

Bowne House rehab will proceed despite funding threats, says Parks Commissioner

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Wednesday, September 30th 2009, 8:57 AM

The long-awaited restoration of a 17th-century [Flushing](#) home will proceed "full speed ahead" despite funding woes that had threatened to derail rehabilitation, city [Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe](#) said Tuesday.

Plans to construct a visitor's center beside the Bowne House - the oldest structure in Queens and a symbol of religious freedom that was recently donated to the city - are also on target for 2012, Benepe said.

"We probably have a pretty good shot," Benepe said of finishing the restoration and the new visitor's center on time.

The project is funded with \$5 million from the city, state and private groups.

Repairs to the Colonial-era home seemed headed for delays when the city announced it was deferring \$628,000 allocated by [Councilman John Liu](#) until 2013.

But Benepe said the city will "have enough money to do all the pressing work."

He also hailed the stability that comes with the site's transfer from the private [Bowne House Historical Society](#) to the city - a move which will be feted today at an 11:30 a.m. ceremony.

"Going under the umbrella of the Historic House Trust will afford all kinds of services and protection and sort of a backstop for bad times," Benepe said.

The wood-frame landmark is known as a symbol of religious freedom because its owner, [John Bowne](#), was arrested in 1662 for allowing Quakers, a banned faith, to worship there in defiance of New [Amsterdam](#) law.

[Bowne](#) successfully fought to overturn the rule.

Last fall, experts studying the timber-frame design said parts of the house appeared to have been built years before the long-accepted 1661 start date, perhaps making it the city's oldest building.

Rosemary Vietor, president of the Bowne House Historical Society, viewed the handover to the city as the dawn of a new age for the edifice, which has been closed to visitors since 2000.

"I hope we'll be able to have something available to the public before [2012], if not the whole house," Vietor said.

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