lenox Hill want, cannot be achieved on a much smaller, more contextual scale of build.”



Krusch explained that the CPOLHN will continue the fight against Northwell's plan | Upper East Site

Should the application be approved by the full City Council at its vote on Thursday, August 14th, it heads to the mayor's office, where he can veto the measure or allow the zoning changes to proceed by doing nothing.

“We’re going as far as we can go,” Krusch said. “It is nothing near what the community has been fighting for all along.”

“After years of planning and conversations, today’s vote to advance the essential revitalization of Lenox Hill Hospital marks a major win for New York City,” a spokesperson for Northwell Health told **Upper East Site**. “We remain committed to building a state-of-the-art hospital that will serve generations of New Yorkers, while also balancing the needs and concerns of our neighbors.”