



GROUP FORMED TO PROMOTE DOWNTOWN CANAL

Rochester, NY, May 10, 2006 – A new organization has been formed to raise awareness and promote action on a major revitalization plan, centered on the re-watering of the historic downtown route of the Erie Canal. Advocates for the Development of Rochester's Canal, or ADROC, has been launched with the goal of seeing the opening of a new Rochester Erie Canal by 2012. According to the group, downtown canal development has changed the fortunes of many cities facing similar challenges to those faced by Rochester—with virtually a 100% success rate—and Rochester has the unique advantage of a world-famous, historically-significant canal already in its back yard.

ADROC was inspired by the Grasso-Zimmer Canal Revitalization Plan, developed last year by canal expert Thomas Grasso and Architectural Intern Rory Zimmer, with major research and concept validation done by an R.I.T. group. The plan proposes to take advantage of the still-existing canal bed that runs along Broad Street, roughly from the Rundel Library to the site of the new Paetec Park. The original canal flowed through the city until 1920, and was converted to the downtown subway system which ran until 1956. Much of the original structure, including the iconic Broad Street Aqueduct that carried the canal over the Genesee River, remains in place in some form. ADROC believes that turning it back into an urban canal—connected to the world via the river and Barge Canal system will link nearly all of the current and proposed downtown attractions and make Rochester a true international destination.

According to ADROC spokesman Michael Hess, "A new Rochester Erie Canal is truly the 'magic bullet' that Rochester has been searching for." Hess says that similar projects have been extraordinarily successful in cities of all sizes and climates, including Indianapolis, Providence, San Antonio, Oklahoma City and others. "Oklahoma City is a prime example," says Hess. "It built the Bricktown Canal as an attraction, to try to improve its struggling downtown, and the result has been roughly \$800 million per year in increased city revenue. Imagine what we could do with the brand-name strength of the Erie Canal." ADROC envisions a thriving destination with water-taxis connecting key attractions, ice skating in the winter, and retail and residential development all along the proposed 1.5-mile downtown canal. The City has been considering spending approximately \$21 million to fill the Canal bed with dirt, a move which ADROC strongly opposes. "We don't see the logic in spending that kind of money to destroy something that has the real and unique potential to turn the region around," says Hess.

Tom Grasso, who is also the President of the Canal Society of New York State, is ADROC's Executive Director. Rory Zimmer and Tim Zimmer are Co-Directors of Urban Planning, and Hess is Director of Marketing and Public Relations. The group has launched a website at www.rochestercanal.com.

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