

## Biederman: Patience is key for Canalside and Outer Harbor

Business First by James Fink, Buffalo Business First Reporter  
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**James Fink**

The first time Dan Biederman came to Buffalo was in 1967, and the city made an impression on him.

“There was a mythology about Buffalo, especially as a kid growing up in the other end of New York state (New York City),” Biederman said. “Buffalo meant something to me.”

Between that day in 1967 and now, Biederman has been back to Buffalo half a dozen other times, but this time, Biederman is in town to help achieve a blueprint that may go a long way toward setting the future course for Canalside and the Outer Harbor.

Biederman’s firm, Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, has been retained by the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp. to focus on what it calls “public space” development opportunities along the city’s waterfront.

Biederman comes to Buffalo with an impressive resumé, including overseeing the transformation of New York’s Bryant Park from a crime-ridden wasteland into what is now a major tourism and local destination in Manhattan. He has done the same thing with Boston’s South Station, the Kendall Square area in Cambridge, Mass., and Pittsburgh’s South Shore Riverfront Park.

“Buffalo has these incredible bones,” Biederman said. “In many ways, it is far ahead of some of the other cities where we’ve worked.”

Biederman cited the 450 events slated for this summer at the Central Wharf, Canalside and other downtown waterfront sites that are expected to attract 500,000 people. He also pointed to the “great architecture” that surrounds the waterfront.

Two years ago, Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp. and Buffalo Place Inc. produced 115 events on the Central Wharf that attracted approximately 110,000 visitors.

While the jump between 2010 and this year has been dramatic, Biederman warns that for Canalside and the Outer Harbor to really take hold, local residents and leaders need to be patient and to allow the growth to be organic, rather than forced.

“There is no substitute for a patient effort,” Biederman said. “Bryant Park started off with small, tiny stuff and grew from there. The first year, we had an artists-in-residence program that practically no one paid attention to. If you deliver good events, people will go back and tell 37 other people, and it will grow from there.”

Tom Dee, Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp. president, said Biederman’s firm was retained because his agency feels a short-term and longer-term blueprint is needed to attract people to the waterfront. Despite its recent successes, including Buffalo Place’s concert series, many people have yet to visit. A wide variety of hooks and attractions are needed, as are physical changes, including developing vacant parcels.

“We’re at the point where we need to get to the next level,” Dee said. “We need fresh ideas that fit into the mold of the geometry that we have now.”