

# Buchheit kills Queen City Landing project



*A rendering of the revised Queen City Landing project is shown from the water. (Courtesy of Queen City Landing)*

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**By Jonathan D. Epstein**

*Published Fri, Mar 20, 2020 | Updated Fri, Mar 20, 2020*

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Developer Gerald Buchheit has pulled the plug on his Queen City Landing project on the Outer Harbor, citing a financial gap that he was unable to bridge without help from the city.

The Orchard Park developer has been in talks with city officials for several weeks about potential assistance for the \$180 million project, including a "project incremental financing" concept where reduced property tax payments could have

been used to pay for infrastructure or other components of the venture. But those talks led nowhere.

“There comes a point where the economic realities of a bold venture like Queen City Landing and the political realities of what is needed to make the project viable need to align with one another,” Buchheit said.

“Unfortunately, we are unable to bring those various components together,” he added. “We are simply unable to bridge a significant gap in order to deliver our plans for Queen City Landing as envisioned.”

Now, with the city largely shut down and attention focused on fighting the Covid-19 outbreak, it made no sense to keep going, said project spokesman Phil Pantano.

"It really comes down to finances," Pantano said. "A project like that doesn't fit easily into any box, when you consider the support that building projects get or are eligible for. And with everything going on now, it's certainly unreasonable to think any meaningful progress is going to be made, and he's got other business considerations."

As a result, Buchheit said, the planning for the ambitious waterfront project "has been suspended indefinitely" and the project will "no longer proceed through the City of Buffalo review process as scheduled."

Buchheit did not say what would happen with the property, but he "has no specific plans for development at the site at this point in time."

“The site is private property and will remain so,” he said. “I haven’t decided what the future holds.”

Buchheit bought the 20-acre peninsula property – formerly the Freezer Queen site – in 2008, and unveiled plans for a 23-story, glass-walled residential tower in 2016. The project eventually received city approval over vocal environmental and community opposition, but was stalled for more than two years by continued litigation against it.

He came back a few months ago with a revised plan for a 20-story tower, with a mixture of apartments, restaurants and storefronts, and later added plans for further development on the rest of the site – including two six-story buildings with more apartments and a cluster of three-story townhouses at the western edge, as well as 2.5 acres of green space and 4,100 feet of public trails.

But while the project had received interest from more than 200 potential tenants, it still faced significant resistance from the same opponents.

**Story topics:** Gerald Buchheit/ jonathan d. epstein/ Queen City Landing

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