

OUR Outer Harbor

January 16, 2018

To: Buffalo Common Council
FR: The Outer Harbor Coalition
RE: ECHDC projects for the Outer Harbor area south of Bell Slip

The Outer Harbor Coalition is in general support of the Erie Canal Harbor Development Commission's proposed projects for Outer Harbor lands south of the Bell Slip and adjacent to terminals A and B.

We want to thank the ECHDC for incorporating many of our recommendations into the current plan, including moving the mountain bike trail and visitors center out of the re-naturalizing Bell Slip area; adding habitat restoration elements; repurposing Terminal B to support large public events at this end of the Outer Harbor; and protecting the public from soil contamination.

Overall, we approve this plan, but as we all know, the devil is in the details, so here are one specific and one general recommendation we hope the Council will consider.

- We hope the ECHDC will create a committee, or a venue to include members of the Our Outer Harbor Coalition along with mountain bike trail proponents in discussions moving forward on the mountain bike courses. Many of our members are concerned that they take up too much valuable coastal land compared to the general public's needs, and see potential conflicts between fast bikes and families with children and dogs and other slow walkers. Although the relocation away from the Bell Slip is an improvement, many see this as a limited use that is not water-dependent or water-enhanced, and therefore not consistent with the City's basic principles for its coastal zone.

Other specific points:

- Can the footprint for the mountain bike courses be reduced as a specialized use?
 - Can the multi-purpose bike trail be expanded and also go through wooded areas?
 - Can the proposed tunnel to reduce conflict between pedestrians and bikers be reversed to put the bikers through the tunnel, not the walkers?
 - Can we share in a conversation about other possible points of conflict? We would appreciate reviewing these with ECHDC, their designers and bikers to develop ideas to mitigate conflicts.
- We are at the point now in the Outer Harbor that before any new major development occurs, we need a comprehensive assessment of its vulnerabilities to flooding, high winds, stormwater runoff, and natural disasters including plans for evacuation, shelter, communication and recovery. This is a City responsibility and the ECHDC needs its guidance. The assessment should account especially for extreme winter weather events. Erie County is ranked third highest of all 62 counties in the state for flooding because of its position at the east end of Lake Erie in the fetch of prevailing wind, rain and snow. The Outer Harbor is 60% FEMA floodplain, and that is likely an underestimate given recent flood damages to more developed shorelines. High winds have caused Lake Erie to pile up at our end by as much as 50 feet. The Skyway is a tenuous link in high wind and winter weather, so the assessment should provide a framework for limiting coastal uses appropriately. Having this framework in place will facilitate project planning and review going forward