



Westchester seeks proposals for Playland property

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Have a serious, economically viable idea for the future of Playland [Amusement Park](#) and the surrounding beachfront? Westchester County wants to hear from you.

The county on Friday formally released its request for proposals seeking "visionary" plans for 100 acres of the Playland property on Long Island Sound in Rye.

"I recognize that Playland is an emotional issue for many of us in Westchester, but I also think the vast majority agree that something needs to be done if we want to be fiscally **responsible**," County Executive Robert Astorino said in a statement released by his office. "This is just the beginning of what will certainly be a long process. What's exciting is that we have a chance to invent the future."

The amusement park opened in 1928 and seven of its rides — including the iconic Dragon Coaster — and several art deco buildings there are National Historic Landmarks. But it loses millions of dollars each year and has seen a significant drop in attendance this decade, from 1 million visitors five years ago to 615,000 in 2009.

Astorino has dealt with a huge budget deficit since taking office in January and has renewed the decades-old issue of whether the county should stay in the amusement park business. This month, in announcing that the county would seek development plans, he suggested that Playland as it is likely would never make money again.

Astorino said previous efforts to combat what ails Playland have failed because only the amusement park was considered.

"This RFP is essentially a blank sheet of paper that is looking for entrepreneurial imagination to unlock the full recreational and entertainment value of the property at large," he said.

Rye Mayor Doug French met with county officials Friday to review the RFP as it was unveiled.

"It's a great opportunity to take a fresh look at Playland," French said.

The city has formed a committee to make its own suggestions for what kind of plan Westchester should accept. French said most city residents want to see increased access to the waterfront and more recreational use for the Playland property.

Developers can offer completely new uses for the property — but no proposals for residences — or maintain all or some of the amusement park.

They can consider everything within the 100 acres covered by the RFP, including the rides, the boardwalk, the bath houses where a children's museum is planned, the [swimming pool](#), the boating lake and the ice skating rink.

The only part of the property that cannot be used in development proposals is the Edith G. Read Natural Park and Wildlife Sanctuary. Any plans for the property now used by the Pier Restaurant & Tiki Bar would not be implemented until the restaurant's lease with the county expires in 2014.

The county is not obligated to accept any of the proposals. Submissions must be made by Feb. 10 and county officials expect to take at least three months to review them. There will be a meeting Oct. 13 at Playland for anyone interested in submitting a plan.

The county Board of Legislators has expressed support for the administration's effort to revitalize Playland — but also intends to move forward soon with a lease for the children's museum.



Rene Aceituno, 11; his sister, Maria, 14; and Crystal Lantiqua, 14, all of the Bronx, ride the Derby Racer at Playland Amusement Park in Rye. The county is seeking plans for the property. (Seth Harrison/The Journal News)