

After six years of neighborhood controversy, the Upper East Side hospital's planned tower is one step closer to construction | Upper East Site

Lenox Hill Hospital's Controversial Expansion Plan Greenlit by City Planning

[Nora Wesson](#)

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Following years of neighborhood opposition, Northwell Health's plan to massively expand the Upper East Side's Lenox Hill Hospital is now headed to the City Council, after the City Planning Commission issued an approval that one critic called a "disservice to the community," **Upper East Site** has learned.

"I'm feeling pretty incredulous how the CPC, who [are] supposed to be thoughtful and unbiased city planners, could miss practically the entire point of the overwhelming community and Community Board 8 opposition here," neighbor Stacy Krusch told **Upper East Site** of Wednesday's approval vote, which now advances Northwell's proposal. CB8 had previously disapproved of the controversial plan. "They missed the point... the CPC didn't do its job today."



Northwell Health seeks to expand Lenox Hill Hospital, at 100 East 77th Street between Lexington and Park Avenues, with a soaring tower expected to take nine years to build | Upper East Site

As **Upper East Site** has reported, Northwell Health [aims to renovate](#) Lenox Hill Hospital's aging infrastructure, at 100 East 77th Street between Lexington and Park Avenues, with a modernized tower

far larger than would be allowed under current zoning regulations. The healthcare giant's two proposed designs would see the new building rise 436 feet on Lexington and 210 feet at its mid-block portion, or 395 feet on the avenue and 360 feet to the west.

Both options require a change in zoning regulations, which do not currently allow for 40-story towers in that area. The two proposals would also convert all patient rooms to single occupancy — increasing capacity by just 25 beds — move ambulances and delivery trucks into loading bays off the street, and take nine years to build.



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

The [commission](#) issued unanimous approvals of the first three items in LHH's application — a change in zoning district, the ability to distribute floor area according to the proposed site plan, and an amendment to zoning text that allows everything to be implemented.

The final item, the additional floor area required for LHH's promised upgrades to the 77th Street-Lexington Avenue subway station's downtown entrance, was laid over for a future vote.



Both versions of the proposed tower would loom over surrounding buildings, and require changes to zoning regulations that do not currently allow constructions that large | Dashiell Allen/Upper East Site

Since 2019, when Northwell first announced its expansion plans, neighbors have expressed [concern and fear](#) over the redevelopment, especially regarding its towering height and nearly decade-long construction timeline, which many believe will negatively impact their quality of life.

“I’m just shocked, dismayed, overwhelmed by how the planning commission didn’t hear our testimonies, didn’t read our letters,” Stephanie Reckler, a longtime member of [grassroots opposition group](#) the Committee to Protect Our Lenox Hill Neighborhood, told **Upper East Site** of the vote, which occurred after a May [public hearing](#) where messages of opposition and support were heard. “It’s so opaque, the whole process.”



Lenox Hill Hospital says it needs the space for 475 single-occupancy patient rooms, an increase in capacity of just 25 beds | Rendering via Northwell Health

She commended CB8 for posting submitted public testimony online, saying she feels that, unlike the community board, the CPC hadn't listened to neighbors' concerns.

"What was going on in the background that we didn't know about?" she wondered.



Neighbors and stakeholders both for and against the project made their voices heard at numerous Community Board 8 meetings, ultimately culminating in the board issuing a disapproval of the application | Nora Wesson/Upper East Site

“The proposal strikes the right balance — strengthening a critical institution while protecting the surrounding community,” CPC Chair Dan Garodnick said before voting to approve the three items. Multiple other commissioners associated themselves with his statement, which referenced community concerns as well as the need for the hospital to modernize.

Both Reckler and Krusch, also a CPOLHN member of six years, agree that the hospital is in “dire need of upgrading and renovation,” the latter said. “We don’t oppose development, just not at this size and scale that they proposed. I mean, it just doesn’t fit here.”



The New York City Planning Commission's chair Dan Garodnick acknowledged both the opposition and the hospital's need for modernization before voting to approve the application's first three items | City Planning Commission

Krusch urges Northwell to find a way to meet LHH's needs within a smaller footprint.

"This isn't the end. In fact, it's just the beginning, because we're going to fight even harder to make sure that this hospital does not ruin the neighborhood in the guise of healthcare," Reckler said, fired up for the future, as the City Council prepares to review and vote on the application. "If anything, we're now more energized because this is such a disservice to the community that it's supposed to be helping."



Many neighbors worry the significant height of the tower and its long construction timeline will negatively impact quality of life in the area | Rendering via Northwell Health

“This vote brings us one step closer to delivering a modern, world-class hospital that meets the urgent and growing needs of everyday New Yorkers,” a Northwell Health spokesperson told **Upper East Site**.