

OUR Outer Harbor

For Immediate Release

November 9, 2021

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Press Conference Today, 12:15 pm Our Outer Harbor Coalition Calls on Governor to Stop Plans for Amphitheater

Where: Lakeside Bike Park, 825 Fuhrmann Boulevard, Buffalo, NY 14203

When: 12:15 pm, November 9

Who: Members of the Our Outer Harbor Coalition, including Sam Magavern, senior policy fellow, Partnership for the Public Good

What: Our Outer Harbor Coalition calls on Governor Hochul to

- Halt implementation of the General Project Plan (GPP) for Buffalo's Outer Harbor, especially plans for an amphitheater;
- Order a full environmental review of the Plan, as required by state law;
- Being work to transfer all the State-owned land on the Outer Harbor to State Parks and create a world-class park.

Why:

- Opposition to the GPP is wide and deep. Of 242 public comments on the Plan, just 3% supported it. The other 97% were critical – because it does not reflect the public's repeated calls for a beautiful, Olmstedian, naturally-regenerative park. Three groups with broad constituencies (League of Women Voters of Buffalo-Niagara, WNY Environmental Alliance, and 21st Century Park on the Outer Harbor) have sued over the ECHDC's failure to do a full environmental review and other legal violations.
- ECHDC's plan for an 8,000 person event facility on the Outer Harbor is misguided for many reasons:
 - **Destructive.** The amphitheater plan involves destroying a large number of mature trees in a location where trees remain scarce. It replaces vegetation with pavement and requires large-scale use of pesticides to protect visitors from mosquitoes and ticks. It turns a meadow into an overflow parking lot for 750 cars. It will produce noise, glare and lights that impact breeding and migratory birds who rely on this critical coastal habitat.
 - **Misplaced.** Public waterfront land is a rare and precious thing. As stated in Buffalo's Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, it should be used for water-dependent uses. A concert venue has no relationship to water. Furthermore, the Outer Harbor lacks public transit accessibility and the

infrastructure for large amounts of traffic and crowds. It is subject to frequent flooding and storm damage, which are increasing in frequency and severity due to climate change.

- **Inaccessible and inequitable.** It appears that the ECHDC plans to use the amphitheater to generate revenue through expensive ticketed events (tickets for ECHDC's "drive-in" concert event this summer started at \$165). Buffalo is an under-parked city with one of the highest poverty rates in the nation; what it needs is free, healthy access to nature and recreation; not another expensive concert venue.
- **Redundant.** An Outer Harbor venue will not grow our economic pie; it will simply compete with existing venues such as Artpark, many of which struggle to survive. Plans for Centennial Park also include an outdoor event space, in a much more apt location, accessible to public transit and close to businesses.

Environmental Review

Lake Erie is one of the most important environmental assets in the world, and the Outer Harbor is a critical habitat. As Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper stated in its letter opposing a special use permit for the amphitheater, "We cannot emphasize enough the importance of the Outer Harbor, how it supports critical habitat and ecosystems, the role it plays in coastal resiliency, and the protection it affords the City of Buffalo's lakefront." It is shocking that the ECHDC did not do a full environmental with its GPP - a plan that involves many major alterations to a heavily-polluted, fragile, and environmentally critical site. The Outer Harbor is part of a Globally Significant Bird and Pollinator Habitat and includes state-designated Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitats. The amphitheater plan alone - which involves cutting down many mature trees, continually applying pesticides, and bringing thousands of vehicles to the Outer Harbor - should be enough to trigger a full review.

A State Park

Over 7,000 people have signed the petition calling for a state park on the Outer Harbor. We set forth the reasons for a park in our 2019 report, "[Buffalo's Outer Harbor: the Right Place for a World-Class Park.](#)" Over the last year, many people have discovered the beauty of Buffalo's Outer Harbor. As the pandemic made healthy recreation harder to find, thousands flocked to the waterfront to walk, bike, boat, picnic, or watch a sunset. It is an amazing spot - over 200 bird species, animals like fox and mink, rare plants like spotted bee balm, and historic structures like the grain elevators - all within minutes of downtown Buffalo.

The City of Buffalo is severely "under-parked," with only 7 percent of its land used for public parks (New York City, by contrast, is 20 percent park). People of color and people with low incomes, in particular, suffer from this lack of access to recreation and natural beauty. A state park would:

- Permanently protect the site's natural and historic assets;
- Ensure long-term funding and expert stewardship;
- Maximize the potential of the site for its best and most appropriate uses: ecological protection, historic preservation, and nature-based recreation;

- Promote economic development by drawing more companies, new residents, and tourists to Buffalo, attracted by an Olmstedian park in one of the most remarkable locations on the entire Great Lakes.

The Our Outer Harbor Coalition unites many groups and individuals dedicated to protecting and enhancing one of Western New York's greatest assets. Members include 21st Century Park on the Outer Harbor, WNY Environmental Alliance, Sierra Club, League of Women Voters Buffalo-Niagara, and Partnership for the Public Good.