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## Another Voice: Don't let a white elephant despoil the Outer Harbor

Dr. Larry Beahan  
Dec 20, 2021

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**T**his is about white elephants. Remember the ugly brown brick wall Mayor Stanley Makowski's administration put up around the marble obelisk to McKinley at the center of the square in front of City Hall?

There was such an outpouring of public protest, before and during its construction, that the mayor and Common Council had to tear it down before it was even finished. It was a \$575,000 make-work project for this depressed area. Its only accomplishment was to employ a thousand workers for the time of its building – and of its demolition.

Mrs. Virginia Tillou, whom I recall as the gentle mother of two of my Cub Scouts when I was a den chief for Pack 98, was one of the leaders of the protest. The Buffalo News quoted her back then: "Oh dear," she said. "I was afraid they were going to do something like that. It's as if the Albright-Knox Art Gallery had gotten some local artist to paint over a Rembrandt to make it look better.

"What we need in this city is simplicity, taste and restraint. Why didn't they spend their money on some landscaping? That would have been lovely."

The News added, "Mrs. Tillou, an artist, once succeeded in blocking a city plan to color the pavement in that square red, white and blue."

The Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp.'s plan to build a white elephant of an amphitheater in the midst of the simple naturally regenerating Outer Harbor seems to be headed for a similar fate. This time such gentle and formidable women as Margaret Wooster, Lynda Schneekloth and Gladys Gifford lead the protest.

The League of Women Voters is a major funder of the suit to stop it. I have heard mutterings of a small army of such women willing to sit between the bulldozers and the copse of 50-year-old cottonwoods that ECHDC's white elephant amphitheater threatens to trample.

ECHDC is a New York State public benefit corporation. Such corporations operate as quasi-private organizations by regulations that govern state agencies. Robert Moses made himself a freewheeling king by wielding the power of these corporations to build highways and bridges without regard to public opinion. Moses turned Olmsted's magnificent Humboldt Parkway into the ditch we call the Kensington Expressway. He named a highway after himself that separated the citizens of the City of Niagara Falls from their rightful access to the Niagara River. This travesty is being corrected and Humboldt Parkway may soon be restored.

Let us pray that this generation of gentle ladies and their thousands of allies prevail against ECHDC's plan for a noisy white elephant amphitheater that threatens to turn loose a stampede of concertgoers and their cars on our Outer Harbor, an invaluable treasure of a natural sanctuary park.

Dr. Larry Beahan represents the Sierra Club and the Adirondack Mountain Club on the Our Outer Harbor Steering Committee.