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ECHDC SELECTS PUBLIC SPACE CONSULTANT

*Biederman Redevelopment Ventures to development a vision and action plan for Aud Block;
Board approves Gallagher Beach Sand Sustainability Study*

The Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) met today and approved the selection of Biederman Redevelopment Ventures (BRV) as its public space consultant. With a contract not to exceed \$253,455, the consultant will expand the Canalside vision and activation plan from the Central Wharf area to the former Memorial Auditorium block. The purpose is to further enhance Canalside as a regional destination, attract a diverse and growing audience, and support the public amenities currently under construction.

“I am pleased that Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, an internationally recognized leader for its innovative work in public spaces, will partner with ECHDC to transform the Aud Block and surrounding area into a vibrant public space that appeals to a wide demographic and enhances the important link between the people of Buffalo and our waterfront,” said ESD Regional President and ECHDC Interim Chair Sam Hoyt. “It is crucial that the area be developed in a visually appealing fashion that activates the space and creates an opportunity for mixed-use development. BRV has the experience to accomplish that.”

BRV was selected based on its knowledge of how to successfully activate public spaces, its experience with similar projects and its ability to translate ideas and public participation into sustainable projects. BRV has extensive experience operating public spaces, including Bryant Park since 1990, Herald and Greeley Square Parks since 1997, and the Boston Commons since 2007. It has been using innovative management techniques and private funding to redevelop parks, streets and neighborhoods in major cities throughout the country for more than two decades.

BRV’s scope of work will include leading a public workshop to solicit ideas from the general public; identifying key issues, opportunities, partners, audiences and technical items (such as availability of power, lighting, ADA access); developing principles and themes that describe each environment, their inter-relationships, as well as the former Aud Block’s connection to Canalside; developing a program plan of activities for Canalside on the Aud Block for 2013; and developing two signature Canalside ideas (e.g., physical amenities, events, festivals, programs) for summer 2013 and winter 2013, among other tasks.

The “Canals and Public Environments” (CPE), a \$20 million investment in public space on the former Aud Block, is an interpretive landscape of water features and site amenities that will help visitors understand the history and character of the former canal district and its significance to the City of Buffalo, New York State and the nation. The CPE contract was awarded by ECHDC on January 9, 2012, with an opening targeted for May 20, 2013. The CPE will provide water features, towpaths, three bridges, and steps that reflect the mid-19th century elements of the site, while gravel paths will invoke the former street pattern through the southern end of the site. These “environments,” along with the lawn areas of future development parcels, are considered the locations to be developed under BR’s project.

“ECHDC has made a commitment to attracting residents and tourists alike to Buffalo’s waterfront,” said ECHDC President Thomas Dee. “Working with BRV, we will revitalize the space to create a welcome environment and sense of place that we all can enjoy. As our city’s greatest asset—the waterfront— is developed, it will continue to attract private investment.”

The board also authorized ECHDC to implement the Gallagher Beach Sand Sustainability Study (GBSSS) on the City of Buffalo’s Outer Harbor. The GBSSS will involve placing sand in three test locations to determine if they become compromised by currents, seiche action (periodic localized water level fluctuations on the Great Lakes) and weather activity. The results of the field test will be used to help determine the next steps in the beach development process. The cost of implementing the study is expected to be approximately \$300,000 and will be paid from proceeds from the New York Power Authority (NYPA) Relicensing Settlement Agreement.

Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation is a subsidiary agency of Empire State Development Corporation whose 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.

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