

Saving and Repurposing the Glenwood Landing Power Plant

Karin Barnaby – July, 2013

Since February, I have pitched the idea of saving and repurposing the Glenwood Landing (GWL) power plant as a viable, commercial, tax-paying enterprise, to all local, town, county, state and federal politicians, to all area mayors, to LIPA and National Grid, as well as to Chelsea Piers executives, in letters, emails, statements and in letters to the newspapers.

- **Long Island's North Shore residents are slated to shoulder a 19% tax increase in the coming years due to the loss of tax revenues in the amount of \$14 million annually from the GWL utility.** Saving of the GWL plant building from demolition and repurposing it as a successful commercial enterprise as quickly as possible will help alleviate the devastating financial impact of the GWL utility's decommissioning on the surrounding communities.

- **The GWL plant is a historically and architecturally unique building on Long Island.** Such plants were designed as civic monuments with the best architectural features of their day, to show that they would be there for the long term to provide a reliable source of electricity. According to architectural historian, Richard Gachot, the GWL plant is a “very important vestige of early 20th century industrial architecture, a symbol of power harnessed for mass consumption.”

- **Preserving older buildings has become a standard component of urban renewal projects.** According to Alexandra Wolfe, the Director of Preservation Services at the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities (SPLIA), “the reuse of an existing structure is an aspect of Green Building and is considered a more sustainable approach when taking into account the cost and impact of demolition and rebuilding. The idea of repurposing this GWL building is great and your reference to successful similar projects helps to drive home the possibility that dynamic commercial projects providing public benefits are possible for Long Island.”

- **Elsewhere, decommissioned power plants are increasingly being repurposed as showcase, community-oriented, commercial enterprises** because their location near water, their solid construction and their unusual size and shape make them ideal for repurposing. (See *The NY Times* April, 2013 article: “From Power Plant to Civic Renewal Centerpiece”).

- **In January of this year, Senator Chuck Schumer pledged millions of dollars in federal tax credits for repurposing the Yonkers Glenwood power plant on the Hudson as a convention center and hotel.** Sen. Schumer called the \$250 million project a “very high priority” that will spur development and create jobs. The Yonkers Glenwood project is slated to open in 2016 and is estimated to create 2,000 construction jobs, 1,000 permanent ones.

- **In Stamford, CT, the recent Chelsea Piers conversion of a Clairol manufacturing plant, completed in just two years,** created 900 construction jobs, between 400 to 600 related jobs in other areas, and 250 permanent jobs in Stamford—all thanks to the impressive building-recycling and can-do philosophy of the company's owners and architect, and the clear-eyed vision of the Stamford mayor and other civic leaders who had the imagination, will and courage to “aggressively” court Chelsea Piers executives.

- **The LI Regional Economic Development Council** met at Hofstra last week and discussed NYS

consolidated economic development funding available for community and waterfront revitalization projects. The project to save and repurpose the GWL plant would seem to qualify perfectly for such funding.

• **The Town of North Hempstead (TONH) Director of the Office of Intermunicipal Coordination**, Ellen Birnbaum, commented on saving and repurposing the GWL plant: "Your vision for this area is a very exciting one. It would be financially sound to have this property developed for commercial use rather than residential. I shared your letter with the Town's Commissioner of Planning who agreed that the site's attributes are that it has pretty much the right size, shape and topography with a large enough area for parking for such a plan. Tappan Beach is just down the street, so it could be a logical continuation of a recreational corridor and the Town would have less concern regarding any prior environmental contamination than if it were to become a residential development."

• **TONH supervisor and councilmembers claim no authority over the National Grid corporation's plans to demolish the GWL plant.** Since the 1963 demolition of NY City's Penn Station, however, which gave birth to the architectural preservation movement in this country, such a laissez-faire approach to historic buildings on the part of political leaders is no longer valid or acceptable.

• **The demolition of the GWL plant is not merely a means for National Grid to eliminate assets for the purpose of reducing its tax-assessment.** The decision to demolish or save and repurpose the GWL plant is a matter that will affect the quality of life and the economic and environmental well-being of all surrounding communities, now and in the future. It is a matter of preserving an architecturally unique and historic building. It is a matter that requires the engagement and leadership of the TONH supervisor and council members, of National Grid and LIPA executives, of all local, town, county, state and federal civic and political leaders.

• **We ask National Grid to not demolish the GWL power plant**, a structure of immense potential value to the community, until full consideration can be given to ways the landmark building might be most advantageously and profitably repurposed in the long term.

• **We ask for time to explore the repurposing of the GWL plant for everyone's benefit**, now and for future generations, as part of an environmentally responsible and commercially viable regeneration of what is presently a haphazardly developed and largely user-unfriendly GWL shoreline.

• **We ask that Town of North Hempstead and Oyster Bay, Nassau County and Albany leaders, together with National Grid, convene a public forum about saving and repurposing the GWL plant**, as a first step toward the regeneration and revitalization of a visitor-and-user-friendly Glenwood Landing-Hempstead Harbor waterfront.

• **A Change.org petition to "Save the Glenwood Landing power plant from demolition,"** has 548 supporters to date. A Facebook "Save the GWL power plant" group has 272 members to date.

• **Links to informative articles about power plant recycling & Chelsea Piers CT**

NYT “From Power Plant to Civic Renewal Centerpiece”

www.nytimes.com/2013/04/25/business/energy-environment/growing-supply-of-former-power-plants-offers-sites-for-renovation.html

Schumer pledges federal support for Yonkers power plant rehab

<http://polhudson.lohudblogs.com/2013/01/16/schumer-pledges-federal-support-for-yonkers-power-plant-rehab/>

Stamford Advocate “Chelsea Piers celebrates pending debut”

<http://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/article/Chelsea-Piers-celebrates-pending-debut-3671417.php#ixzz2LFt7hF18>

WSJ "Chelsea Piers Puts Ashore in Stamford: Former Clairol Factory Is Converted Into Recreation Facility”

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303640804577488692675787110.html>