



Pfizer holds ‘eco restoration’ at Upjohn site

Published: October 6, 2014 | Last Modified: October 8, 2014 11:25AM

By Ken Liebeskind The North Haven Citizen

The “eco restoration” event that took place Monday at the former Upjohn Company site on Stiles Lane saw everyone from U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal to First Selectman Mike Freda and North Haven Citizens Advisory member Miriam Brody place shovels into the ground around plantings on the east side of the site that has been declared nearly complete.

The ceremonial planting was the conclusion of an event that celebrated Pfizer’s role in restoring the site contaminated by chemicals used by Upjohn and other companies prior to 1993 when all manufacturing ceased and the Environmental Protection Agency began investigating the property for environmental damage caused by the chemicals.

Pfizer director of engineering Russ Downey moderated the event that, he said, expressed Pfizer’s interest in restoring the site for beneficial use. “We’ve come a long way and the east side is near completion. We still have a significant amount of work to do to establish an ecological presence on the banks of the Quinnipiac River.”

Deborah Szaro, an EPA administrator, said, “There are few good neighbors left but Pfizer is one of them. The company put up \$152 million to invest in a site they acquired but didn’t contaminate. They are restoring 60 acres, 17 for economic development.”

The east side of the site is largely for public use and is being restored as an ecological preserve. An open space and ecological habitat will be created on the banks of the river and an interpretative trail will be built to allow school and community groups to study the ecosystem. Freda called the site “an ecological wonderland” also noting that the west side will provide room for commercial development. “North Haven is poised for growth and this property is the cornerstone for future development,” he said.

Blumenthal views the site as a harbinger of things to come for North Haven and the rest of the country. “I want to praise Pfizer and the town of North Haven for their perseverance on this issue, which is a really teachable moment for the entire country. What happened here is a big deal for North Haven and the entire country,” he said.

Chaz Cilitri, Pfizer’s vice president of global engineering, said the site was part of the company’s “green journey” of environmental enhancements. “North Haven will see an aesthetic improvement along with commercial opportunities for economic development,” he said.

Hugh Davis, a member of the North Haven Citizens Advisory, which formed in 1995 and has met regularly to discuss the site, said, “Pfizer came in with the right attitude and reached out to us for advice and direction, and took it to heart. It was a collaborative effort. It’s wonderful for the town because it will bring the site back to the ecology of the area before the first chemical plant was built.”