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## Illuminating Buffalo's waterfront

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The permanent lighting of the Buffalo Skyway and several waterfront grain elevators — designed to attract more visitors to the Canalside district — could be ready by late next summer.

The \$5 million project, announced in March 2012 by the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp., took a step forward when the agency awarded \$1.5 million lighting design and engineering services contract to Buffalo's Foit-Albert Associates and Montreal-based Ambiances Design Productions. Once the design work is completed later this year, the actual lighting equipment will be installed and project should be ready to make its debut by the summer of 2014, officials said.

Initially, the Connecting Terminal — located just across the mouth of the Buffalo River from the busy Central Wharf site, along with the Buffalo Skyway and Ohio Street Bridge will be bathed in the illuminating lights. Plans call for 18 grain elevators and bridges between Canalside and the Buffalo/Lackawanna municipal border to be part of the elaborate light show.

“This is a way to make lemonade out of lemons,” said David Colligan, an ECHDC director. “It tells the world that we are proud of our past and, it’s a good way to highlight the progress we’ve made on the waterfront.”

The 45-minute light show will run every day, said Tom Dee, ECHDC president. It may be themed to specific events such as Buffalo Sabres’ games at First Niagara Center or concerts.

The shows are designed to attract not only local residents to the waterfront but out-of-towners. A similar package designed by Ambiances in Quebec City attracts more than 200,000 visitors.

“This will go a long way to filling hotel rooms and downtown restaurants,” said Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown. “It is money well-spent.”

The light show was one of several items addressed by the harbor development agency during its meeting Wednesday morning. Among the other items:

- The directors agreed to pay **Biederman Redevelopment Ventures** of New York City, the lone bidder, \$846,191 to consult on development possibilities for several key parcels on the former Memorial Auditorium property.

Tentative plans call for the development of at least one sit-down restaurant, a beer garden and public market.

The restaurant is of importance as Canalside continues to grow in popularity and dining options are limited. The lone sit-down restaurant, the Liberty Hound that opened last year, is doing great business, Dee said.

“We know we need more food options down there,” Dee said. “That’s what the public is telling us.”

Dee said more food trucks will be on site this year.

By next year, the One Canalside Building — the former Gen. Donovan State Office Building — will be open and house a restaurant and the Buffalo Sabres’ HarborCenter will have a 10,000-square-foot sports bar and perhaps other dining options.

The Biederman report should lay out a detailed development game plan for the Aud parcels.

- Art Services Initiative of Western New York was awarded a three-year pact, running through 2015, to program events along the Buffalo River, using small and medium-sized cultural groups. The bulk of the funds, approximately \$194,000, will be allocated for programming, marketing and insurance costs. ASI will be paid \$46,500 in consultant’s fees during the next three years.