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## **Buffalo Outer Harbor's Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper Projects Moving Forward**

*ECHDC today approved a consulting contract for architectural and engineering services on the Outer Harbor*

*ECHDC Board also Authorizes Acquisition 14.2 acres of Outer Harbor Land from NYPA*

The Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) Board of Directors met today and approved a \$1.56 million contract with Trowbridge Wolf Michaels Landscape Architects LLP (TWLA) for architectural and engineer services on the Outer Harbor that will enhance access and facilitate greater public use and enjoyment of Buffalo's waterfront. TWLA, a New York State certified women-owned business enterprise (WBE), will complete detailed environmental studies, structural and building surveys and architectural and engineering design services in order to prepare a construction bid package that is expected in 2017.

"The improvements that TWLA will be planning build on prior incremental improvements at the Outer Harbor using the Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper approach," **said ECHDC President Robert Gioia.** "The project will fill in existing access gaps, expand public usage of our waterfront and provide additional activities that will increase visitation to the Outer Harbor."

In November 2015, the ECHDC Board approved the Buffalo Outer Harbor Access & Activation Civic Project and today's approval marks the first steps toward making this project a reality. The project is funded with \$5 million from the Buffalo Billion initiative. It will consist of several capital improvements and investments which will allow for increased public access and activation of the Outer Harbor:

- **Improvement 1:** Create Visitor Center/Hub at Bell Slip with a modular installation, including pedestrian and bicycle amenities (i.e., bike racks, benches, trash cans, Adirondack chairs, etc.) to take advantage of the existing parking lot and views. Install electric service and/or renewable energy source for power requirements.

- **Improvement 2:** Complete bike path, including railing, pedestrian and bicycle amenities (i.e., bike racks, benches, trash cans, Adirondack chairs, etc.) along Terminals A & B property, thereby completing the southern end of the Greenbelt loop. The northern end of the Greenbelt loop was completed in July 2015.
- **Improvement 3:** Redevelop the Michigan Pier into a multi-use flex space and build on the success of Wilkeson Pointe. Clear, cap, and re-grade the approximate eighth-acre site to accommodate Adult Playground, Workout Area, Ropes Course, foot/bicycle paths (doubling as x-country ski trails), cantilevered trail section (doubling as fishing pier), install railing and perimeter walkway along entire edge (doubling as setback), deck, beach, beer garden area, and adult games zone (i.e., horse shoes, bocce courts, pétanque, shuffleboard, volleyball, etc.). Install electric service and/or renewable energy source for power requirements. Include recreational fields, pollinator fields, seasonal floating docks, safety ladders and life rings.
- **Improvement 4:** Develop two “overlook” locations adjacent the Bell Slip. Design shall be such that birding, painting, photography, and astronomy (publicly desired activities) could occur at these locations.
- **Improvement 5:** Install comprehensive signage package from Gallagher Beach to Lighthouse based on the Erie County Shoreline Standards, including ancillary pedestrian and bicycle amenities (i.e., bike racks, benches, etc.) and landscaping features. Highlight key public locations as well as distances. Trail signage will be placed along NY Route 5 multi-use pathway (western side only) and the “Greenbelt” pathway along the Lake Erie edge, for a total of approximately four miles of signed trails.
- **Improvement 6:** Develop a mountain bike course(s) within a six-acre area bounded by the Bell Slip, Lake Erie and Fuhrman Blvd. Given the site’s features and proximity to existing paved pathways, a series of unpaved trails (each less than five miles in length) and a pump track would be constructed to take advantage of the mature trees and small gently-rolling hills.

TWLA’s team also includes Ravi Engineering and Land Surveying (Minority Business Enterprise), WSP/Parsons Brinkerhoff, the LiRo Group, Biohabitats, Touloukian&Touloukian, and RJR Engineering (Service Disabled Veteran Owned and Small Business). TWLA is well suited for this project, having completed the “nodal improvements” along Fuhrmann Boulevard and the recent improvements at Buffalo Harbor State Park. In addition to TWLA’s experience, nearly all sub-consultants on the team have worked on projects for ECHDC and/or the New York Power Authority (NYPA) along Buffalo’s waterfront.

The goals/objectives of the project are directly connected with ECHDC’s guiding principles, including improving seasonal, recreational and tourist access, use and enjoyment of the Outer Harbor; enhancing pedestrian and bicycle access along the Outer Harbor, as well as connecting segments of the existing regional trails network along the Lake Erie waterfront; and minimize adverse impacts on communities and the environment by avoiding an inequitable distribution of impacts and maintaining neighborhood and community cohesion.

The ECHDC Board also authorized the acquisition of 14.2 acres of land on the Outer Harbor owned by the New York Power Authority (NYPA). The property includes the Connecting Terminal grain elevator that is lighted by ECHDC as an attraction, the Queen City Bike Ferry landing and a recreation marina that is operated by a private entity, Brand-On First Buffalo Marina, Inc. under contract with NYPA. As NYPA no longer has use for the property, the transfer will place ownership of the property in control of the agency responsible for waterfront development and will further bolster ECHDC's efforts to revitalize the Inner and Outer Harbors. Also, as ECHDC already has a presence on the property via permits with NYPA, namely to operate the bike ferry stop and illumination of the Connecting Terminal grain elevator, ownership of the site will make it easier for ECHDC to operate and maintain its current facilities. ECHDC will acquire the property from NYPA for \$1. Also as part of the transaction, ECHDC will accept assignment of the Brand-On agreement and will also acquire the equipment owned by NYPA for \$1 that is used by Brand-On for operation of the site. Currently, the Brand-On agreement expires in February 2017. It is expected that ECHDC will issue a request for proposals seeking an operator to continue the operations and maintenance of the property in accordance with NYPA's past practices.

"NYPA has played an integral role in the transformation of the Outer Harbor and today's vote affirms our commitment to ensure it becomes one of the jewels of the Queen City," **said Gil C. Quiniones, NYPA president and CEO.** "We also expect that this land transfer will allow for the uninterrupted operation of the First Buffalo Marina, at a time when more recreational boats are coming downtown."

Since ECHDC took possession of 340 acres on the Outer Harbor from the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) in May 2014, there has been a dramatic transformation of the parcel. The improvements include:

- Establishment of the City of Buffalo's first state park, Buffalo Harbor State Park.
- Creation of a state-of-the-art playground and the construction of several recreational pavilions.
- Dramatic landscaping enhancements.
- Later this month, the Outer Harbor Break Wall at Buffalo Harbor State Park will be unveiled as a pedestrian walkway. It will feature paved surfaces, fishing access, lighting, shade structures and park furnishings, such as benches and trash receptacles.
- Extension of the Greenbelt Public Pathway.
- Hiring of the Outer Harbor Management Group (OHMG), which has brought numerous popular events to the Outer Harbor, as well introduced food and beverage operations, as well as bike and kayak rentals.
- Introduction of the extremely popular and successful Queen City Bike Ferry.
- Creation of a new, much more attractive and customer-friendly ferry landing location which has increased the frequency of trips across the river and reduced wait times.
- Illumination of the Connecting Terminal grain elevator.

In two short years since taking possession of the Outer Harbor, ECHDC has made dramatic improvements, creating a destination that more than 250,000 people enjoyed this summer.

**About Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation**

The ECHDC is governed by a nine-member board consisting of seven voting directors and two non-voting, ex-officio directors. The seven voting directors are recommended by the New York State Governor and are appointed by the New York State Urban Development Corporation d/b/a Empire State Development as sole shareholder of ECHDC. The two nonvoting, ex-officio director positions are held by the Erie County Executive and the City of Buffalo Mayor.

As a subsidiary of Empire State Development, the state's chief economic development agency, the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation supports and promotes the creation of infrastructure and public activities at Canalside, the Ohio Street corridor and the Outer Harbor that is attracting critical mass, private investment and enhance the enjoyment of the waterfront for residents and tourists in Western New York. Its vision is to revitalize Western New York's waterfront and restore economic growth to Buffalo based on the region's legacy of pride, urban significance and natural beauty. For more information on ECHDC, visit [www.eriecanalharbor.com](http://www.eriecanalharbor.com).

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