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Rentals for a Pioneering Spirit

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BAYONNE

HERE on a peninsula jutting into the Hudson River, with a landscape so stark it served ably as a set for the 2005 remake of “War of the Worlds,” the outpost of a new civilization is being created. The economy permitting, it will take the form of rental apartments.

Surrounded by giant piles of dirt and deep cuts for new roads, and under the steely gaze of enormous insect-like cranes on the nearby docks, the 544-unit Alexan at Bayonne Bay is rising steadily. In fact, leasing for the first 100 units is supposed to start in June, according to its developer, Trammell Crow.

The recession has stalled other companies’ approved projects on the peninsula, and caused one player to drop out, Bayonne city officials say. But Trammell has proceeded and appears confident of success.

“We went into this with our eyes wide open,” said [Richard Murphy](#), a managing director of Trammell Crow in Morristown. “We know that development on the Bayonne peninsula will be an ongoing process, but we think we can create a fantastic environment for our residents.”

Rental rates for the one- to three-bedroom units at Alexan have not yet been established, according to Mr. Murphy, but he said that they would be much lower than those in [Manhattan](#), Hoboken and Jersey City, and that a 10,000-square-foot clubhouse and parking facilities would open at the same time as the first available apartments.

In addition, a June startup is envisioned for shuttle service to the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line stop just inland of the peninsula — connecting to PATH train service to Manhattan — and also limited ferry service to Manhattan from the point of the peninsula.

The rental units will be the first residential construction at what is now called the Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor, a 297-acre former military ocean terminal just south of another, similar-size peninsula devoted to maritime industrial business. The military operation was shut down and the land ceded to the town for redevelopment in 1999.

Since then, an ambitious plan has been adopted, establishing five large parcels that are to sustain different types of development: 6,700 housing units, as well as office space, retail, hotel/convention facilities, and a permanent dock for the Royal [Caribbean](#) cruise line, which already operates there.

Even before the economy froze up, said John P. Clarke, a partner with the Trenton architecture firm Clarke Caton Hintz, which wrote the master plan for redevelopment three

years ago, “the plan was expected to take 10 to 15 years to realize.”

“The scale is extremely massive,” he said. “For example, Battery Park City, which was 20 years in the planning, by the way, is 97 acres. This is around three times that size.”

Right now, the harbor peninsula has the curious aura of a place where dreams and desolation commingle.

The Alexan is framed out to its full four-story height — and just south, across the Bayonne Bay channel, the lighthouse tower on the clubhouse at the private Bayonne [Golf Club](#) stands tall on a grassy hill.

But elsewhere on the peninsula, only a few spare, squat military structures are left — after the base was razed to make way for the new project, and enough fill was dumped in to raise the surface of the entire land mass out of a 100-year-old flood plain.

At the point of the peninsula stands a gift from Russia to the New York metropolitan region: a 100-foot-tall “teardrop” 9/11 memorial sculpture, now surrounded by a new landscaped park. And now that the channel between the peninsulas has been dredged, the Explorer of the Seas, Royal Caribbean’s largest cruise ship, glides in and lends its grandeur for a time between passages.

But elsewhere along the east-west length of the peninsula there is mainly earth — vast expanses and impressive piles of dirt with tractors perched on them.

“The first people who move there will have to possess a pioneering spirit,” Mr. Clarke said. Suzanne Mack, the chief planner at the local redevelopment authority, echoed that view, adding, “They will have to have excellent forward-thinking skills, and an ability to appreciate the rough beauty of what is here now.” Ms. Mack’s office is on the peninsula, in a small concrete building that once served as a military “hotel.”

Mr. Murphy of Trammell Crow said the prospective renters his company had in mind did not include families with children.

“Young professionals, looking for a cheaper alternative to Manhattan with a good commute time,” he said. “That’s who we think our first settlers will be.”

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: March 15, 2009

Because of an editing error, the “In the Region” article in New Jersey and Manhattan copies last Sunday, about the Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor, a large-scale redevelopment in Bayonne, misspelled the name of the Trenton architecture firm that wrote the master plan for the project. It is Clarke Caton Hintz, not Clarke Canton Hinton. And a rendering of the project carried an incorrect credit. The rendering was by Clarke Caton Hintz, not Carrier Johnson Architects.