

OUTSIDE YOUR WINDOW



Bruce Liozzi, right, a National Lighthouse Museum (NLM) board member, discusses the historic buildings on the site with Tomas Morales, president of the College of Staten Island; Linda Dianto, board president of the NLM, and Richard Guarasci, president of Wagner College.

PEOPLE & PLACES

So much potential, so little faith

Two college presidents join growing chorus wondering how National Lighthouse Museum can become a reality

By KATHRYN CARSE
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

ST. GEORGE — Linda Dianto has seen the reaction countless times. As president of the National Lighthouse Museum (NLM) board, she has conducted dozens of tours of the proposed site for the museum. Adjacent to the Staten Island Ferry, the 10-acre parcel has historic buildings, a plaza and pier, views of the harbor and Narrows, skyscrapers and plenty of fresh air. It was formerly the headquarters of the US Lighthouse Services General Depot and its successor, the US Coast Guard.

"I am falling in love with the site. Who knew? Wow," said Dr. **Richard Guarasci**, president of Wagner College.

He and Dr. **Tomas Morales**, president of the College of Staten Island, had accepted an invitation to tour the site and consider developing student internship positions.

The group, including Captain **Joseph Ahlstrom** and **Bruce Liozzi**, both NLM board members, and **Brian DeForest**, terminal manager with Atlantic Salt, stopped to admire the first three of the five historic buildings. Even though it

NLM lecture series

"The Masters Role in Maritime Tragedies, Case Study: Costa Concordia" will be presented by Captain Ahlstrom, a SUNY Maritime College professor.

Tonight, Feb. 29, 7 p.m.
Richmond County Yacht Club
142 Mansion Ave., Great Kills

Admission is free.

For more information
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Call 855-NLM-SINY or email info@lighthousemuseum.org

sports graffiti and is in disrepair, the 19th century administration building of the US Lighthouse Services General Depot inspires admiration.

The three buildings and hillside vaults that were used to store oil for the lighthouses are part of the coming Lighthouse Point development of Triangle Equities. The mixed use development combines commercial and residential facilities. According to **Elyse Goldman**, Triangle's director of development, plans for the historic buildings include restaurants, catering space, shops and a boutique hotel.

Being developed separately, the museum would

provide a unique cultural and recreational aspect with an historic link to the waterfront site. The NLM board is working to have a pilot museum in Building 11, one of the two buildings designated to be part of the NLM. Ready for use, the NLM hosted "Beacon: Artists Respond to 9/11" and the Council on the Arts and Humanities incorporated the space in Lumen, a multi-media arts event staged last summer.

Building 10, a much larger space that needs to be further restored, would ultimately house displays of artifacts from lighthouses all over the country and archives. The architectural plans for building 10 were

prepared by **Lee H. Skolnick** Architecture and Design Partnership of Manhattan.

Fund-raising hurdles and bureaucratic roadblocks frustrated the original NLM board and the same issues challenge members of the present board, which was chartered in 2010. It set a goal of \$1 million to begin the pilot museum.

Without the funds, the city's Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the site's landlord, is withholding occupancy. In turn, without residency, fund-raising is hobbled. Individuals and foundations are hesitant to contribute without seeing on-site progress. In addition, said Ms. Dianto, federal grants cannot be released without an institution being on site for three months. Some \$300,000 in grant money is being held, she said.

The NLM has submitted a plan to the EDC in anticipation of getting a short-term lease for programming this summer. Plans include school and camp visits, a ham radio operators worldwide lighthouse meet, a lighthouse photo contest, a community concert on the pier. Future plans include an historic ship district with such

ships as the Lilac, a lighthouse tender and the FDNY Firefighter.

The board plans to repeat boat tours of 15 area lighthouses, a successful program last summer. The purchase of one of those lighthouses, the Romer Shoal, by Eltingville businessman **John Scalia**, has been a boost to the development of the NLM. Keen to work together, the board and Scalia are working on a formal agreement.

The NLM board and Friends of the NLM meet monthly and are also hosting a lecture series, the next one scheduled for tonight.

"The potential here is unbelievable. What can I do?" said Morales.

Ms. Dianto would like to

Summer plans, other projects

By KATHRYN CARSE
STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

Activating the site of the National Lighthouse Museum (NLM) this summer is the goal of a number of agencies, including the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Councilwoman Debi Rose's office, Community Board 1, and the Staten Island Council on the Arts and Humanities. While it considers the long-term plan for the esplanade and buildings, the EDC is working on interim programming.

"We are actively working with the local community and councilmember to identify a coalition of Staten Island groups, including the lighthouse advocates, which would be able to continue to program Building 11, the memorial plaza, and Pier 1, at the former Coastguard site with short-term cultural activities on a more regular basis," said EDC spokesman **Kyle Sklerov**.

One of the hurdles to programming is the permitting process. It involves a number of agencies, including the departments of Buildings and Transportation and the Fire Department. Councilwoman Rose's office has been facilitating the process to develop a document that would provide more of a one-stop process and to appoint a community based organization to oversee it.

"Recognizing the need to fully engage this piece of landscape, Lighthouse Plaza, the councilwoman brought together groups who have provided programming in the past, who know what works and what obstacles they encountered. We have had them come to help streamline the process to get the area more active and increase waterfront access for the community," said **Christine Johnson**, chief of staff for Councilwoman Debi Rose (D-North Shore).

The sputtering economy has been no help to Triangle Equities which was selected in 2007 to develop commercial and residential facilities. However, spokeswoman **Elyse Goldman** said the commercial development of the site is "well under way in getting approvals from the city in order to start" with the goal to begin construction by the end of the year. Planned to be completed in phases, the first phase is to be shops on Bay Street in the open space next to the post office and behind the brick wall with stars. Restoration of the historic buildings is part of phase two, which she said does not have to wait for the completion of phase one.

Although the NLM is a separate project from Triangle Equities, it is being included in the company's marketing of the site. Ms. Goldman agreed it would enhance the development of the area, saying, "Any type of use to activate that esplanade would be wonderful."

build staff with internships from Wagner and CSI in areas such as marketing, media, research, database management, grant writing and site tours.

"We have an array of students that would work on projects here," said Guarasci.

Morales shared his enthusiasm for the college's involvement.

"The college serves the public. We engage our students in community service. Certainly, this is a gem that needs to be supported by the anchor institutions in the community," he said.

Kathryn Carse is an editor and reporter at the Staten Island Advance. She can be reached at carse@siadv.com.



The group goes on a tour of the National Lighthouse Museum's proposed site, a 10-acre parcel next to the Staten Island Ferry in St. George.

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE PHOTOS/KATHRYN CARSE