



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Excellence In Our Midst

[JAMES L. SEWARD](#) January 15, 2009

Our region is filled with great pieces of history; many are well known while others have yet to receive their due. Now is the time to change that.

I am issuing a call for nominations for the 2009 Erie Canal Heritage Award of Excellence. The award honors and celebrates the significant places of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and recognizes excellence in advancing the goals of the Erie Canalway Preservation and Management Plan.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor encompasses New York's canal system and the communities that grew along its shores. It stretches 524 miles across the full expanse of upstate New York and includes 234 cities, towns and villages that touch the canal system. It has been called America's most famous and influential man-made waterway.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission encourages investment in places throughout the Corridor, including parks, trails, historic buildings and canal structures, streetscapes and entire communities. The Award of Excellence calls attention to those places where people come together to contribute their time, talent, creativity, enthusiasm and hard work to make their part of the Canalway Corridor a vibrant place to live, work or play.

The commission is accepting nominations now through Wednesday, February 25, 2009, three finalists will then be selected for a site visit. A formal award presentation will take place at the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission meeting in June.

Municipalities, community groups, private entities and non-profit organizations are all eligible to submit an application. Multiple parties involved in a collaborative or regional project are especially encouraged to apply. However, a project does not have to be huge to be recognized.

Award winners are selected based on the applicant's effectiveness in helping to advance one or more of the goals set forth in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan in the place being nominated. They include:

- The corridor's historic and distinctive sense of place will be widely expressed and consistently protected;
- The corridor's natural resources will reflect the highest standard of environmental quality;
- The corridor's recreation opportunities will achieve maximum scope and diversity, in harmony with the protection of heritage resources;
- The corridor's current and future generations of residents and visitors will value and support preservation of its heritage;
- The corridor's economic growth and heritage development will be balanced and self-sustaining;
- The corridor will be a "must do" travel experience for regional, national and international visitors.

If you are wondering exactly what the jury is searching for you need look no further than Canal Place, Little Falls, a 2008 award winner. In the middle of what was once an extensive manufacturing district, the demolition of an abandoned factory revealed the historic beauty

of two deteriorating 150 year old stone buildings and sparked the imagination of local property owners who formed the Canal Place Development Association in 1988. The site of the factory became a park, another park was built alongside the canal, and grant money was secured to make a host of improvements. Private money was then used to renovate two stone buildings, and now antique shops, restaurants, and galleries create a destination for tourists and residents alike.

Canal Place was selected for its outstanding example of citizen driven economic and community revitalization that protected and reused 19th century mill buildings along the canal in Little Falls. The jury commended the project for drawing on existing physical assets, contributing to waterfront revitalization in Little Falls, and celebrating and preserving the past while offering a positive vision for the future.

Additional information on 2009 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence is available on line at www.eriecanalway.org. You can download an application for the award competition, and see other past winners.

I hope that when the jury makes its selections later this year, we can once again trumpet a winner from the 51st district.

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