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Community & Regional Planning

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Preliminary Conceptual Plan for Northern Conomo Point

Beginning in March 2009, the planning firm of Taintor & Associates, Inc. has been working with Carolyn Britt of Community Investment Associates to provide technical planning assistance to the Town of Essex. Our scope of services included 25 hours of consultant time to work with the Conomo Point Planning Commission to help develop an action plan and outline steps to realize the Committee's goals.

Concurrent to our work with the Town, the Committee has been working with Horsley Witten Group to develop a plan for Southern Conomo Point. For this reason, after discussions with the Town Administrator and members of the Conomo Point Planning Committee, we proposed developing a conceptual plan focusing on Northern Conomo Point.

To develop the elements of the conceptual plan, we conducted two field visits. The first field visit was with three members of the Conomo Point Planning Committee in June 2009 and the second was in August 2009. We also reviewed news archives as well as documents provided by members of the Conomo Point Planning Committee to provide context for the conceptual plan components.

Models / Comparable Uses

We considered a few nearby examples of areas with similar geographic and natural constraints as well as comparable scenic and recreational appeal in the development of the conceptual plan. These include:

Tuck's Point in Manchester-by-the-Sea, approximately 6 acres of Town-owned land located on Manchester Harbor. The property includes a public picnic house (the Chowder House), a pavilion overlooking the harbor (the Rotunda), a small public beach, a public bathhouse with restrooms and the private Manchester Yacht Club.

Little Neck in Ipswich is a peninsula that juts out into Ipswich Bay at the entrance to the Ipswich River. Private roads are laid out in a grid pattern on this small hill and the land is owned by an association called "The Feoffoes" of which the proprietors lease the land to individuals who own the buildings. There are restrictions limiting the amount of time each year that one is allowed to live in each bungalow, hence they remain summer cottages. There is a small public beach on the east side of the causeway leading to Little Neck with some parking.

Spectacle Island in Boston Harbor is a converted landfill that now includes a public beach and restroom facilities that are designed for minimal impact on environment. The Island is the result of partnerships between many city and state agencies to achieve shared objectives.

Plan Components / Considerations

Based on our background research, discussions with Committee members, and observations in our field visits, we developed a conceptual plan that incorporated potential land uses for the northern portion of Conomo Point. The conceptual plan:

- Identifies a site for a rental facility to serve as a community space as well as for private reservations
- Sites rental facility to easily separate it from other public uses
- Preserves the high point of the site and promontories to promote public viewing opportunities
- Retains and enhances public access to beaches / waterfront
- Retains the existing perimeter road for primary access
- Considers conversion of other roads / right-of-ways to bike and pedestrian paths
- Disperses parking to multiple areas to minimize visual and environmental impact
- Sites facilities on low ground to minimize visual interference
- Identifies restroom and service facility sites near water access points and parking
- Restricts access to environmentally sensitive areas
- Preserves the balance of the site for passive recreation.

Options for Further Planning

The Town has multiple options for the future use of Northern Conomo Point. Following are several ideas for guiding that decision.

- Hire a consultant to manage a public process for exploring options for the reuse of Northern Conomo Point. The process should engage the residents of the Town of Essex and other stakeholders to discover and discuss the multiple options for reuse, identify one or more preferred options and develop a plan for implementing the decision.
- Hire a consultant to prepare a Request for Proposals for a Development Plan and cost analysis for all or a portion of the site. The Request would outline plan requirements addressing issues such as public access, parking, and environmental impacts. It would allow any number of proponents to submit development plans at a limited cost to the Town.
- Hire a consultant to prepare a reuse plan and cost analysis. The plan could include residential units, parks and open space, preservation land, public or private facilities, or any combination of these uses. The cost analysis should consider any demolition, removal and / or reuse of existing structures and infrastructure as well as redevelopment costs along with potential Town income from sales, taxes, and / or fees.

