



PHOTO BY JAMES CARBONE

LAB DEVELOPMENT



Efforts to turn Tesla's base into museum, living space

Mark Baisch seeks to build apartments for seniors on 4.5 acres of Nikola Tesla's Shoreham lab property and give a nonprofit the rest. Below, a radio tower erected by Tesla that was dismantled about 1917.

BY PATRICK WHITTLE
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The long-awaited reinvention of physicist Nikola Tesla's Shoreham laboratory as a science museum is closer to reality, as a private developer has expressed interest in purchasing the 16-acre site.

The 1903 Wardencllyffe lab, where the Serbian-American inventor researched wireless telegraphy and transmission, has been wracked with contamination for decades and closed for nearly 25 years.

But the lab is the only standing monument to Tesla's work, and advocates who have pushed for its preservation as a museum since the mid-1990s say it is important because it was designed by early 20th-century architect Stanford White, known for some of the country's most celebrated structures.

Enter Mark Baisch, a Rocky Point real estate developer who is working with the property's owner, Belgium-based imaging giant Agfa-Gevaert, on a potential purchase. Agfa-Gevaert is asking \$1.6 million for the site,

which includes several other buildings, for a total of 140,000 square feet, said a real estate agent close to the sale.

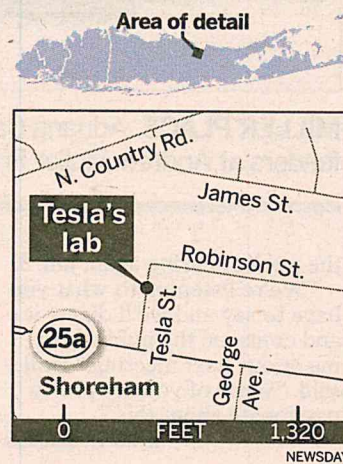
Baisch wants to develop about 50 apartments for seniors on 4.5 acres of the property and donate the rest to Tesla Science Center at Wardencllyffe, the nonprofit organization that wants to open the museum.

"If everybody follows through on what we've talked about, it works," Baisch said. "It's the lowest impact, highest return on that property."

Baisch said his biggest concern is the environmental health of the property, and that he wants the state Department of Environmental Conservation to sign off on the site before he commits to a purchase.

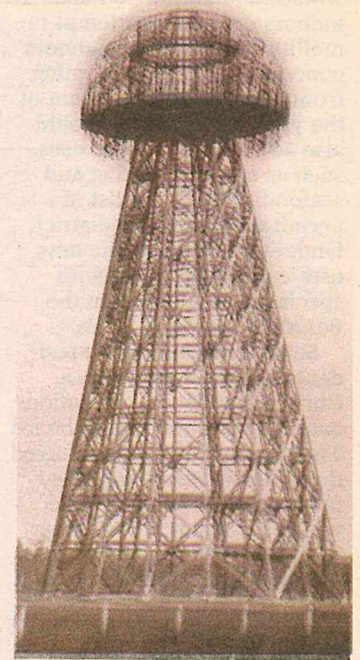
The DEC's assessment of the property, which has been through millions of dollars in remediation, should be coming soon, agency sources said.

Tesla lost the property in 1915 as he struggled with mounting debt, and the property grew into a photochemical plant. Agfa-Gevaert bought it about 40 years ago and set about its cleanup.



Jane Alcorn, president of Tesla Science Center, said the nonprofit wants to use the property for a science museum, public meeting space and working laboratory. The development of the science center could cost millions of dollars, and the group is reaching out to donors to make it possible, she said. "What better space for a science museum in this community than a former scientist's laboratory?" Alcorn said.

Brookhaven Supervisor Mark



Lesko, whose town secured a \$400,000 state matching grant for the project in 2010, said a successful museum could become an "international destination."

The state will also provide a \$850,000 grant to Tesla Science Center once the property is in the nonprofit's hands, officials said.

Town Councilman Jane Bonner, who represents the area, agreed. "It has been a vision for a number of years for hundreds of residents," Bonner said.