

Port Covington Parcel B Property
301 East McComas Street, East Cromwell Street
Baltimore, Maryland
(Voluntary Cleanup Program)

Site Description

This 13.042-acre property, located in Baltimore's Inner Harbor industrial district, is currently vacant but has one active pier that is currently leased to the Department of Defense. The two remaining piers are in a state of disrepair. The property is bordered to the north by the Baltimore Sun newspaper plant; to the south by Winan's Cove and the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River, to the east by the Baltimore Gas & Electric Power Plant; and to the west by Port Covington, Parcel A, a retail development. The site is primarily open grassland with stands of small saplings and shrubs. The northeastern portion of the site has a paved access road and parking area for Pier 6.

Topographically, the property varies with a general slope south toward the Northwest Harbor of the Patapsco River. The site is partially located in a 500-year flood zone. The entire property is underlain by fill material derived from a variety of sources such as dredge spoils, waste fill from manufacturing operations, and structural fill. This fill was emplaced over tan/brown medium grained sands with various amounts of silt and clay. Clay content increases with depth and a clay layer is encountered approximately 15-20 ft bgs. Groundwater beneath the site occurs under unconfined conditions in the shallow aquifer (5 to 7 feet below grade) and confined conditions in the deep Patuxent aquifer. Groundwater in the shallow aquifer flows southerly towards the Middle Branch Patapsco River, which is the nearest surface water body and located along the southern property boundary. The site and vicinity receive municipal water and sanitary sewer services. Surface runoff from the property also drains southerly towards the Middle Branch Patapsco River.

Site History

Formerly referred to as Fort Covington, the property was involved in the military defense of Baltimore between 1813 and 1869. In 1903, the Western Maryland Railroad Corporation (WMRC) began purchasing portions of the property. Between 1914 and 1988, WMRC owned and operated the property, which was part of a larger tract of land estimated at 136 to 180 acres. In 1988, CSX Transportation Inc. (CSXT) acquired the property through a merger with WMRC. The current property owner, Port Properties, LLC, purchased the property in April 2001.

For over 150 years (1848 to the mid-1990s), the property supported numerous commercial and industrial enterprises. Historical commercial operations included yacht and boat manufacturers, marine suppliers, and social clubs. Piers 4, 5 and 6 were used for unloading coal, freight and ore, respectively. The site was primarily used as a bulk intermodal facility where box trailers were unloaded from railroad flatcars and trucked off site. Various portions of the site were used for boxcar cleaning, for steel, ore and coal storage and for the transfer of acids and plastic pellets from railroad cars to tank trucks. The intermodal and associated maintenance operations vacated the property at the end of 1988. In the mid-1990s, the buildings were demolished and the rail lines removed.

Environmental Concerns

Multiple environmental investigations were conducted on the property between 1987 and 2000. These investigations included soil gas surveys, soil and groundwater sampling and an assessment of the wildlife habitat.

Environmental investigations conducted in 2000 identified elevated levels of metals (arsenic, chromium, copper, lead and mercury) in the soil. Groundwater sampling detected bis(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate and diethyl phthalate in the shallow aquifer.

Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP) Status

On October 27, 2003, Struever Bros. Real Estate Development Corporation, a prospective purchaser, submitted a VCP application seeking a Certificate of Completion as an inculpable person. The Department is currently evaluating the application package.

Site Contact

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