

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Opinion

[Front Page](#) > [Opinion](#) > [Buffalo News Editorials](#)

Clean shoreline energy

Wind turbines help region refute its rusty reputation with clean energy

8/26/2006



Derek Gee/Buffalo News
Lackawanna Mayor Norman Polanski Jr. supports a windmill project on the city's waterfront, arguing that it's a good use of dormant land.

Lackawanna could regain towers of power later this year, and the entire Buffalo region could see the start of a reengineered reputation as a center of innovation instead of just a depository of past glories. The Steel Wind project to erect eight towering energy-producing wind turbines on the old Bethlehem Steel site deserves strong support.

What makes this idea especially attractive is the location - an underused former industrial site where the usual issues of noise and aesthetics are less of a factor than they are for countryside wind farms. It's also a place uniquely positioned to capture prevailing Lake Erie winds while still fairly distant from Buffalo's urban waterfront mixed-use redevelopment zones.

Critics contend that such wind farms are far too heavily subsidized via tax breaks for the power they produce, draining taxpayers for a trickle of electricity. It's a false argument. The subsidies aren't for the megawatts produced - 20, in this case - they're designed to encourage the development of even better alternate energy technology in the future. That technology is a lifeline for America, a chance to wean the nation off much of the dependence on foreign oil that makes it especially vulnerable in economic and security terms. It's also a step toward a better environment and a chance to slow some of the climate change now tied convincingly to smokestack emissions.

There is, in fact, a precedent for the turbines, which will stand 260 feet tall and have a maximum height to their blade tips of 410 feet. Decades ago, a single giant wind turbine was erected on the lake shore just to the south in Blasdell but failed because the technology and the push for alternate energy sources was still new and rudimentary. But that effort, too, was part of technological development that now has led to subsidized but energy-producing wind farms throughout the country.

The project being developed by BQ Energy and UPC Wind is welcomed by Lackawanna's leadership, and is a good fit for the brownfields site that once was home to large-scale steelmaking and the towering stacks that defined it. It has now cleared a federal Environmental Protection Agency procedural hurdle, and awaits state Department of Environmental Conservation site guidance. The energy companies hope to have the turbines up in time to catch some winter winds. Cool.

This material is copyrighted and is for your exclusive personal use only.
Republication or other use of this material without the express written consent of The Buffalo News is prohibited.
Copyright © 1999 - 2006 The Buffalo News™

