

City of New Rochelle
Department of Development

MEMORANDUM

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

THRU: Charles B. Strome, III, CITY MANAGER

FROM: Michael W. Freimuth, COMMISSIONER OF DEVELOPMENT

DATE: March 23, 2012

SUBJECT: Davids Island Initiative Update

Background:

In September 2010, The Davids Island Task Force of citizens, environmentalists, business owners, public officials, and regional regulatory agencies, was created to examine the challenges and opportunities surrounding Davids Islands' future.

The Task Force conducted a comprehensive assessment of the Island, researched its history and current conditions, and entertained a variety of potential re-use scenarios. All of this documentation was used in the preparation of a practical policy guide that has been donated by the planning professionals from the firms of Kohl Pedersen Fox, ARUP and SBI. This guide illustrates the benefits, impacts and obstacles associated with a spectrum of options (i.e. open space, civic uses, educational uses, sustainable energy generation) and provides tools for evaluating such options.

Between November 2005 and February 2009, the US Army Corps of Engineers (CORPS) performed a demolition and asbestos abatement project on the Island, razing 94 buildings and structures. CORPS secured funding from the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment. Concurrent with the building demolition activities, a Site Investigation (SI) was performed jointly by the City of New Rochelle and County of Westchester, as part of the Davids Island Environmental Restoration Project. The SI revealed that areas across the island have been impacted by metals and solvents. Groundwater sampling revealed no elevated concentrations of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs). In addition to the areas of soil contamination discussed above, an on-site landfill was identified along the southern tip of the island. The landfill contains significant quantities of ash and slag from past on-site incineration practices.

Working closely with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), an

Agreement between the City of New Rochelle and Tetra Tech under DEC's Environmental Restoration Program (ERP) to provide services necessary to finalize a Remedial Action Work Plan (RAWP) is ongoing. The scope of the agreement is for preparation of the Remedial Alternative Analysis Report for the Island, which must comply with DEC procedures.

It is the opinion of staff that in order to accomplish any of the scenarios outlined in the guide prepared by KPF and their associates, the City will need to continue the steps outlined above with respect to the RAWP. This process will require a public meeting and comment period prior to DEC approval and issuance of a Record of Decision (ROD), which outlines the preferred alternative selected by the City from which remedial designs can be prepared.

Department of Development staff has prepared the attached rough sketch that outlines the recommended phasing of remedial activities on the Island. Phase I suggests opening up the core of the Island where the former parade grounds once existed. This phase will require temporary small craft dockage for limited access to the Island. Phase II provides additional open space with picnic areas leading to the water's edge. Interpretive signage is also introduced in this phase that highlights the Island's marine habitat and rich military heritage. Permanent dockage may be needed, but likely not required until the next phase. As shown on the sketch, Phase III brings together the open space concepts with commercial uses such as a research institute, hotel and conference center. These uses will require participation from a broad spectrum of local, regional, state, and federal stakeholders both community and regulatory to accomplish. Finally, Phase IV reflects that the contaminated soils are consolidated into a previously identified landfill on the Island. With such consolidation in place, there is an opportunity to create an energy generating facility using available advanced solutions for energy production.

Status:

Once the RAWP is approved, the City can utilize this plan to seek funding from a variety of resources that may be available. Currently, there is limited funding available at the State or Federal level for brownfield cleanup activities and special appropriations and/or grant requests will need to be prepared.