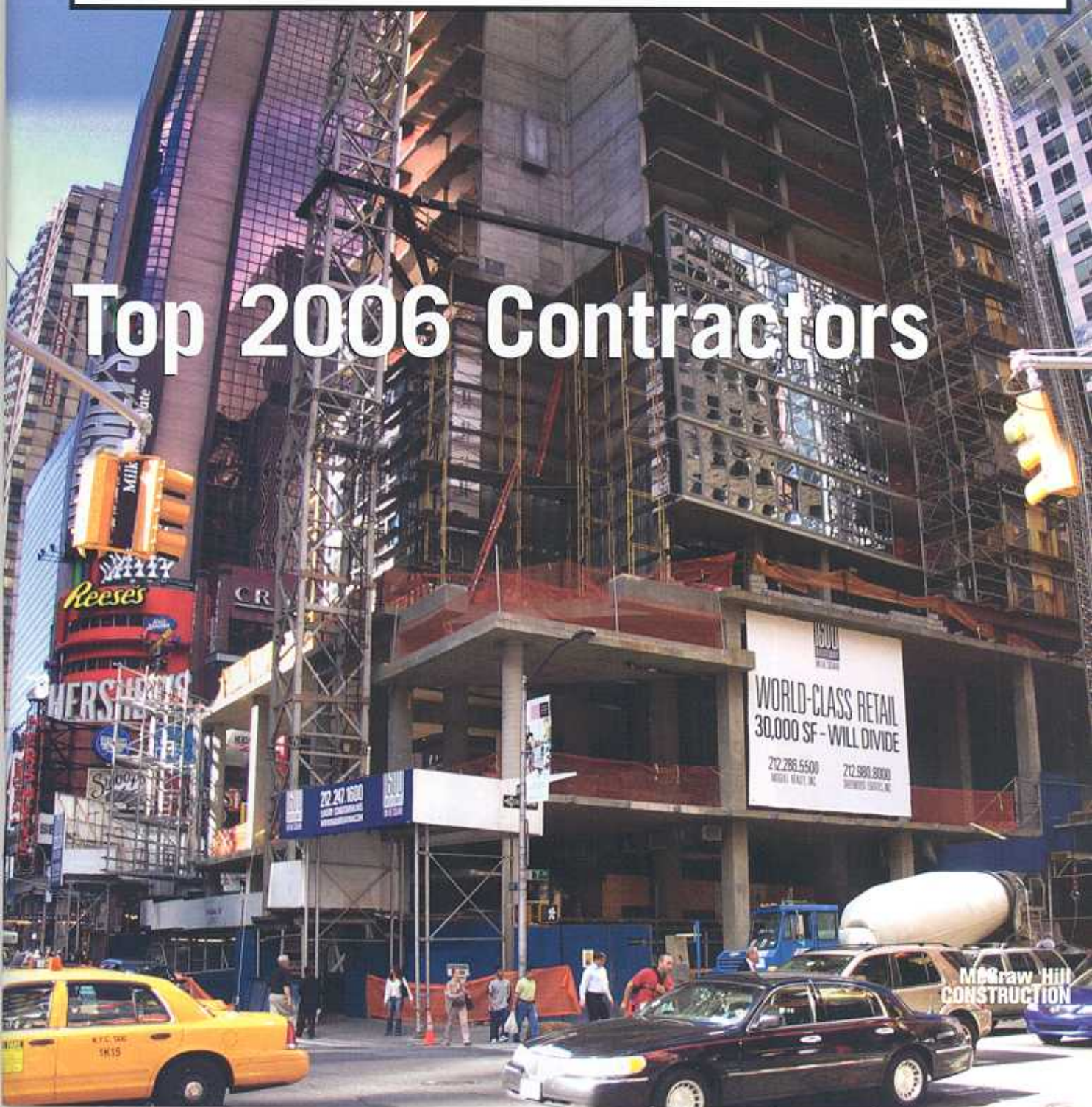


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Site Contamination is Not the End of the Road

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by JoAnne Castagna

Even the most challenging site problems – such as projects registered in the federal Superfund program – have solutions that can pave the way for redevelopment.

Recently on a cool, breezy morning

on Long Island's waterfront, a proud mayor enthusiastically announced to the public and media assembled on a notoriously contaminated property that the last truckload of radioactive waste was being hauled away as she spoke.

The city is Glen Cove, and the property is part of a 214-acre mixed-use waterfront development being planned on land that includes the Li Tungsten Superfund Site.

The remediation project offers a successful case study showing how public agencies, through creative partnerships with private developers and contractors, can play a critical role in rehabilitating land contaminated by past uses. The collaboration was evident in the group of officials who joined the mayor, Mary Ann Holzkamp, at the podium on that morning, including members of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and various state and local agencies.

A key element in the project's success occurred two decades ago, at a point where the site's prospects seemed dire. The property's owner, Li Tungsten Corp. – last in a series of

site operators – went bankrupt. The Glen Cove Development Corp. stepped in to purchase the site in 1984.

The 8-mi.-long waterfront is a key feature of Glen Cove, which is on Long Island's north shore, about 28 mi. east of New York City. For decades, one mile of the waterfront was occupied by various industries, and a portion was used as a dumping ground. All of this occurred before the establishment of the strict environmental laws we have today.

Wah Chang Corp. and Wah Chang Smelting and Refining Co., Li Tungsten Corp., and others ran facilities on different portions of the site for decades.

The Li Tungsten facility processed tungsten, a material used to harden steel. It received tungsten ores from around the world and smelted them to produce tungsten carbide powder, tungsten wire, and welding rods. The heavy metals and radioactive ore residues from this process contaminated the property.



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transformers, elemental mercury, and gas cylinders containing compressed liquids and gases spilled on the property. During an initial round of remediation, the agency hired a contractor to remove the most serious chemical and radioactive hazards.

But the EPA also found low-level radiation and heavy metal contamination in the soil throughout the 26-acre Li Tungsten facility as well as in the nearby 23-acre Captain's Cove

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Once the last owner had gone bankrupt around 20 years ago, New York State asked the EPA to assess damage to the land. The agency found large quantities of hazardous materials, such as laboratory chemicals and PCB-contaminated waste in and around hundreds of rusted drums and underground tanks.

In addition, the agency found asbestos,

property long used as a dumping ground by area businesses and residents. The contaminated land went onto the federal Superfund list in 1992, then into receivership, while the agency performed additional remediation.

During that time, the EPA convened a Li Tungsten Task Force that included representatives from EPA, state and county health >>

and environmental agencies, and the Glen Cove municipal government to craft a long-range remediation plan. The agency also reached out to citizens in the community for their input.

The property finally headed on the path to full recuperation in 1999, when the Glen Cove Industrial Development Agency purchased

the site with redevelopment in mind. It developed a new plan with the EPA, which in turn enlisted the U.S. Army Corps to complete the remediation, one of dozens of collaborations between the two agencies in the region.

The effort involved several phases of work in recent years. Last year, the EPA issued an interagency agreement with the New York

District of the Corps to oversee remediation work at the Captain's Cove site. The New York District hired Conti Environmental Services as the remediation contractor.


It was no small job, according to Richard Gajdek, the project manager for the New York District. It entailed excavation, separation of radioactive and metal-contaminated soil from clean earth, and transport of the contaminated soil to appropriately licensed disposal facilities. It required extensive measures to protect the public, including limiting site access and monitoring air quality.

The effort also has called for extensive coordination and communication, including weekly conference calls with the agencies, contractors, and technical staff. The meetings have covered major project elements such as schedule, cost, technical items, and local political considerations.

Conti began the latest round of remediation work in spring 2005, removing 87,500 tons of radioactive soils and 35,000 tons of metals-contaminated soils. This cleanup, along with the future cleanup of other nearby areas, is clearing the way for the new waterfront redevelopment to break ground.

The goal of the city's industrial development agency is to link the nearby downtown shopping area with the redeveloped waterfront. Thirty percent of the development will feature parks, public squares, nature walks, and botanical gardens. Pedestrian-friendly walking paths will be lined with restaurants, art galleries, stores, condominiums, and hotels. The agency will select private developers to carry out the vision.

The new waterfront development is expected to create as many as 1,700 new full-time jobs and bring in new business that will generate an estimated \$200 million in annual sales. But the development, expected to be complete in a decade, could never have moved ahead without the public-private efforts to clean up what was once lost territory. <<



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