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## Army Pays Middletown \$2M For Cucia Park, Awards Building Contract To KBE Ventures

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MIDDLETOWN —

The U.S. Army has paid the city \$2 million to buy Louis F. Cucia Park, a former industrial site that will house the Army Reserve's new military training center.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which will oversee the project, has awarded KBE Ventures a \$51.5 million contract and authorized the company to begin work on the 42-acre Smith Street parcel, said Ken Beyer, a Corps spokesman.

KBE Ventures — a partnership between Farmington-based KBE Building Corp. and Derita Construction Co. of Middletown — will build a 164,000-square-foot training facility, 35,000-square-foot maintenance shop and 3,890-square-foot storage building. The campus is expected to open in June 2011 and serve 100 full-time employees and up to 450 Army Reserve and National Guard soldiers during drill weekends.

The Corps is building the training center because several of its Connecticut facilities are scheduled to be closed, the result of the 2005 recommendations of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission.

The Corps had considered two other sites: a 125-acre, environmentally sensitive parcel off Boardman Lane — whose selection Attorney General Richard Blumenthal had vowed to fight — and the 35-acre Bysiewicz Industrial Park on Middle Street.

The Corps chose Cucia Park after the city reached an agreement with Ted Bysiewicz — the industrial park's owner — in which the city would buy three lots from Bysiewicz at market value, rendering the remaining land too small for the Army's needs. The city wanted to block the Army from buying the site because its tax-exempt training center would have deprived the city of tax revenue from as many as 11 new commercial tenants on Bysiewicz's land. Bysiewicz has agreed to continue to market his parcel for private sale and return the city's money after finding another buyer.

Mayor Sebastian Giuliano said Thursday the city has set aside \$450,000 for the pending Bysiewicz purchase. The Corps submitted its building plans to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and the state Department of Environmental Protection, said Bob DeSista, chief of the Corp's New England permit branch.

The Corps, which has a regulatory division, has issued a permit for the project under the federal Clean Water Act, which requires that construction plans minimize any damage to wetlands. Construction will destroy about 1.5 acres of wetlands at Cucia Park. To compensate, the Army plans to buy a 52-acre parcel off Boardman Lane, which also contains wetlands, and protect it against development, DeSista said.

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