

## **Netflix rumored move to Fort Monmouth? Here is what Gov. Murphy has to say**

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OCEANPORT - Gov. Phil Murphy would not confirm rumors that Netflix is eyeing a move to Fort Monmouth. But neither would he deny them.

The Two River Times, using anonymous sources, reported last month that the streaming TV service and film production company responded to Murphy's recent incentive-based sales pitch to film and entertainment industries based in Georgia to relocate to New Jersey. The story didn't say what the response was.

Murphy, who was in Toms River Friday, refused to tip his hand on any potential deal. "No news of that," Murphy said when asked about the prospect of the fort landing Netflix.

"Fort Monmouth is an incredibly important opportunity for us as a state and getting the fort into the best shape possible is something that we care deeply about. I'll leave it at that, but we are excited about the fort and its future and generally excited about our film, television and digital future," Murphy said.

Meanwhile, the comments come just after fort development officials dropped plans to sell its 80-acre "jewel" of land for homes and stores in favor of a much larger "Mega Parcel."

Murphy scored headlines in March when he sent a letter to major production companies, including Walt Disney Co., Warner Bros. and Netflix, asking them to consider leaving Georgia in the aftermath of the state's new voter law and film in New Jersey instead.

Along with the social issues, Murphy offered the companies competitive tax breaks as part of a \$14.5 billion economic incentive package that "makes the Garden State just as competitive as Georgia to attract film and television production businesses," Murphy wrote in the letter.

Bruce Steadman, executive director of the Fort Monmouth Economic Revitalization Authority, or FMERA, likewise declined to comment. Netflix did not return a request for comment.

On July 21, FMERA, the state agency redeveloping the former U.S. Army base, created a new 289-acre "Mega Parcel" on land that lies in parts of Eatontown and Oceanport. FMERA said it's open to several industries purchasing the site, including film and digital, but also life sciences, information and high tech, clean energy and the food and beverage industry.

Steadman said they haven't opened the parcel to public bids, yet. Typically, one purchaser is selected for a Fort Monmouth parcel. Steadman did not comment when asked if the authority would be willing to divide the parcel between multiple buyers.

John Boyd, a corporate site selection specialist and principal of The Boyd Co. Inc. said Fort Monmouth would be a perfect fit for Netflix.

"(New Jersey) is a sharp night-and-day cosmopolitan contrast to other current Netflix locations in New Mexico and Georgia. Being located just minutes away from New York City — home to Broadway, the media, the arts, Madison Avenue advertising, Wall Street financing and major league sports are all synergies that a Fort Monmouth location brings to the table for Netflix."

Boyd said Netflix also has the financial capability to purchase the Mega Parcel, which will require the removal of many defunct buildings and utility infrastructure upgrades.

Netflix's studio in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is 300 acres, for some perspective.

FMERA tried several times to sell a major piece of what is now part of the Mega Parcel, called Parcel B. It was an 89-acre tract located at the fort's former Main Gate in Eatontown.

FMERA shopped it as a mixed-use neighborhood village, with integrated residential, retail, commercial uses among public spaces and amenities. The plan called for 302 residential units, 20% of which would be reserved for affordable, and low to moderate-income housing.

In the last four years though, two developers, Paramount Realty and Lennar Monmouth Developers, successfully bid on the property but then each walked away without closing on it. Both developers backed out over uncertainty in the retail marketplace.

FMERA has taken Parcel B, and several other developmental districts, and wrapped them into the single 289-acre Mega Parcel. The new plan still permits residential and retail uses, but those uses are no longer a requirement.

The parcels contain former residential, administrative, research and development buildings, warehouses and workshops, many of which will need to come down.

Oceanport Mayor Jay Coffey, who's also an attorney for the city of Bayonne, has seen film studios take advantage of former U.S. military infrastructure before. "Oz," an HBO prison drama, was shot at a warehouse at the former Military Ocean Terminal in Bayonne.

Still, Coffey said it's a guessing game as to what companies are going to submit a proposal to buy the site when the bidding starts. "Anybody can come in and bid on it," Coffey said.

Eatontown Mayor Anthony Talerico Jr. said the Mega Parcel's multitude of uses gives the site "flexibility" to attract a broader range of potential developers. He declined to comment on Netflix's plans.