

## Senate Bill 282

The Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority has been aggressively developing the waterfront in Erie, PA for the last 30 years. We have developed and refined plans for overall development (Master Plan) as well as individual site development plans implementing the Master Plan. We have tried to balance the need for shipping, ship building, industrial parks, etc with the need for recreation, marinas, parks, free launch ramps, commercial development, etc. All of these plans include substantial public access features.

Public access to the Waterfront was determined to be a key priority to the City of Erie in the late 1980's. This was the time where our waterfront was beginning to transform from strictly an industrial use site to one of varied uses. As such, the City of Erie, in 1988 enacted Section 306 of the City of Erie Zoning Ordinance specifically regulating Waterfront Development. That ordinance, requires that prior to the issuance of a building permit "Every proposed site development that has access to the Bayfront water's edge shall show on the plans a proposed free public access way, abutting and parallel to the waters edge". This public accessway must be designed for use by the general public for such activities as walking, jogging, fishing, etc and made available for the public's use during daylight hours, and as mandated by City Council.

One might believe that with this ordinance, public access is no longer an issue. While the ordinance has made strong strides in addressing the public's access to the water, it has not holistically solved the problem. First, this only addresses access at the water's edge, it does not look at access as a complete system requiring improvements away from the water to address connectivity. Secondly, there is the financial burden of a developer who looks at this requirement without being able to see a return on their direct investment.

The proposed Senate Bill 282 is an excellent way of financing public improvements that would burden a private development. Finding was to reconcile the needs of the public and the needs of developers is always an issue. The need for public/private partnerships is almost a requirement for a successful waterfront development. This Bill makes these partnerships more easily attainable on every project.

I have brought a display with me today which highlights the features of Erie's waterfront as well as an entire panel dedicated to a new proposed 12 acre development. This 12 acre site is not entirely situated along the waters edge, however, as you will see in the renderings, the developer has recognized the need for additional public space beyond that required by ordinance. Our community demands a different type of development on the waterfront, however, the costs associated with that expectation have outpaced what the developer considers an acceptable ROI and the project has stalled.

This is just one example of many public and private projects that are proposed along our Bayfront. I respectfully request that you support Senate Bill 282, and adequately fund the line item in the budget to allow for the Port Authority and others around the state to create additional and enhance existing public access areas across the Commonwealth. Lake Erie consists of "Commonwealth Waters" please allow us to continue our mission to make them accessible to all regardless of income, mobility or age.

Thank you.