

ANOTHER VOICE ARTICLE

The League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara (LWVBN) commends the report, “Buffalo’s Outer Harbor: the Right Place for a World-Class Park,” which was presented to the media on September 23 by the Partnership for the Public Good (PPG), a coalition of more than 200 organizations. The report provides history and uses of the Outer Harbor and makes important recommendations for future uses. You can download the report at www.ppgbuffalo.org.

LWVBN believes parkland is the best use of the Outer Harbor. We believe future park development should be water related and vetted by a transparent public participation process. Recreation could include fishing, boating, birding, hiking, and cross-country skiing. Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) has proposed and is implementing various amenities that support such activities.

The Outer Harbor is a brownfield that includes documented industrial and urban wastes, along with illicit dumps. Some remediation has occurred, enabling safe recreation uses. Due to severe contamination issues, two Outer Harbor areas require ECHDC to monitor, maintain and report to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. One area is the trail along the lake’s edge. The other is the so-called Radio Tower Area located near the south end of the new elevated bike trail. Restrictive signage is required at the Radio Tower Area.

Some of the recent discussion about the future of the Skyway includes references to the Outer Harbor, with attendant development. LWVBN insists that there be no permanent residential or commercial development at the Outer Harbor, as such development would constitute urban sprawl. Sprawl takes resources away from existing city neighborhoods that need improvements. Several years ago LWVBN documented the high costs of sprawl in Erie County. You can find our report, “At Taxpayers’ Expense,” at our website: www.lwvbn.org.

LWVBN is proud of the recent designation of the Outer Harbor and Niagara River area as a “Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.” This prestigious designation rates the importance of the Outer Harbor-Niagara River area on a par with other designated areas across the country, including the Everglades, Chesapeake Bay Estuary, and San Francisco Bay. Therefore our community has a responsibility to protect this Ramsar area from threats that destroy wetlands which play a role in mediating severe weather. As recommended by the report cited above, we urge New York State to adopt the whole of the Outer Harbor as part of the state park system.

Gladys Gifford

League of Women Voters of Buffalo/Niagara, Waterfront Chair