

CNSG LONG BEACH NEWS CLIPS

Terminal Island site on block

By Donna Littlejohn
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A 14-acre parcel of surplus Navy property on Terminal Island was put up for grabs Friday to homeless providers.

The property — known as Site 6A — was listed in the *Federal Register* as “available” under provisions of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, which gives homeless groups first crack at surplus federal land.

The Los Angeles Harbor Department, however, hopes to use the parcel north of Seaside Avenue near Navy Way to expand port rail service.

“It’s very important in our long-range plans to develop Piers 300 and 400,” said Dave Mathewson, a senior planner for the port. “If we don’t have rail access to Terminal Island, we have some problems.”

The property was declared surplus because of the Long Beach Naval Station’s planned closure Sept. 30.

Tay Yoshitani, the port’s deputy executive director for maritime affairs, wrote a letter to Joan Shepard of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in San Diego stating that the land is vital to port expansion plans.

“Without the acquisition by the port of the Seaside Avenue parcel, these projects will be irreparably harmed,” he wrote.

Port officials believe the land is ill-suited for the homeless.

“It’s a remote industrial area, with limited public transportation,” Mathewson said. “It’s not really conducive to the homeless.”

He said homeless groups probably will not want the property after they examine it.

Even so, he expects several to apply.

“We anticipate a lot of applicants for the property, sight unseen, just to keep their options open,” Mathewson said.

Homeless groups must file a letter of interest within 90 days. Then they have 90 days to follow up with a formal application. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has 25 days to review the application. If not designated as a homeless site, it will be offered to state and local agencies.

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The port says it needs the land so it can expand its rail service to Terminal Island, where it plans to build one of the world’s largest container terminals.

In addition to the port, the Los Angeles and Long Beach unified school districts have written letters of interest.

Los Angeles Unified is looking to expand its Wilmington Skills Center at the site, possibly using it for marine science education, said Dominic Shambra, the district’s director of planning and development.

The district has expressed concern, however, about environmental conditions on the property.

In a letter of interest to the Navy, Shambra requested a one-year period for the district to evaluate possible toxic and other environmental conditions.

“The acquisition of this property will allow the district to relocate a substantial portion of the Wilmington Skills Center and Angels Gate Continuation School from the current site on the Upper Reservation at Fort MacArthur,” Shambra wrote.

Long Beach school officials are less clear about how they would use the property, which is within Los Angeles Unified’s boundaries.

Possible uses include storage for school district hazardous materials or for transportation operations, said Jerry Wilhoit, facilities planner for the Long Beach school district.

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pg A-1