



# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

Enter a keyword

You are not logged in. [Register now.](#) February 24, 2010



Archives  
Brooklyn Public Library's  
Brooklyn Daily Eagle  
Online   
(1841-1902)

## Brooklyn SPACE

Archives  
Brooklyn Eagle   
(2003-present)

### Historic Turning Point After Century in Brooklyn, Watchtower Pulls Out of Heights

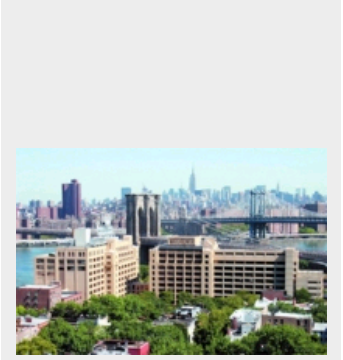
by Linda Collins (), published online 02-23-2010



**Sign In**  
ID is your email  
  
Password  
  
  
  
For registration questions [click here](#)

#### Key Executive Leadership To Move Upstate

By Linda Collins  
Brooklyn Daily Eagle



DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN — It's definite. Rumors can be laid to rest. The Watchtower Bible & Tract Society is moving its headquarters out of Brooklyn Heights and up to Warwick, N.Y.

"We have submitted a proposal to the Town of Warwick to build a complex there that we're calling the World Headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses," Richard Devine told the Eagle Tuesday. "We have started the land use process there."

Devine, who is in charge of real property for the religious organization, was confirming what was contained in a document forwarded anonymously to the Eagle last week.

The current world headquarters and administrative offices of the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society (Jehovah's Witnesses) in Brooklyn Heights, at 25 and 30 Columbia Heights. Image courtesy of Watchtower

That document included several pages from a public scoping session held Nov. 18 by the Town of Warwick Planning Board.

In his presentation, Bob Pollock, identified as the project manager for Watchtower and its 253-acre Warwick site, told the Planning Board, "This one would have the World Headquarters for the Jehovah's Witnesses. That is right now located in Brooklyn."

1/1  
<<first <previous next> last>>

He went on to describe the organization's plans for the site: "It is planned to house about 850 people at its peak. All of them would live and work on the site."

Parking will be underground, except for a visitors' lot; the existing driveway will be improved as a boulevard; and the old existing structures and new multi-story buildings (totalling about 850,000 square feet) will be sustainable, Pollock told the board.

Devine confirmed this Tuesday, adding, "Yes, it will be sustainable. In fact, we're shooting for a LEED Gold designation on this one."

Additionally, the organization will only develop about 10 percent of the property, leaving 90 percent to remain forested, he said.

The site will have to be remediated. Last year, Devine described it as originally built 50 years ago for the International Nickel Co. (now known as INCO) for its research and development division. The company closed that division in 1983.

King's College owned the property for awhile in the 1980s and had received approvals for its plan to develop a 1,600-student campus there. But the college dropped those plans and the property has changed hands several times since then, according to Devine.

#### Daily Cover



#### Weekly Cover



#### Real Estate Brooklyn



#### Bay Ridge Eagle



- Categories**
- ▶ Main page
- ▶ RSS Channels
- ▶ Atlantic Yards
- ▶ Photo Galleries
- ▶ Brooklyn Today
- ▶ Brooklyn People
- ▶ Brooklyn Cyclones
- ▶ Courthouse News & Cases
- ▶ Brooklyn SPACE
- ▶ Features
- ▶ Crime
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Street Beat
- ▶ Brooklyn Inc
- ▶ Brooklyn KIDS
- ▶ Editorial viewpoint
- ▶ OUTBrooklyn
- ▶ Brooklyn Woman
- ▶ Art
- ▶ Up & Coming
- ▶ Hills & Gardens
- ▶ Auction Advertiser
- ▶ On Food
- ▶ Health Care
- ▶ Get A LifeStyle
- ▶ On This Day in History
- ▶ Obituaries
- ▶ Community Boards
- ▶ Stars and stripes
- ▶ Community News
- ▶ Brooklyn Yellow Pages

**Contact Us**

If you'd like to contact us [click here](#)

For registration questions [click here](#)

Read about Us [HERE](#)

Business:

salon

Location:

brooklyn.ny

Search

- ▶ Appliance Repair
- ▶ Car Dealers
- ▶ Car Repair
- ▶ Carpet Cleaners
- ▶ Child Care
- ▶ Chiropractors
- ▶ Computer Repair
- ▶ Contractors
- ▶ Dentists
- ▶ Dry Cleaners
- ▶ Electric Contractors
- ▶ Golf
- ▶ Hotels
- ▶ Landscapers
- ▶ Lawn Maintenance
- ▶ Lawyers
- ▶ Limousines
- ▶ Locksmiths
- ▶ Optometrists
- ▶ Pest Control
- ▶ Physician & Surgeons
- ▶ Plumbers
- ▶ Restaurants
- ▶ Salons
- ▶ Full Directory

"We actually bought it from Touro College," Devine said.

It is not clear whether the need for remediation of the former industrial site was the cause for the colleges to back out of their deals.

As previously reported in the Eagle, the Society had acquired this property (in Orange County) and another in nearby Ramapo (in Rockland County) last year. It has also submitted a proposal for the 248-acre site to the Ramapo Town Council for an administrative complex.

"We're just getting ready to begin the land use process there. We're not as far along as we are in Warwick," Devine said, noting that the two sites are only a mile apart.

These two properties bring the total to four now owned by the Jehovah's Witnesses in Upstate New York, including property in Wallkill, also known as Shawangunk, in Ulster County, home to a printing complex and a farm facility; and one in Patterson in Putnam County, home to an educational center. Each of these currently house approximately 1,100 people, according to Devine.

"The idea is since our printing complex moved up there, our facilities here don't make as much sense," said Devine about the move. "Also, it's a change for us to build something brand new and eco-friendly from what we're used to doing, which is accumulate properties and retrofit them."

Asked about problems transporting the national and international visitors — some 70,000 per year, according to Devine — that now come to tour the Brooklyn headquarters, Devine replied that this will not be an issue.

"Warwick is only a 45-minute drive from LaGuardia [Airport]," he said. "It's right at the border of New York and New Jersey, about 20 minutes from Paramus."

While a zoning change is required for the Ramapo site, it is not needed for the new headquarters site in Warwick. "We only need a special permit," said Devine. Approval of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be approved first.

Also on hand for the Watchtower Society at the Nov. 18 meeting, according to the minutes, were Bob Krahulik, attorney with Bonacic, Krahulik, Cudde-back, McMahon & Brady; and Max Stach of Turner Miller Group.

Turner Miller is described on its web site as a full-service land use and environmental planning firm specializing in community planning, environmental studies and developer services.

#### Brooklyn Properties

As Devine has noted, all plans to move the headquarters to Warwick do not take into account the current state of the real estate market.

The current world headquarters and administrative offices at 25 and 30 Columbia Heights, which are massive buildings — they are 13 and 10 stories, respectively, and 304,650 and 402,300 square feet — are still occupied and the business of the organization goes on.

"We have eight smaller buildings [in Brooklyn Heights] we have yet to sell," Devine said in a 2009 interview. "Because of the market we are not actively promoting their sale. We've even started using the Bossert [Hotel] again on a limited basis."

As previously reported in the Eagle, the Bossert was going to be acquired by Robert Levine, president and CEO of RAL Companies & Affiliates, and developer of the former Watchtower shipping complex at 360 Furman St., but he backed out of the deal.

The other buildings still available — and vacant, except for tenants that pre-existed Watchtower ownership — include 165, 161 and 183 Columbia Heights, 105 Willow St. and 34 Orange St., all residential buildings.

As regularly chronicled in this newspaper, the religious organization has been reorganizing and consolidating its operations in Brooklyn Heights since transferring its printing and shipping operations to Wallkill in 2004.

That transfer resulted in a decrease in the organization's Brooklyn staff, reducing its need for residential space.

---

© Brooklyn Daily Eagle 2010 All materials posted on BrooklynEagle.com are protected by United States copyright law. Just a reminder, though -- It's not considered polite to paste the entire story on your blog. Most blogs post a summary or the first paragraph, ( 40 words) then post a link to the rest of the story. That helps increase click-throughs for everyone, and minimizes copyright issues. So please keep posting, but not the entire article. arturc at att.net