

Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation
95 Perry Street, Suite 500
Buffalo, NY 14203-3030

Dear Mr. Ranalli:

League of Women Voters Buffalo-Niagara members attended the open house offered by the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) on November 19th, held at the KeyBank Center in downtown Buffalo. This letter offers comments from the LWVBN as a whole, in accordance with the League position on the Buffalo waterfront.

We were overwhelmed by presentations and displays offered by the consultants who responded to the Request for Proposals offered by the ECHDC this past January. Some of us submitted comments on the spot; others planned to submit individual comments at the website: outerharborbuffalo.com/accessandactivation.

The various development projects offered by the consultants do show better sensitivity to the ecological importance of the Outer Harbor. Space is set aside for meadows and overlook locations are recognized. The sand dunes are protected. Attention is given to water habitat for fish spawning. However greater attention must be given to the reality that the whole of the Outer Harbor lands is contaminated landfill and must be respected as a brownfield, much of which must not be disturbed. The first priority should be to leave the soil intact and then to let the spaces evolve to benefit the natural environment.

As for the marina area opposite Times Beach, we are encouraged by the various proposals to bring the public in contact with the Connecting Terminal grain silos. This fits with our LWVBN waterfront principle, to document and preserve the significant industrial history of the Outer Harbor. However, any changes in the marina area should preserve all the boating docks and facilities currently at the site, as an appropriate and water-based commercial use.

As for Terminal B, we question the intent to demolish that structure, which does witness to the commercial history of the site. The suggestion to install a BMX racing oval inside the building violates the water-dependent principle for commercial development on the Outer Harbor. Furthermore, the ECHDC should determine the impact on water and shoreline if the pilings that support Terminal B are removed.

Overall, the work of the consultants presented to the public on 11-19-18 followed precisely the Request for Proposals offered by the ECHDC. The result is a plethora of well-intended designs to induce more activity by the public at the Outer Harbor and does not reflect a master plan adopted with adequate public participation. The public will be better served when the ECHDC adopts such a master plan.

Sincerely,

