

Buffalo Waterfront Community Center

www.waterfrontcommunitycenter.org



Making the waterfront, water sports, and our maritime heritage available to all

A PROPOSAL FOR A COMMUNITY CENTER ON THE WATERFRONT WHERE EVERYONE IS WELCOME REGARDLESS OF AGE, PHYSICAL ABILITY OR FINANCIAL MEANS

By

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Buffalo Waterfront Community

Center

Let's imagine something exceptional when planning Buffalo's Outer Harbor development. Imagine a place that is the focus of public boating and water related activities as opposed to the gated and locked harbors only for the use of private boat owners. It's the place that tourists and the general public naturally gravitate to. We envision such a place.



A community center on the waterfront that is a hub of activity, and it serves a vast number of citizens of diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

This would be a waterfront community center that supports and embraces among other things the basic ideas in the LWRP (Local Waterway Revitalization Plan), the federal law that emphasizes precious waterfront land be reserved for uses that require access to the water. Your community center would be a water-enhanced site that enlivens the waterfront, attracts the public with year round projects and activities, promotes water based industry, education, and enterprise, and supports commercial and recreational boating, fishing etc.

There are a number of additional reasons and features of the community center that we envision would make it remarkable;

- It would engage the public with “on the water” sports and recreation rather than the usual land based “passive” activities.
- It would reverse the statistic that over 90% of the population utilizing parts of the outer harbor do not have access to inexpensive/free boating, sailing, kayaking, wind surfing, jet skiing, SCUBA, waterskiing, and other related “on the water” activities (recreational programs that give quality “full” access to the waterfront).
- It has the advantage of being proposed on a site (Wilkeson Point) that is readily usable regarding geography and topography and much of the existing

amenities are useable.

- Effective programming will make it a mecca for diverse populations to participate in a multitude of year round activities.
- The facility and programming would have emphasis on families and children/youths development.
- The program will encourage volunteering both as a way of mentoring and a way to gain access to the boats and programming at little or no cost. Work on a boat-use it for free.
- It would be a destination for tourists attending local, regional, and even world class competitions and events related to water sport recreation and maritime activities.
- It would be inclusive by design with a local board of directors and advisors representing diverse populations and interests.
- Private and corporate rental of the facilities would provide a portion of the income required to sustain the facilities.
- Internships and scholarships would supplement educational initiatives for youth and college age students
- This community center would draft its own plans while drawing from ideas and experiences of other municipal waterfront community centers. There are already a vast number of waterfront community center models to preview. Some 50 cities/communities in the USA have successful waterfront community centers in full operation. **We can do this in Buffalo as well.**



Partnerships

We believe there are a number of groups and organizations that need to be invited and encouraged to be a part of the outer harbor waterfront community center's development. Sea Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, senior groups, elementary schools, high schools, colleges, youth programs, veterans groups, disabled veterans programs, the Olmsted Center for the Visually Impaired, The Association for the Learning Disabled, the 65 member coalition for the disabled, Masten Block Club Coalition, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, active duty military, labor unions, corporate groups etc.

There would be the synergy of cooperation that would strengthen the project and the diverse critical mass formed by collaboration would ensure that the destination would be desirable for all of the general public and tourists. After rigorous publicity about the *Buffalo Waterfront Community Center* potential, applications to utilize the site will be solicited. From the foundation of these interested entities “partnerships” would be formed which in turn will bring a flow of quality programming and establish a platform for volunteers to begin participation.

Governance and Guidance

The business model we propose is essentially the same as most of the successful facilities of this kind around the country i.e. the land and buildings are in public ownership and leased to the not-for-profit operating entity for a nominal amount. The Waterfront Community Center would be built primarily with public funds, and operated by the Great Lakes Water Sport Institute (a 501(c)(3) organization) with a Board of Advisors consisting of representatives from the various entities that partner in the use of the site, with a mission of service to all. The operating and programming costs will be funded by the not-for-profit organization, which has particular expertise in marine and water sport operations and activities, and collaborating organizations as well as income derived from donations, grants, and facility rental which will generate funding to cover the ongoing costs related to staffing, equipment maintenance, repair, utilities, etc. It will be the joint responsibility of the non-profit organization and a “governing” Board of Advisors to put together comprehensive, inclusive projects and activities that have the ability to build in sustainable non-public revenue for the future. The Board would be a diverse and inclusive “working” group that includes representatives from the organizations that utilize the facility.

- WNY educational and religious institutions,
- civic groups representing athletic clubs, seniors, minorities, ethnic and international associations, veterans, the disabled, and more
- coalition of community centers.
- boating and sailing clubs
- fishing clubs
- ecology and environmental interests

There will also be an advisory committees made up of community members who would suggest and provide the programming and services ideas that would be beneficial to diverse populations made up of various local and regional non-profit organizations who will provide guidance about the quality of programs and services.

A review committee of the Board of Advisors will be asked to assess, on an annual basis, programs and services, and to provide guidance as necessary to ensure expertise in facility operation and management.

Sites

Outer Harbor Community Center Program Site



The proposed site for this project is known as Wilkeson Point. It has a number of features unmatched by any other in the region which makes it the most ideal place for a public project of this magnitude. In turn It makes this project the best use of the land from the public standpoint.

- The site has shallow water access making it ideal for small sail boats, paddle boards, kayaking, and training for waterskiing, jet skiing, and SCUBA.
- The site has deep water access making it ideal for larger sailboats with keels, power boats, fishing boats, dive boats, visiting cruisers, tall ships, safety and patrol boats, and water taxis.
- The site is behind the outer harbor break wall and protected from the lake's

rough waves. When teamed with a “wave attenuator”, or a floating break wall, there is additional wave reduction resulting in a safe, appealing, and calm waterfront site.

- The area behind the break wall is large enough to make the site the ideal staging area for hydroplane races, sailboat races, paddle craft events, boat parades, fishing tournaments, and numerous other marine related activities.
- The site is located in an area with sufficient wind to make it ideal for sailing, sail training, and sailboat racing.
- The site is close to downtown, many of the neighborhoods, roads, and public transportation making it easier for the general population, including youth, the disadvantaged, and individuals with disabilities to access the site and participate.
- The site is at the center of the Outer Harbor Development and will serve as a focal point, center of activity, and welcoming center.
- This site will include an appropriate heavily vegetated buffer between it and the Times Beach Nature Preserve.
- Lawn space for tented activities, pond hockey, and outdoor games.
- Parking for 50 cars.
- Outdoor patio facing the water.
- Launch ramp
- 20' x 20' special fishing pond for younger children.
- The site is on the Greenway making it an ideal destination for hikers and bikers.
- This site is open for development and is presently underutilized. Essentially it is available for a “waterfront community center” project.



The Community Center

Community Center building will be built using the latest energy saving design with renewable energy systems that will not only power the building but serve as an operating laboratory to teach and demonstrate the concepts. The layout will include full accommodation so that the aged and physically challenged can participate at all levels. The first level will be for classrooms, meeting rooms, and office space. It can be configured to meet the specific needs of the partnering organizations. There will also be a general public gathering space that can serve as a welcoming area, display area, and information kiosk. We are including in this proposal, a modest but functional office workspace for not-for-profit and volunteer organizations. The first level will include bathroom, shower, and locker room facilities with access both inside and outside to service the outdoor activities.

The second level will feature a large multipurpose room with a spectacular view of the Lake. It will be able to accommodate 150 people in a theatre like setting or 120 people for a formal catered sit down dinner. Outside the glass doors will be a covered veranda offering additional gathering space for receptions, parties, and just hanging out in

suitable weather. Kitchen and service facilities will enable simple meal preparation and presentation and will support catering of more elaborate meals.

Attached to the building will be a high bay workshop area. This shop area will not only serve as the place to maintain and repair the rather large resident fleet of boats and equipment, but will be a teaching lab as well.

Many of the boats and much of the equipment the Community Center relies on is donated (not always in the best condition). The shop will offer the space, equipment, and opportunity for volunteers, mentors, and partnering organizations to teach and learn skills like boatbuilding, small engine repair, painting, rigging and more while maintaining the existing equipment and upgrading the donations. The shop will be situated in such a way that it can be expanded at a later date if there is programming demand.

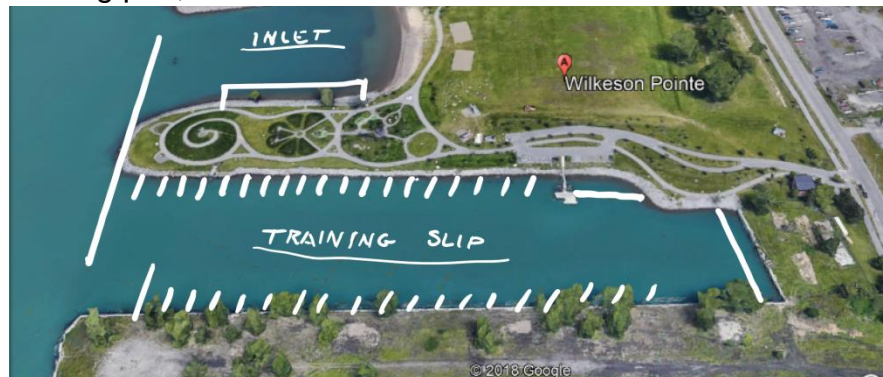
Robert Coles Training Slip

The slip immediately adjacent to Wilkeson Point currently has a kayak launch that is not handicap accessible, a short fishing pier, and a water taxi dock. These facilities will be retained and upgraded.

Consideration would be given to transient boats that would be visiting the potential snack bar. In addition to these amenities, we envision a handicapped accessible dock and slips to handle approximately 70 boats.

Of immediate importance

would be 10 slips for keelboats used for general training and competitive high school/college programs. Additional slips would be used by groups and organizations as well as private vendors to train people interested in sailing and safe boating. In addition, some slips will be available for rent to the general public and thus raise critical dollars for the care and upkeep of the slips and boathouse. The slip will have a wave attenuator to block waves.



The Inlet

The site of the shallow water inlet will be home to the beach boats such as sailing dinghies, canoes, kayaks, paddle boards and the like. The shallow water facilitates launching and especially training. A wave attenuator/dock will keep the water calm and provide an excellent staging area. Along the shore will be a simple shed to store the many kayaks, canoes, boards etc. with a deck so that parents, lifeguards, and instructors can keep an eye on activities. This area will be a focal point for training in canoes, kayaks, rowboats and sailboats. The site will also have four midsize Dragon

boats (large 10 person canoes built on site) for family centered and small group activities.

The Deck

The deck is an observation platform built at the outer most point of the site. It will command the best view of activities in the outer harbor and will serve as the start/finish line for the many races, parades and other activities going on all summer long. It may also be incorporated into the design of the wave attenuators.



Events

Based on a range of events that are taking place at various Community Boating Centers around the country and based on feedback and ideas that we have received from potential partners, some events suggestions are:

- Paddlefest Expo
- Small and large sailboat regattas
- Team sailboat racing
- Hydroplane races
- Canoe – skills training, exhibitions and races
- Kayak Polo Leagues
- Dragon Boat Racing
- Fishing exhibitions and tournaments
- Water ski exhibitions and demonstrations
- Paddleboard exhibitions and races
- Poker run for offshore power boats
- Try SCUBA events
- Open water swimming (Carlie's Crossing)
- Marathon events (swim-bike-run)
- Jet ski skills testing and exhibitions
- Corporate team building events
- Pond hockey league
- Open house events with opportunities for boat rides and "first time" experiences.

Program

Everyone Welcomed and Involved

Buffalo Waterfront Community Center is an umbrella agency. In addition to its

regular programming, it brings together, in one place, many different groups, entrepreneurs, schools, agencies, clubs, and individuals who want to see watersports and maritime activities available to the general public. The Center itself doesn't want to run all these programs, but wants to provide the place and support for those that do. Each sport at the center would have a place in the program. Every sport would be expected to make opportunities available for newcomers to learn about the sport. In some cases it could be formal classes and lessons, while in other cases it could be periodic 'try it' opportunities or *on the job training*. Being a part of the programming would be requisite for each sport.

The facilities will lend themselves to "open" programming or fixed programs such as day camps merit badge programs, licensing training, and accredited courses associated with colleges and school districts.

We hope to offer a wide range of opportunities with something for everyone; from the youngest child just learning to swim, to the disabled veteran wanting to take his family out for a boat ride, to the senior wanting to take his grandson out for a day of fishing. We want to make boating, fishing, and water skiing available to everyone without having to go out and buy a boat. We want someone to be able to try a Jet- ski without having to pay thousands of dollars to buy one. We want a family to be able to come down and learn about Buffalo's rich maritime heritage and ecology, and we want a young person to be able to become a sailor, even though his parents were never on a boat.



Empowering Children and Young Adults

We are especially focused on poor/challenged, and at-risk children and youth. Programs such as area High Schools, regional Navy ROTC programs, BOCES, Sea Scouts, ECC, Junior Achievement and others can be involved in an empowering, inclusive program. The majority of our children do not know the importance of Lake Erie, and many have never even been to their community's waterfront. Thousands of kids have never had the experience of playing on a beach or going out on a boat. We want to give them a safe, supervised, exciting place to spend their time having fun, learning new life skills, meeting new people and being part of a team.



When and wherever possible, children and young adults will be involved in the operation of The *Buffalo Waterfront Community Center*. Some of the young adults may be involved in training programs connected with area tourism, to learn about developing and marketing a positive tourism program. The local high school students can assist with professional fund raising efforts. Emerson High School, BOCES, and ECC students can learn the restaurant area of business operations. Students can maintain boats, and tune outboard engines. Older more experienced youth will become coaches, instructors, and day camp counselors.

Accessibility and accessible programs



The site will be handicapped accessible but beyond that, it is our goal to provide the special equipment and support required to allow those with disabilities to participate in mainstream activities. Many people with disabilities are afforded the freedom of driving their own car because it is adapted to fit their needs.

There is no reason a boat can't be adapted in a similar fashion, and there is no reason a dock can't be constructed to facilitate the transfer from shore to boat. The Outer Harbor Community Center will provide such a safe haven for the handicapped boater as well as provide staff for training and aid if the need arises.

The Outer Harbor Community Center would be very accessible to the public, focused on children/youth, and will consciously reach out to the economically disadvantaged and disabled, through groups and agencies. It is worth repeating that we invite **from all neighborhoods** our seniors, families and especially children.

Programs and Activities A Snapshot

Fishing

- Basic instruction
- Advanced instruction
- Fishing contests for middle school, high school, and college level
- Bass and Walleye competition



- Host regional and national competitions
- Adaptive fishing events
- CHILDRENS POND

Sailing

- Basic instruction
- Keelboat certification
- Cruising instruction
- Racing instruction
- Hosting local, regional, and national regattas
- Adaptive pleasure sailing
- Adaptive racing
- Boat rental
- Chartering



Junior sailing

- Basic sailing K-12
- Junior racing
- High School League racing
- College League racing
- Working site for area yacht club junior programs
- Boat rental



Power Boating

- Basic training
- Power Squadron classes
- USCG training programs. Classroom and on the water
- Coast Guard Auxiliary safety inspections
- Navigation
- Maintenance & repair classes and seminars
- Engine Maintenance & repair



Snorkeling and SCUBA

- Snorkeling instruction
- Underwater trail
- SCUBA instruction
- SCUBA certification
- Advanced SCUBA certification
- Adaptive SCUBA
- SCUBA charters
- SCUBA trips and cruises
- Above ground pool for tourist viewing



Kayak/Canoe

- Basic skills
- Eskimo rolls
- Adaptive Paddling
- Adaptive Canoeing
- Adaptive Surfing
- Dragon canoe –support competition
- Distance Races



Jet Ski

- Basic course
- License course and exam



Water skiing

- Basic skills
- Show skiing
- Slalom competition
- Adaptive skiing
- Introductory Slow-Safe



Ecology and habitat

- Classroom training
- Water sampling programs

- Public displays

Winter activities

- Pond Hockey
- Ice fishing
- Cross country skiing
- Boat building classes
- Training classes
- Organization meetings



Facility rental

- Corporate events
- Trade shows
- Weddings
- Cocktail parties
- Private parties



7. Resource Development

We anticipate the capital costs of developing the site and building will be public sourced. In addition to state and federal sources there is the Greenway, Wilson Foundation, and several other funding sources a project would qualify for.

For operating costs we will need to focus on areas of long-term resource development in order for the Center to be self-sustaining and deliver its programming at the lowest possible cost. :

1. What are the needs of our citizens? How can the Outer Harbor Community Center serve as a resource to develop fundraising dollars, publicity and support?
2. The care and upkeep of the community center.
3. The boats, the docks and other equipment.
4. We would utilize a part-time resource developer to work with our volunteers to build a solid fundraising program. The enhanced development of a range of events to build interest in boating and sailing, conspicuously inviting neighbors to be part of the experience and ensure that all events are well staffed, very secure and well-managed.
5. The center concept is built on the need for experienced partners to bring their programming expertise and to use the centers sites as tools for excellent outcomes. The concept also is focused upon ensuring that individuals and families who cannot afford some activities will be able to participate. Thus, there is a necessity to raise special dollars to enhance programming and to develop scholarship opportunities so that the center is really a place for all to participate.

With the needs that have an identified through the survey asking citizens what interests they have in the areas of boating, fishing and sailing and the fact

that we have observed very little foot traffic in the Wilkinson Point area we will be going to a wide range of faith groups and community organizations, veterans groups, neighborhood groups, seniors, and others to share with them the types of programs that are being offered at community boating centers around the United States, the opportunities that would be available in the Wilkinson Points and the need to encourage a wide range of citizens throughout Erie County to get involved in supporting and utilizing a facility with the wide range of exciting programs, significant community interest and a commitment to invite and involve neighbors from every community.



"just do it for the children"

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A proposal by

Great Lakes Water Sport Institute

A 501(c)(3) not for profit corporation

www.greatlakeswatersportinstitute.org

To make this project a reality we need broad public support.

For more information go to our website or:

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