



**Vision for the Future of Davids Island
Comments to the Davids Island Task Force**

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Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE) is an 80,000-member, non-profit, non-partisan, advocacy organization founded in 1985 to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment in New York and Connecticut. CCE works to build widespread citizen engagement for policies that protect our land and water resources, wildlife, and public health. One of CCE's top priorities is the protection of Long Island Sound.

CCE is actively involved in efforts to protect Davids Island, a 78-acre island off the coast of New Rochelle. Currently, CCE participates in the Davids Island Task Force Meetings to ensure the representation of our membership around Long Island Sound, and our more than 500 members in the City of New Rochelle.

CCE applauds Mayor Bramson and the City of New Rochelle on the creation of the Task Force and for holding this public hearing to gain community input to determine and clarify a vision for the future of Davids Island. CCE also applauds the Mayor for his desire to see waterfront access, sustainable designs, and public input throughout the planning process.

CCE has worked to protect Davids Island for 20 years and recognizes that the Island requires extensive clean-up and remediation. Davids Island is a unique part of New York's history, and cleaning up the Island for public access and recreation is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to give the residents of the Long Island Sound more access to open space and recreation. Making Davids Island a park and recreation area also provides the most benefit for the health of the Long Island Sound by reducing additional developmental stressors.

There have been many proposals to develop Davids Island over the last 40 years, ranging from a nuclear power plant to privately owned Trump mansion community. Each proposal was rejected because they all would be inappropriate for the health and safety of Long Island Sound as well as for the residents of the region. In fact, the public's support for preservation is what advanced millions of federal dollars for needed remediation. Due to the overwhelming public support for clean-up of the Island and making it a place for all residents of the Sound, the future of Davids Island must include preservation of open space, ample public access, parkland, and a sustainable waterfront.

Davids Island past development and uses require extensive remediation. CCE is especially grateful for federal, state, and local efforts, and in particular the leadership of Congresswoman Nita Lowey, in securing funding to advance remediation. Additionally, CCE remains concerned that public access to the Island could be limited after public dollars are used to clean-up the

Island. The public wants Davids Island cleaned up and used for public access. Developing Davids Island for residential or commercial use would require costly infrastructure in a part of the Long Island Sound that struggles to achieve clean water standards. It is imperative to the health and future of the Long Island Sound that Davids Island be used for parkland and open space. After Davids Island is remediated, CCE believes that it should be used to provide public access waterfront without negatively impacting the Long Island Sound.

There are many environmental, economic, and social benefits to be gained by New Rochelle and the Long Island Sound region by transforming the Island into a park including:

- increasing public access to Long Island Sound;
- preserving open space;
- preventing inappropriate development in the most environmentally stressed section of the sound;
- creating an opportunity to for a long island sound education resource center located on Davids Island that could be used by local schools and colleges;
- providing a diversity of water-dependent recreational uses such as fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, and biking,; enhancing the natural environment in Westchester County; and
- maintaining the cultural heritage of the Sound.

CCE supports a park to transform Davids Island from an inaccessible place to an accessible one. Currently, New Rochelle provides limited public access to the waterfront. Waterfront areas are increasingly becoming crowded during the summer months. More than 90% of Long Island Sound's coastline is already privately owned and developed. Private development constrains and eliminates access to Long Island Sound. Davids Island creates a rare opportunity for New Rochelle to preserve and protect 78 acres of waterfront land on the Sound for the public to access and enjoy.

CCE opposes harming the health of the Long Island Sound. The Western end of Long Island Sound is stressed by the depletion of oxygen in the water causing hypoxia. Without adequate oxygen available, signature shellfish and finfish populations, including lobsters, suffer. Inappropriate development throughout our sensitive waterbodies has directly led to an increase in polluted run-off, allowing chemicals and other pollutants to end up in our waters. CCE opposes increasing impervious surfaces that contribute to runoff, as well as the use of fertilizers, and pesticides on the Island. Instead CCE supports incorporating the green infrastructure into Davids Island plans, including green roofs and raingardens. Green infrastructure will reduce the amount of water treatment needed for Davids Island. By incorporating green infrastructure into the plans for Davids Island the residents of New Rochelle will save money in the long-term by reducing the need for costly infrastructure updates. Using green infrastructure allows nature to do its job and will protect the health of the Long Island Sound from potential contaminated water run-off.

Upon successful remediation, CCE supports public access and recreation opportunities on the Island. Activities with low-environmental impact including walking, hiking, and birding, will add immense value to the island with minimum or no negative impact to the Long Island Sound. If the level of clean-up includes the removal of harmful surface and subsurface PCB contaminants, more active uses could include a band shell, athletic facilities, playgrounds, and

bike lanes. The majority of the park should be dedicated to low-impact trails for hiking and walking.

CCE supports a carbon neutral Island. Transportation on Davids Island should be automobile-free. CCE opposes the construction of a costly bridge to the Island as its most likely connection would be through Glen Island Park and would facilitate unnecessary automobile traffic to the Island. Instead, CCE supports a low impact marina to serve regional boaters and possibly a seasonal ferry. The marina can include minimal low impact commercial and educational activities; such as a nature center and maritime center. CCE supports generating electricity demand on the Island by renewable sources, including solar power.

In conclusion, Davids Island is a rare gem in the Long Island Sound that can provide incredible public access opportunities for residents of New Rochelle and beyond to enjoy the beauty and open space. CCE is excited about new opportunities for the residents of the Long Island Sound and New Rochelle by creating a publicly accessible parkland and open space area. This is truly a unique opportunity for our generation to leave a positive legacy for future generations by cleaning up Davids Island and leaving it accessible to the public.

Thank you for the thoughtful consideration of our comments. Respectfully submitted,

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