

The Legacy of Little Boy

Ending Tonawanda's role in the Manhattan Project

Part 5: Redevelopment brightens the future

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N W Record Editor

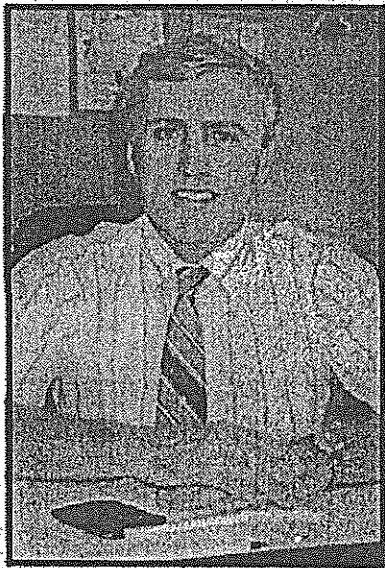
Tonawanda's last frontier is soon to be opened.

As cranes unearth the radioactive material from the Ashland II site and plans for cleaning up Ashland I, Seaway and the Linde/Praxair property are mulled, local politicians are looking to developing Tonawanda's waterfront.

Erie County Legislator Charles Swanick and Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Carl Calabrese have stated they have spoken to "major" developers who have expressed interest in locating along the Niagara River.

The area occupied by the Ashland I, Ashland II and Seaway landfills is zoned for commercial and light industrial usage. Once the remaining radioactive material is removed, the land will likely be developed extensively.

"We have three things in our favor with this property," Mr. Calabrese said. "First of all, all of the infrastructure is already in place. Secondly, it's right off the Thruway.



Chuck Swanick

And, it's on the waterfront."

Mr. Swanick agreed.

"It's time to shift the fight to the development side," he said.

The first step in opening the area, located off River Road, south of the Grand Island bridge, will be to de-



Carl Calabrese

sign roadways to bisect the area. Mr. Calabrese said that planning the roads can take place right away.

Development of the area would open approximately 300 acres to business, creating dozens of new jobs. Preliminary plans will place

light industrial facilities and commercial enterprises back from the waterfront. Restaurants, parks and a marina could be located along the waterfront.

Neither Mr. Swanick nor Mr. Calabrese would name the developers who they have consulted. Mr. Calabrese noted that interested developers would receive tax-abated financing.

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- Part 1 - Linde's Part in the Manhattan Project (Published Wednesday, July 15).
- Part 2 - Waste Dumped in Wells (Thursday, July 16).
- Part 3 - CANIT and FACTS: Two Approaches to One Goal (Friday, July 17).
- Part 4 - Removal Today (Tuesday, July 21).
- Part 5 - The Final Step: Development (Wednesday, July 22).

Part 5: Redevelopment

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through the Erie County Industrial Development Agency for locating near the property.

Removal of the low-level uranium tailings from the Tonawanda site was a prerequisite for development. The current remediation project at the Ashland II site is expected to cost \$19 million.

"As it is, the landfill is not detrimental to public health," Mr. Swanick said. "But when you get a fence around a piece of land and put nuclear radiation warning signs around it, no one's going to want to be located near that."

Once the remaining radioactive deposits are removed from the town, site levels will be reduced to 40 picocuries per gram per thorium-230. That level will prevent residential usage for the area, but is within federally-accepted levels for commercial usage.

For a Clean Tonawanda Site (FACTS) member Don Finch thinks the cleanup is being hurried and may be conducted haphazardly in order for the town to begin developing the waterfront.

"We have a responsibility to ourselves and our children to ensure that this clean-up is getting done right," Mr. Finch said.

Corps of Engineer officials and local politicians have adamantly defended the precautions taken in the remediation and future development.

Tonawanda officials have already begun work at increasing public access to the waterfront. In the late 1980s, the Riverwalk was expanded

from the City of Tonawanda through the town. The acquisition of the 57-acre River Road Cherry Farm site from Niagara Mohawk will further enhance waterfront access.

According to Mr. Calabrese, the Cherry Farm park will include open picnic areas, small and large shelters, a half-court basketball court, a sand volleyball court and possibly a restaurant. A one-acre parcel will be designated as a playground, making it the largest playground in New York State. An extensive woodlands trail

would also be installed through surrounding forested areas.

Negotiations with Niagara Mohawk are on-going. The site is located about 2,000 feet south of the Grand Island bridges.

Complete remediation of the Ashland I, Ashland II and Seaway landfills as well as a full development of the Town of Tonawanda waterfront could be complete in under 10 years.

"This is a great day for the Town of Tonawanda," Mr. Calabrese said.

Who to call

For more information on the Town of Tonawanda's role in the Manhattan Project and remediation efforts, contact the following sources:

- Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) 24-hour, toll-free public access line: 1 (800) 833-6390

- FUSRAP homepage: <http://www.fusrap.usace.army.mil>

- Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo District homepage: <http://www.ncb.usace.army.mil>

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, FUSRAP Public Information Center, 1776 Niagara Street, Buffalo, NY 14207, 879-4438.

- For a Clean Tonawanda Site (FACTS) homepage: <http://www.freenet.buffalo.edu/facts>

- Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Carl Calabrese: 877-8800

- Erie County Legislator Charles Swanick: 877-3986