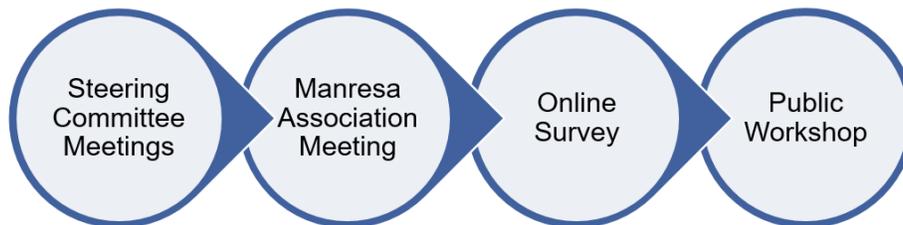


## **Manresa Island Reuse and Economic Impact Analysis Study**

### Public Involvement Process & Summary

June 2017

The public involvement process for the Manresa Island Reuse Study used a variety of methods to engage key stakeholders and the public. The elements of this process to date include:



*Steering Committee:* The project steering committee includes representatives from the Planning & Zoning Department, Norwalk Redevelopment Authority, the Economic Development Department, and the Manresa Association. Regular meetings have been conducted with the steering committee and the committee has assisted in developing and facilitating the public involvement process.

*Manresa Association Meeting:* The FHI team presented existing conditions findings to approximately thirty people at a Manresa Association Meeting, held at the Rowayton Community Center on February 28, 2017.

*Online Survey:* An online survey was composed as a means of soliciting feedback regarding the Manresa Island property, what their preferences and concerns are, and thoughts they have about potential future uses and environmental remediation for the buildings and property. The survey, which was released prior to the public workshop, was also used as a mechanism to promote the workshop.

*Public Workshop:* A public workshop was conducted at Norwalk City Hall on 5/22/2017. Approximately sixty-five people were in attendance. The goal of the workshop was to gather input and ideas from the community regarding future uses of the Manresa Island property. The workshop included a presentation about the existing conditions of the property, as well as breakout sessions with conversations focused on different questions related to future uses of the site.

## Online Survey Results

An online survey was conducted in May and June of 2017 and was promoted via the City's website, social media, and in local media. A total of 675 responses were received. The key findings are summarized below.

### About the respondents

- 45% of respondents live within a five-minute drive of Manresa Island; 33% of survey respondents live in Norwalk, but beyond a five-minute drive from Manresa Island; 21% live outside of Norwalk
- Age of respondents was generally spread out; with 12% between the ages of 31-40; 19% between the ages of 41-50; 33% between the ages of 51-60; and 30% who were 61 and over
- When asked “are you familiar with Manresa Island”, 61% of respondents replied “yes, I know the property well”; 36% said “yes, somewhat”; and only 3% were not familiar with the property. – See figure 1

Manresa Island Economic Analysis and Reuse Study

Please tell us about yourself

1. Where do you live?

Within a five minute drive of Manresa Island

In Norwalk but more than a five minute drive from Manresa Island

Outside of Norwalk

2. What is your age?

Under 21

21-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61+

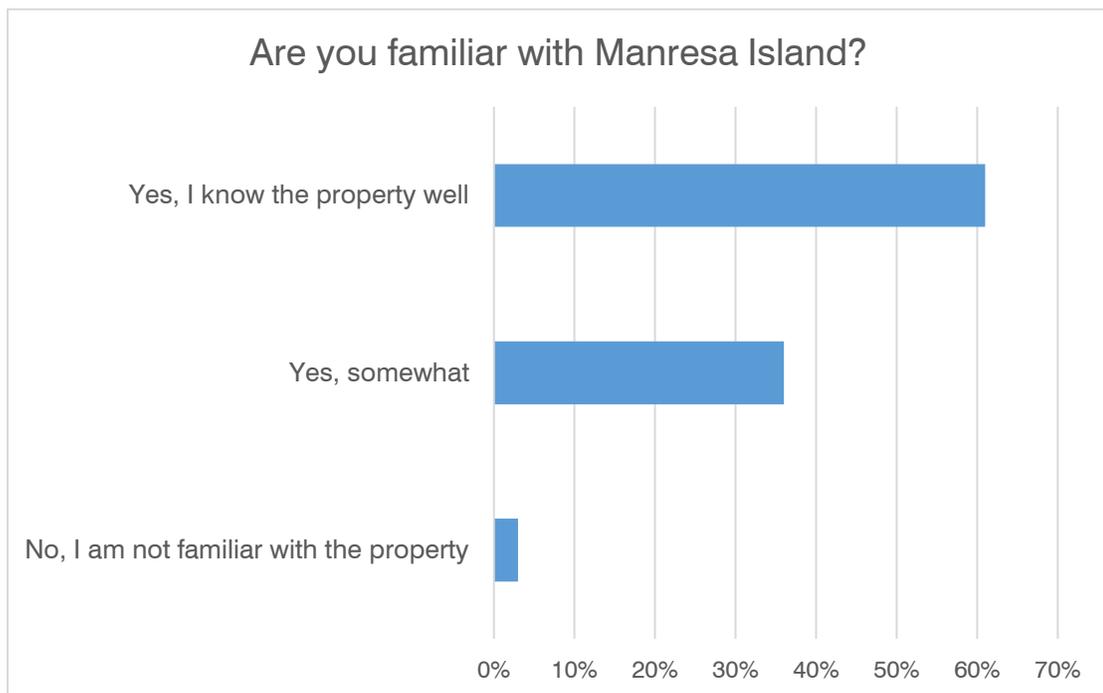


Figure 1

### How respondents view the property

- 65% of respondents said that Manresa Island is “very significant to Norwalk’s landscape and identity”; 20% said it was “somewhat significant”; 5% said it was “not significant”; and 9% answered “other” - See figure 2.
- When asked to specify “other” responses, many respondents answered that the power plant and smokestack are part of the skyline and are a wayfinding point when entering Norwalk Harbor. See below for a selection of comments:
  - *“Not very significant now, but it has the potential to be very significant”*
  - *“It is a significant nautical landmark. Aside from that it is an eyesore”*
  - *“The island is significant; the power plant is not”*
  - *“I’m a Norwalk local and I enjoy paddle boarding and kayaking the Norwalk waters. I think it could be a beautiful place if taken care of properly and with a lot of new faces I’m Norwalk and investments in our city it might be worth giving it a makeover”*
  - *“Very significant to Norwalk’s landscape and a major revenue generator”*

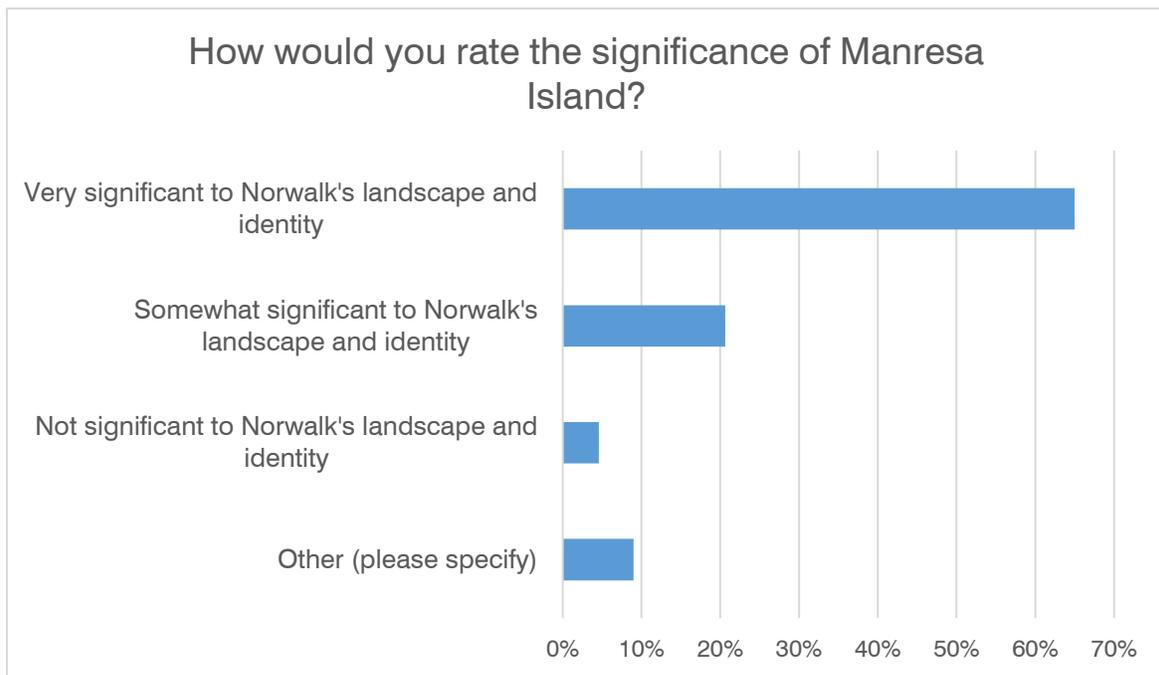


Figure 2

- When asked to select all that concerns about the property, 76% of respondents answered “potential environmental hazards”; 63% answered “potential future uses that are incompatible with adjacent neighborhoods”; 48% said “lack of active uses”; 47% said “lack of public access”; 40% said “reactivation of the power plant”; and 37% answered “vulnerability to flooding and storm surge”; 20% answered “loss of tax revenues from property should the condition or ownership change”. Only 2% answered that they “do not have any concerns about the property”. – See figure 3.
- A sampling of comments received is presented below:
  - *“I would mostly be concerned about not using the area to its fullest potential as it is right now. Wasted space.”*
  - *“It should be turned into something that can be used by many in the area. cleaning up the site will look much better as well”*
  - *“I would not like to see the plant reactivated. Hopefully it will be demolished, the land remediated and put to a use of value to the entire area”*
  - *“I’m concerned the power plant will be replaced with high rise condos. I’m also very much concerned a public beach will not be created on the property. Norwalk needs another public beach and does not need additional high rise condo.”*

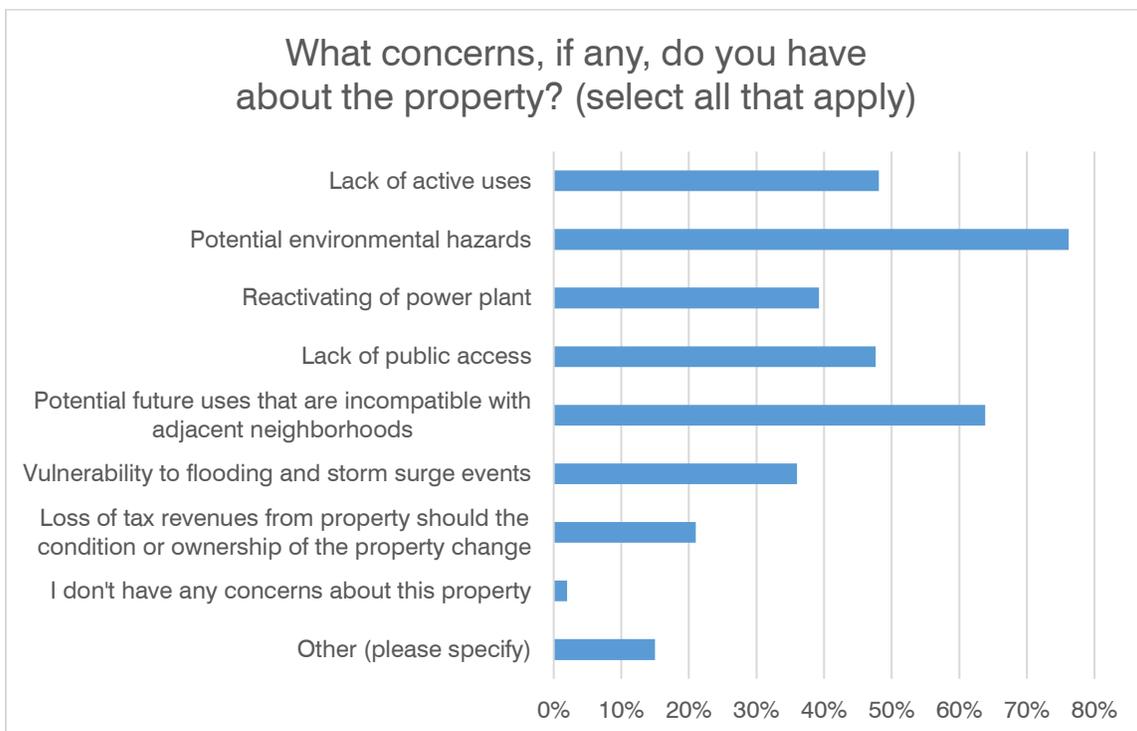


Figure 3

**What respondents think should be done to Manresa Island**

- When asked how they think Manresa Island should be reused, 79% answered as public passive open space (such as trails); 68% answered as conservation area; 33% said as a marina; and 33% answered as alternative energy generation (solar or wind). Only 3% of respondents said they think the property should be left “as is”. – See figure 4.
- A selection of additional comments received is provided below:
  - *“I don't know if public space if feasible due to the remediation needs/costs, but if it were feasible, it would be great for an outdoor concert space similar to Westport's pavilion”*
  - *“Maritime / Oceanographic facility”*
  - *“Should remain as natural as possible without significant development, especially considering periodic flooding”*
  - *“Fairfield County needs open spaces and Norwalk especially is very concentrated”*
  - *“I think it should be a mixture of uses that ultimately is tax neutral to the City”*
  - *“Mixed Use, many of the above items, plus some study should be conducted to review the feasibility of a possible passenger ferry system to New York City, Long Island and to Cape Cod”*

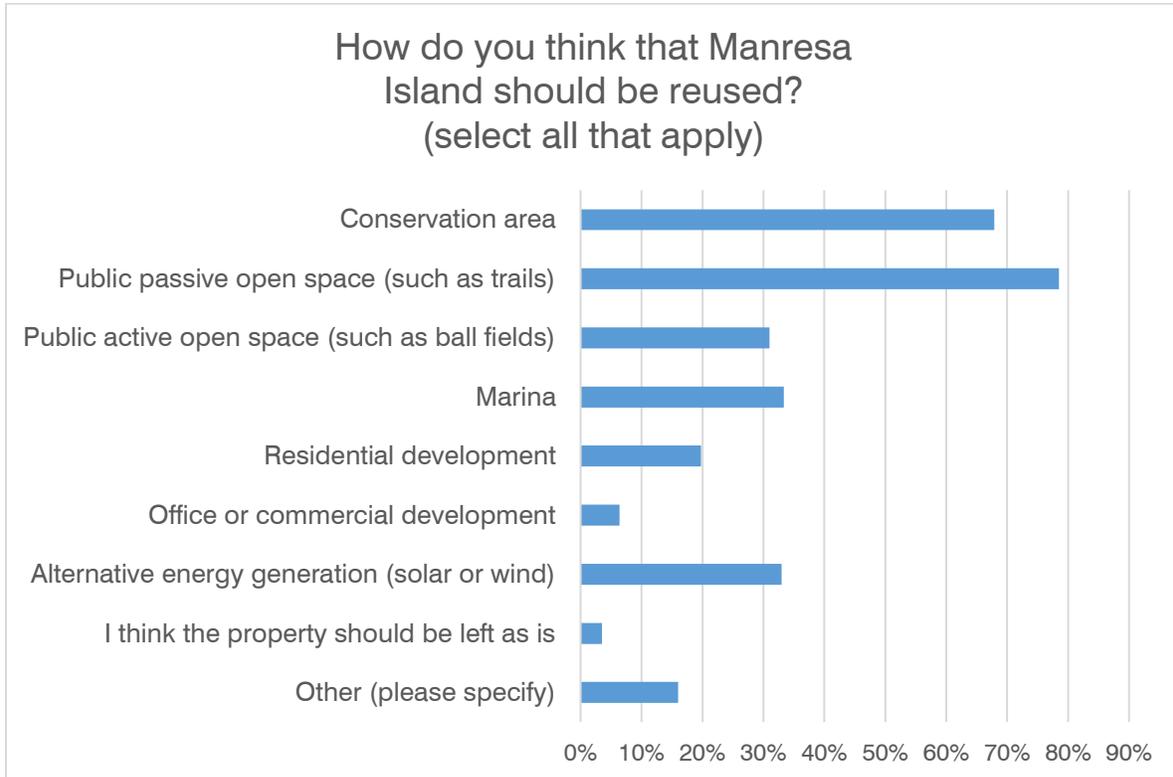


Figure 4

- When asked how engaged the City should be in advocating for or facilitating the reuse of the property, 78% of respondents said that “the City should be very engaged in facilitating a desirable reuse of the property”, even though the site is privately owned (NRG Energy); 12% answered that “the City should support this process, but not lead this effort”; only 2% believe that “the City should not be engaged in this effort”. – See figure 5.
- A sampling of additional comments is provided below:
  - *“The city should be very engaged in the process, but not as a deterrent or an obstacle. Someone needs to have a vision and this property with its prominence on the water needs to be a combination of public and private use”*
  - *“The City should not be letting any brownfield site sit un-remediated under a single ownership anywhere in the City”*
  - *“City should engage in facilitating desirable reuse of the property”*
  - *“The city should NOT be taking on any costs involved, but should be involved so its use is fair to the Norwalk citizens”*
  - *“NRG Energy should be involved with the cleanup and fund a big portion of the project. The City should monitor the progress so it does not violate any local laws”*

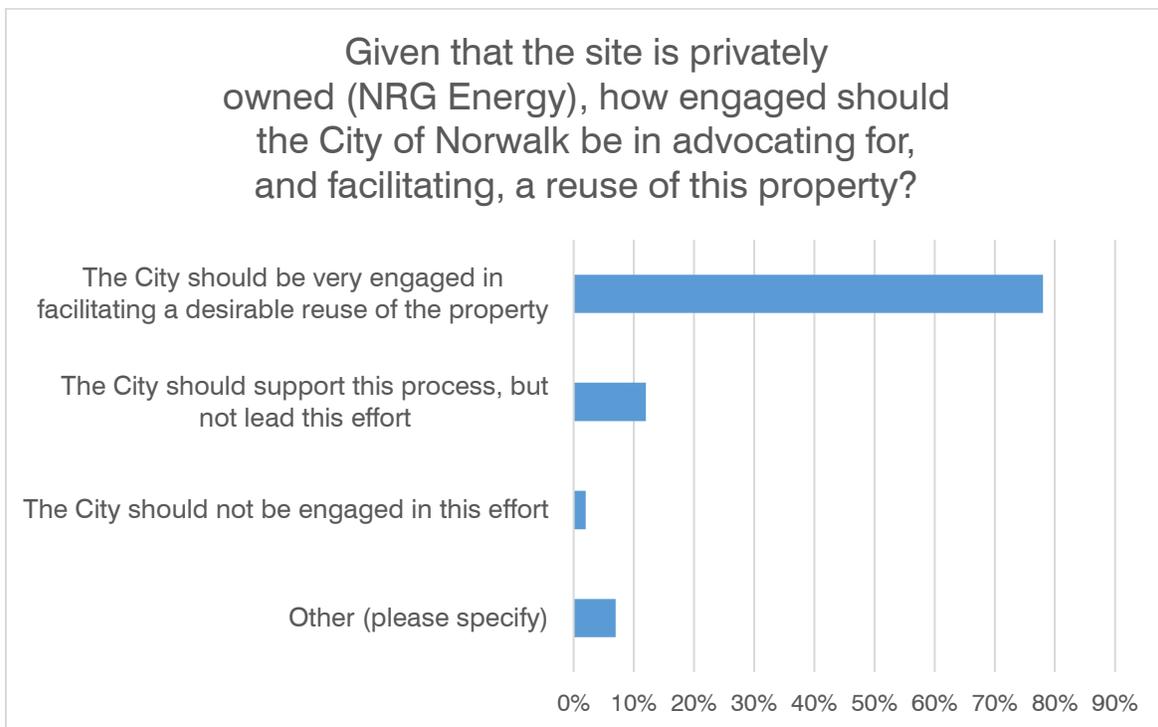


Figure 5

## Public Workshop

A public workshop for the Manresa Island Reuse Study was conducted at the Norwalk City Hall on the evening of Monday, May 22, 2017.

Approximately sixty-five people attended the workshop to provide their input and ideas regarding the future of Manresa Island. In promotion of the workshop there were notices and articles in local media such as the Norwalk Hour, Nancy on Norwalk and the Hamlet Hub. Additionally, a link about the study and workshop was posted on the City's website and the online survey provided information about the workshop.



The workshop began with an introduction from both Charlie Taney, President of the Manresa Association and Elizabeth Stocker, the City of Norwalk's Economic Development Director. Following the introduction, a presentation was given that included a brief overview of the study process and a history of the island and the power plant. Remediation options and related costs for the property were describe, as well as the environmental features of the site, including its essential fish habitat and bird species. The presentation included a case study of a power plant reuse at the Salem Harbor Power Station in Massachusetts.

A review of the online survey results was provided at the end of the presentation. Following this overview, breakout sessions were conducted. Each table of attendees was given three questions to guide discussions. These questions included:

1. What would you like to see happen with Manresa Island?
2. What do you NOT want to happen with Manresa Island?
3. What do you think is likely to happen with Manresa Island?

Participants worked together to answer each question. Following the session, a representative from each group provided an overview of the key points their group focused on.

Most participants felt that the Manresa Island Power Plant structure should be removed and that site cleanup and remediation should occur. Additionally, most believed that the building should not continue to remain "as is". Participants were generally in favor of the site becoming a public park or open space and did not want the existing forest to be removed. Other popular ideas included the site becoming part of the Stewart B. McKinney Federal Wildlife Refuge, the island getting repurposed as a working waterfront with commercial fishing and marina uses, or a mixed-use development.

As a whole, participants favored, and advocated for, reuse of the site. Detailed results of the breakout sessions are provided below.

### ***What would you like to see happen with Manresa Island?***

Most people would like to see the power plant structure removed and would like site clean-up and remediation to occur. Converting the property into open space or an environmental refuge was also very favorable, as well as the creation of a mixed use working waterfront. The most popular ideas that participants identified are presented below:



- *Removal of the existing structure*
- *Significantly improve the land, remove contamination where feasible*
- *A pier with commercial fishing, shipbuilding, and marina use, that would be an income generator for the City*
- *Become part of the Stewart B. McKinney Federal Wildlife Refuge*
- *Passive recreation and open space*
- *Mixed use solar array field with green space*

### ***What do you NOT want to happen with Manresa Island?***

When workshop participants were asked what they did not want to happen to Manresa Island, all focus groups agreed that they did not want the island to remain “as is”. High rise condominiums or other residential use were also not favorable as many groups commented that they feel Norwalk has enough condos and residential properties. The most common responses from participants are presented below:

- *Do not want the property to remain “as is”*
- *Do not want an increase in traffic through the area*
- *Do not want high rise condominiums or a large residential development*
- *Do not want the site to become over-developed*

### **What do you think is likely to happen with Manresa Island?**

When workshop participants were asked what they believe is likely to happen with Manresa Island, all the groups initially said that they believe the property will continue to remain vacant. Despite this first reaction, some groups believe a high-end developer may bring in mixed-use or residential development to the site. The most common responses from participants are presented below:

- *It will continue to sit vacant with nothing being done*
- *It will be turned into a public park with beach access, a waterfront recreation area*
- *It will be added to the Steward B. McKinney Wildlife Refuge*
- *It could become a Visitor's Center, water taxi, or private marina*
- *Buildings could get converted to some other use*
- *Site for alternative energy generation*
- *Developed into high end residential or commercial businesses*
- *The property is divided with mixed use proposals submitted from wealthy investors*