

Ken-Ton Bee Article

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PARTNERSHIPS LEAD TO PROGRESS IN WATERFRONT REGION

Years ago, the Town of Tonawanda set forth a new vision for its waterfront region, a vision that celebrates the natural beauty of the Niagara River as a place to live, work and play. We studied and we planned, but the greatest challenge was finding a way to clear abandoned industrial sites for new development.

We found a solution in a partnership that was forged during demolition of the former Eastern States Grain Mills on Military Road. In that project, the Town joined its expertise and resources with agencies and elected officials at county, state and federal levels to finally rid our community of a significant, blighting influence.

Key partners in that effort included the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA).

The partnership was also successful in efforts to demolish the former Excelsior Steel Ball property on Woodward Avenue, the Town Incinerator on East Park Drive and, most recently, the former Spaulding Fibre site in the City of Tonawanda.

At a recent meeting of the ECIDA, of which I serve as a board member, we passed a resolution that allocated \$300,000 in federal funds to remove two highly visible eyesores from our waterfront region – 3445 River Road and 5335 River Road.

3445 River Road is a 7-acre site located near the NRG Huntley plant. It was occupied by a chemical company, Polymer Applications, until a disastrous fire in 1988 destroyed the facility. NYSDEC has completed an investigation of the site and final clean-up should be complete by the end of this year.

ECIDA funding will be used to demolish unsightly warehouse buildings, leaving the site ready for new development.

5335 River Road is a 25-acre site located next to the entrance of Riverview Solar Technology Park. It was used as a major oil storage facility until it was abandoned many years ago. The Town and Erie County removed all the above-ground structures two years ago. NYSDEC conducted a site investigation and spent over \$700,000 removing contaminated soil and underground storage tanks.

ECIDA funding will be used to fill in containment areas around the former above-ground tanks, leaving the site graded and ready for new development.

Completion of both projects will have an immediate and strong impact on the visual quality of our waterfront region, strengthen our ability to attract new investment and build on the principles of 'sustainable growth' in an area of economic and environmental significance.

The success of our partnership demonstrates that multiple levels of government can work together to transform the legacies of our past into our vision of the future. We will continue to work property-by-property and brick-by-brick to translate that vision into reality for current residents and future generations.

On a final note, this weekend marks the tenth Anniversary of the tragedy of September 11, 2001. It is with great pain that we remember the incidents of that day, and the aftermath it has caused for our nation and our military.

Let us pray for all the citizens, first responders and the military who were victims that day. But let us also remember and pray for their families and also for the thousands of troops still serving in harm's way around the world who continually guard our freedoms.