

FOR CONSIDERATION

March 23, 2011

TO: The Directors

FROM: Kenneth Adams

SUBJECT: Buffalo (Erie County) – Richardson Olmsted Complex Project

REQUEST FOR: Authorization to Issue a Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement; Authorization to Issue a Notice of Completion; Authorization to Take Related Actions.

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I. Project Description

In 2004, New York State appropriated \$100 million dollars of capital funds for cultural and architectural projects in Buffalo including \$76.5 million for the renovation and rehabilitation of the Richardson Olmsted Complex (the “Project”). In 2006, the Richardson Center Corporation (“RCC”) was formed as a New York State not-for-profit corporation with the mission of carrying out the state established public purposes: to renovate the landmark buildings and grounds by carrying out reuse activities that honor the history and architecture of the buildings and grounds, that are compatible with the operations of the Buffalo Psychiatric Center on adjoining land, and that establishes new uses that will provide sufficient revenues to operate the facilities and save the historic complex. To date, the ESDC Board of Directors has approved grants totaling \$19.94 million out of the \$76.5 million appropriated by the State for critical planning studies and stabilization. Part of these funds was used to formulate a long-term Master Plan for the Richardson Olmsted Complex (“ROC”), which envisions a number of progressive phases in the renovation, growing from what is termed the “Core Project”, referring to an initial set of key efforts to facilitate a wider program of rehab and reuse in the future.

As outlined in the General Project Plan adopted by the ESDC Board of Directors in December 2010, the first phase of the Project will consist of leveraging the \$76.5 million of State funds to complete the Core Project with a total budget estimated to be in excess of \$105 million.

The Core Project will include:

- Focus on reuse of three buildings, one third of the historic complex (188,000 sq. ft. of the total 480,000 sq. ft), and 42 acres of grounds. The mixed use campus will start with a core set of integrated uses - an Architecture Center to highlight the architecture of Buffalo and the region, a Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau Visitor Center or other comparable visitor’s center, hotel and hospitality, conference center/event space— in the iconic towers administration building #45 and two flanking former wards #44 and #10. A new shared entrance to the complex will be constructed to address contemporary safety and building codes, provide vertical circulation, and accommodate large groups of visitors. The existing historic entry will remain as a functional entry.

- Building stabilization efforts beyond initial emergency repairs already authorized will be undertaken across the entire complex to prevent further deterioration and “mothball” the buildings not occupied in the first phases. This stabilization includes removing hazardous materials, repairing wooden floors, removing debris, providing water and electric services, patching loose plaster, repairing and repointing exterior masonry, repairing and replacing roofs, rebuilding masonry openings, and abating and cleaning.
- Improvements to the landscape and site circulation will create a more unified design through the incremental relocation of existing surface parking, reviving a landscape of Olmstedian character, removal of unnecessary roads and a site-wide vehicular and pedestrian circulation system. New circulation systems, utility services, lighting, service drives, walks, and plantings would prepare the infrastructure necessary to facilitate access. Parking will be addressed by employing a strategy of well landscaped, dispersed surface parking lots and parallel parking along drives.

Three additional phases outlined in the ROC Master Plan (i.e., “Expanded Core Project”, “Full Reuse of all Historically Significant Structures”, and “Development Landholding” Phases) and involves reuse activities that will take place over a 20-year period depending on market conditions and as improvements to on-site capacity are realized. Proposed uses include: academic instructional/administrative space; residential uses focused on audiences such as artists, academic-related, and seniors; and offices associated with arts and culture uses.

The primary purposes of the proposed Project are to redevelop a blighted area of the City which will (i) rehabilitate the historic Richardson-designed buildings for a mix of public and private uses, (ii) rehabilitate the landscape and improve site circulation, access and parking, (iii) create a place for architectural, educational, cultural, residential, hospitality, and recreational activities for the benefit of the residents of and visitors to the surrounding community, the Museum District, the Elmwood Village, and the entire Buffalo Niagara Region, (iv) create a campus that will succeed economically, and (v) create an environmentally sound Richardson Olmsted Complex.

## II. Project Location

The Project is located on approximately 42 acres of vacant, substandard and underutilized land in the northwest portion of Buffalo, New York. The historic complex is comprised of 480,000 square feet of the historic buildings within the 42 acres. The site is part of the 91 acres of land that is currently owned by the State of New York and comprised of the original Richardson-designed buildings and Olmsted-designed grounds and the newer Buffalo Psychiatric Center (“BPC”). The Project boundaries are within the 91-acre site, a city block generally bounded:

- On the north by Rockwell Road;
- On the west by Rees Street;
- On the south by Forest Avenue; and
- On the east by Elmwood Avenue.

The remaining 48 acres include approximately 40 acres used by New York State Office of Mental Health (“OMH”) primarily for the BPC to carry out its mission of services to adults with

mental illness, approximately 3 acres used by BSC as its maintenance facility, and 5 acres dedicated to the Burchfield Penney Art Center.

### III. Environment Review

The Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (“DGEIS”) for the Project was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (“SEQRA”) by Parsons Brinckerhoff (RCC’s consultant) and its various sub-consultants. On December 16, 2010, the ESDC Board of Directors, acting as Lead Agency for the environmental review, accepted the DGEIS and issued it for public review, concurrent with the Board’s adoption of the General Project Plan. A public hearing to consider both the General Project Plan and the DGEIS was held on January 6, 2011 and written comments were accepted by ESDC until January 17, 2011.

The next step in the SEQRA process is to issue a Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (“FGEIS”). The FGEIS must include copies or a summary of all substantive comments received during the public comment period and the Lead Agency’s response to the comments. The FGEIS is also required to incorporate revisions or supplements to the DGEIS. Upon issuance of the FGEIS, a Notice of Completion must be prepared, filed, distributed, and published as required by SEQRA. The FGEIS will be distributed to all interested agencies and made available to the public.

Staff believes that the FGEIS is satisfactory with respect to its scope, content and adequacy for purposes of SEQRA and the implementing regulations of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Once accepted by the Board of Directors of ESDC, staff will issue a Notice of Completion (“NOC”) and undertake to file and circulate the NOC and FGEIS as required by SEQRA. Circulation of the NOC and FGEIS affords an opportunity for the public and involved interested parties to consider the FGEIS for a statutorily required minimum period of 10 days prior to the issuing findings by ESDC. A copy of the complete FGEIS has been submitted to the Directors under a separate cover.

After the 10-day period, final written findings may be issued by ESDC, which will document the Corporation’s considerations of all of the relevant environmental impacts presented in the FGEIS and the balancing of the impacts with social, economic, and other essential considerations.

### IV. Recommendation:

Based upon the foregoing, the Directors are requested to: 1) authorize issuance of the FGEIS as adequate; 2) authorize the issuance of a Notice of Completion as required under SEQRA; and 3) take all related actions.

### Attachments

Resolution

March 23, 2011

Buffalo (Erie County) - Richardson Olmsted Complex – Issuance of the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement

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RESOLVED, that the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (“FGEIS”) for the Richardson Olmsted Complex Project, as presented at this meeting, a copy of which is hereby ordered filed with the records of the Corporation, is satisfactory with respect to its scope, content, and adequacy for purposes of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (“SEQRA”) and the implementing regulations of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and it is hereby issued by the Corporation for the purposes of commencing public review; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Corporation is hereby authorized to publish, circulate and file the accepted FGEIS in the manner required by SEQRA and the implementing regulations of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer or his designee(s), be and the same hereby is, authorized in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation to take such actions as may be considered necessary or appropriate to comply with the requirements of SEQRA, including without limitation, the issuing of a notice of completion, the providing, filing or making available of copies of the FGEIS in accordance with SEQRA, the implementing regulations of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, other applicable law, and the making of a report or reports to the Directors on such activities.

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