

Buffalo's Grain Lights Project— A Beacon of Resilience, Survival, and a City on the Move

by Shannon Traphagen

A healthy, growing and changing city helps its residents embrace health, growth and change. In 1901 Buffalo, New York hosted the Pan American Exposition, which presented brilliant displays of electric light that, for its time, was awe-inspiring. Buffalo was the city of lights and it was a significant development of the mechanical benefits that electricity would offer in terms of increased industrial productivity. Buffalo was on the move, and that promise was celebrated with great enthusiasm.

After more than a hundred years, Buffalo is once again on the move and nothing showcases that more than the new light display on the grain elevators at Canalside's outer harbor. "It's our canvas of creativity," states Tom Dee, President of Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation.

Dee has been involved with the grain lights project since it was a seedling of an idea back in 2012. When Dee and his team began this venture, they wanted to showcase Buffalo's innovation, creativity, and technology. Dee wanted to find a way to show the world that Buffalo was once again on the move yet also celebrate the city's industrial heritage. "We wanted this to be a symbol of pride for our great city. Before the grain elevators were just an eyesore of something run down, something broken. Now it's a monolith by day and a bold new expression by night. It's been revived and so has our city," states Dee.

The vibrant colors of blues, greens, whites and reds are now a dynamic and permanent lighting installation with the potential to grow. Artistically representing the seasons, beautiful images shine across the giant grain elevators, slowly transitioning from one dazzling expression to another. Utilizing 99% light emitting diodes (LED's), the light display is not only energy-efficient, but according to the Department of Energy LED is one of today's most rapidly-developing lighting technologies. "Quality LED light bulbs last longer, are more durable, and offer better light quality than other types of lighting," states Dee. "We hope to possibly do this with other grain elevators. Right now, this one display will run year-round from dusk to 11 p.m.," he adds.

Adding value to our growing waterfront, the lighting display represents Buffalo's endurance, its desire to remain relevant in an ever-growing nation of innovation and creativity, and our passion as a community to not only survive but thrive beyond all expectations. It's a beacon of resilience, of hope, and a city on the move. "Buffalo is an all year round, every season destination, and this light display is a testament to that," states Dee.

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There are over 1,000 events and activities planned for Canalside in the upcoming year. For more information about these events and the grain elevator light display visit Erie

County Harbor Development Corporation at 95 Perry St. Buffalo NY 14202, call 716.846.8200, or visit them online at: www.eriecanalharbor.com