



FROM: Preservation League of New York State  
44 Central Avenue  
Albany NY 12206-3002  
[www.preservenys.org](http://www.preservenys.org)

CONTACTS: Colleen M. Ryan, Director of Public Relations  
Preservation League of New York State  
518-462-5658 ext. 17; [cryan@preservenys.org](mailto:cryan@preservenys.org)

Kathleen Mecca  
Niagara Gateway Columbus Park Association  
716-881-5309; [krmecca@yahoo.com](mailto:krmecca@yahoo.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**COLUMBUS PARK-PROSPECT HILL NEIGHBORHOOD IN BUFFALO**  
**NAMED TO SEVEN TO SAVE LIST**

*Preservation League of New York State Continues Listing Most Endangered Places for 2008*

ALBANY, January 23, 2008 – The Preservation League of New York State has named the **Columbus Park-Prospect Hill neighborhood** in Buffalo, Erie County, to the nonprofit group’s annual list of the Empire State’s most threatened historic resources, *Seven to Save*.

The city’s historic residential waterfront neighborhood boasts an extraordinary collection of buildings, many of which were designed by important Buffalo architects. Most were built between the 1850s and 1950s to take advantage of the visionary and beautiful landscape designs of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. Today, the National Register-eligible Peace Bridge serves as the major gateway to Buffalo and the area provides international visitors with a first impression of the United States.

“Unfortunately, this area’s historic fabric and residential character have been forced to take a back seat to the demands of truck and automobile traffic,” said Jay DiLorenzo, President of the Preservation League of New York State. “Current plans for an expanded Peace Bridge Plaza call for the demolition of some 88 homes and the loss of about two dozen businesses, which will forever change this strong and vital neighborhood. Border-crossing issues are important, but we must address our transportation needs without sacrificing our community character.”

According to local advocacy groups, the threat of Plaza expansion has loomed over the area for 20 years, eroding the social fabric of the neighborhood, and compromising the health of its residents and the market value of its properties.

The Preservation League is joining the Preservation Coalition of Erie County, Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier, Campaign for Greater Buffalo, and others in calling for a full evaluation of

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direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to the historic properties and landscapes of the neighborhoods of the Peace Bridge Expansion Project area.

“Like many cities, Buffalo learned painful lessons from allowing highway projects to violate its Olmsted park system, his first in the nation,” said Cynthia Van Ness, President of the Preservation Coalition. “One of our finest parkways was sacrificed for an urban expressway, destroying neighborhoods and property values for blocks around. Imposition of a greatly expanded plaza within this natural, recreational, residential, and historic area will only exacerbate that loss.”

Tim Tielman, Executive Director of the Campaign for Greater Buffalo, notes that Prospect Hill should be allowed to regain its reputation as one of the great neighborhoods and distinctive places of New York State. “This great and historic neighborhood has been sorely tested by highway and bridge construction, and is threatened with absolute destruction by a massive new bridge project which can go elsewhere with much less destructive and perhaps even positive impact,” he continued. “With sensitive planning Prospect Hill can be restored to a ‘shining city on the hill,’ rather than be encased by a concrete choker. Today should mark the beginning of the reclamation of Buffalo’s Niagara riverfront.”

“The Columbus Park-Prospect Hill neighborhood has been an important contributor to the vitality of our city in every period of its growth and development,” said Kathleen Mecca, President of the Niagara Gateway Columbus Park Association. “This strong neighborhood is steeped in rich history, architecture and culture. We are committed to continue to serve this wonderful city as both good neighbors and ambassadors for its economic revitalization. We look forward to working with the Preservation League to establish a respectful relationship where the public sector supports the neighborhood instead of systematically wearing it down.”

According to local advocates, the Peace Bridge Expansion Project will eradicate the neighborhood: “people scattered, demolished homes buried in landfills, and the context that keeps the neighborhood knit together lost completely, forever.” The Preservation League and advocates believe that while the city of Buffalo is embarking on an effort to eradicate blight by bulldozing thousands of residences, it makes no sense to demolish a solid neighborhood with a community that is committed to its improvement.

“The West Side Community Collaborative has been working hard at improving this area of Buffalo for over 5 years, and we are seeing significant progress in housing values, homeownership, vacancy and crime reduction, and new hope,” said Harvey Garrett, Executive Director of West Side Community Collaborative and Board Member of the Preservation Coalition of Erie County and the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier. “The Columbus Park-Prospect Hill neighborhood has strong

potential for bridging the Elmwood Village to the waterfront through the West Side. We are making tremendous block-by-block progress, but when we finally get there, after all our years of effort, we need to see a waterfront – not a 45 acre truck plaza”

Francis Kowsky, SUNY Distinguished Professor of Art History at Buffalo State College, notes that the “vast parking areas, ramps, and depots proposed for this neighborhood in the Peace Bridge Expansion Project will obliterate much of this historic in-town neighborhood, greatly compromise the livability and attractiveness of what remains, and ruin any prospects for future revitalization. Olmsted and Vaux were involved in building a fine modern city – one that became famous for its parks, parkways, and neighborhoods; the present anti-urban plan of the Peace Bridge Expansion Project will have the effect of destroying a significant portion of that legacy.”

“The Niagara River cannot be moved. Lake Erie cannot be moved. Olmsted’s Front Park can only exist where he established it,” said Tania Werbizky, the League’s Regional Director of Technical and Grant Programs for western New York. “The Preservation League pledges to support efforts to identify and explore all prudent and feasible alternatives for any bridge crossing proposal as mandated by state and federal regulations. These rules apply whenever projects have the potential to impact historic properties and landscapes – such as those of the Columbus Park-Prospect Hill neighborhood.”

Since 1999, publicity surrounding the *Seven to Save* designation has led to the stabilization of **St. Joseph’s Church** in Albany, the rehabilitation of the **Oswego City Public Library**, and prevented the demolition of the **Conger Goodyear House** on Long Island, along with successes at several other locations.

Three additional *Seven to Save* announcements will be made around the state in early 2008. The historic Saratoga Race Course in Saratoga County, Holy Trinity Monastery in Herkimer County, and Jones Beach State Park in Nassau County have already been designated.

The Preservation League of New York State, founded in 1974, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection of New York’s diverse and rich heritage of historic buildings, districts and landscapes. From its headquarters in Albany, it provides a unified voice for historic preservation. By leading a statewide movement and sharing information and expertise, the Preservation League of New York State promotes historic preservation as a tool to revitalize the Empire State’s neighborhoods and communities.