State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT & ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION PROGRAM
OFFICE OF NATURAL RESOURCE RESTORATION
501 East State Street
P.O. Box 420, Mail Code 501-03
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420
Tel. (609) 633-0700
www.nj.gov/dep

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

SHAWN M. LATOURETTE
Commissioner

May 24, 2023

Barkha R. Patel
Director - Jersey City Department of Infrastructure
Municipal Services Complex
13-15 Linden Avenue East
Jersey City, NJ 07305

Dear Ms. Patel,

On behalf of Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette and our Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) colleagues, thank you for your letter of May 19, 2023 (attached). The DEP is pleased that the City of Jersey City is supportive of Liberty State Park Revitalization Program initiatives that help create a resilient coastal ecosystem and deliver environmental benefits to the community while also providing usable park space and amenities for residents and visitors.

The DEP is aware of recent comments raising concerns that tidal wetland restoration aspects of the Revitalization Program may cause additional flooding in the adjacent area. This letter, and the detailed analysis underlying DEP's restoration plans, addresses those concerns. Rest assured that protecting Liberty State Park and its host community in Jersey City from increasing flooding risks is an important goal that DEP and the City share.

While we offer this response to the concerns raised in your May 19, 2023 letter, DEP welcomes your attention to this project and invites you to remain in contact with our team as planning and construction activities advance in the months ahead.

The May 19, 2023 letter expresses the following concerns that:

> *"the project area does not have the capacity to hold additional volume of water during a major storm or tidal event due to its existing low elevation. Upon review of the plans, it appears the proposed construction of tidal channels and fill will artificially lower the elevation of this area even further and will allow more tidal flow from the Hudson River within the interior space of the park. This condition has the potential to negatively impact the utilities, chambers, tide gates, and other appurtenances within the adjacent public rights of way and easements. As such, it*

> *may create additional flood risk for adjacent public streets, the Liberty Science Center, and SciTech Scity, a 30-acre innovation campus that will be the site of a new high school, residential buildings, and public spaces."*

The observation is correct that the elevation of portions of the Park's interior will be lowered to create the tidal and freshwater wetlands. As you know, both tidal and freshwater wetland ecosystems offer considerable natural resource benefits. One of their greatest values, especially within this densely developed urban area, are resiliency and storm surge attenuation during storm events. In such events, these nature-based flood and climate resilience features act as an energy dissipator while also offering additional flood storage capacity during weather events.

Additionally, a berm designed to keep the freshwater wetlands from being intruded with salt and tidal water will separate the two wetland systems. The top of the berm will be at 10' elevation. The freshwater wetland is designed to capture stormwater runoff from the upstream drainage areas and will provide additional flood storage, from this upstream drainage area, beyond the existing conditions for rain derived flooding events. Furthermore, by lowering the elevation on the eastern portion of the park, fill will be relocated and mounded to the west, *i.e.*, closer to the community, thereby adding more protection from coastal flooding.

Furthermore, due in part to the specifically designed tidal channel network, the project will reduce the area of inundation associated with both 100- and 500-year tidal events. On-site storage for both tidal and rainfall events will also be increased, thereby reducing nuisance flooding and flooding storm-induced flooding in surrounding areas. The project is also anticipated to decrease the inland extent of the Limit of Moderate Wave Action. This reduction of wave energy will benefit inland infrastructure and development, including the Liberty Science Center and SciTech Scity. In short, through the aforementioned features, together with other grading and vegetation improvements, the project will afford surrounding inland properties a degree of protection that they currently do not have. The benefits of this protection will be real and tangible for the surrounding residents.

The May 19, 2023 letter also expresses concerns that:

> *"there is an existing 80" by 80" concrete outfall that spans approximately 3,500 feet through Liberty State Park, from Phillips Street to the Hudson River. This existing outfall line will support the design of a separated storm sewer for the planned Canal Crossing development in Jersey City. Sheet X-FH-125 proposes adding fill in the area above the buried outfall line, which will negatively impact the structure."*

Please be advised that, throughout the interior design engineering process, DEP, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and our supporting professionals have taken the existing 80-inch outfall into careful consideration. The design has been coordinated with Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority (JCMUA), Honeywell, and their respective professionals. The current design should minimize excavation over the pipe to maintain cover and the required clean cap over it. Both JCMUA and Honeywell have been receptive to the proposed additional fill placement over the

pipe. New tree plantings over the line have been specifically avoided, and protocols will be in place to protect the line from construction equipment traversing during construction.

Once again, we appreciate your attention to this project, welcome your further participation in the process, and would be glad to meet should you need additional information. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleagues in DEP's Office of Natural Resource Restoration at (609) 984-3865.

Sincerely,

David Bean, Bureau Chief
Office of Natural Resource Restoration
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

c: Mayor Steven M. Fulop
Shawn M. LaTourette, Commissioner
Elizabeth Dragon, Assistant Commissioner for Community Investment & Economic Revitalization
John Cecil, Assistant Commissioner for Parks, Forests & Historic Sites