

## City to Spend \$192,000 on Velodrome in Kissena Park

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by Liz Rhoades

A major renovation project on the Kissena Park Velodrome got under way this week and is expected to take three weeks to complete. "This is fantastic news. We've been waiting for this for a long time," said John Campo of the Kissena Cycling Club.

According to the Parks Department, allocations of \$192,000 have been made. An additional \$80,000 in private gifts will be used to add guard rails and accessories. Queens Parks Commissioner Richard Murphy, who has been trying to find funds to upgrade the cycling facility for years, said the funding will allow for a complete renovation of the Velodrome. "It's a wonderful thing. I have been trying to get it done for 10 years and now bicyclists of all ages will be at their peak to train there for the 2012 Olympics." New York City is one of two American cities in the running to host the summer games that year.

Built in 1962, the Velodrome is located off Booth Memorial Avenue and 150th Street. Over the years, the facility had fallen into disrepair. Three years ago the city was able to repave the straightaway areas but didn't have enough money or the proper equipment to do the banked turns. Despite the bumpy areas and rough spots, dedicated racers continue to work out there in good weather. The cycling club holds meets there from May to August.

A plaque on a flagpole near the cycling track indicates that it was constructed 40 years ago and was named for Siegfried Stern, a parks benefactor and well-known Flushing businessman. In 1964, the U.S. Olympics trials for speed cycling were held there.

Although membership has decreased over the last few years from a high of 300, Campo said there are about a 100 steady members now. He expects membership to increase greatly once the new track is completed. "Next year, I expect to double the ridership there from 175 this year to well over 300," he said. Riding there since 1984, Campo commutes on public transportation with his bike to Kissena Park from his home in Manhattan, a trip that takes over an hour.

"The Velodrome was really bad when I first started there but the club has always had a good program, the best in the country. Cycling is the joy in my life." Campo, a contractor, believes the Velodrome will definitely be used for Olympic training and for the World Cup, leading up to the Olympics. The nearest velodrome to Kissena is in Pennsylvania, a 1-1/2-hour drive, so local members believe there is great potential here when work is completed on the track. "This is terrific; something that's been needed for a long time," Commissioner Murphy said. "We even got the Department of Transportation to pave the adjacent parking lot in a mitigation." Campo can't wait until the next cycling season and is pushing to get landscaping and other amenities completed by that time.