

## Piecemeal won't cut it

*City and port officials must join forces on the waterfront to nuke projects for Docks 28 and 32 into one grand plan*

Sen. George Voinovich says the big transportation bill Congress just passed is the best ever for the state of Ohio. Certainly it contains loads of cash for important projects around the state.

But four earmarks bode especially well for the future of Cleveland's waterfronts — if local officials are smart enough to leverage those federal dollars by cooperating and by inviting lots of creative people to the table.

Tucked into the \$286 billion package were: \$6.4 million to extend the Towpath trail from its current northern terminus at Harvard Avenue all the way to Lake Erie; \$5 million for riverside boardwalks and streets along the eastern edge of the Flats, where developer Scott Wolstein hopes to build a new downtown neighborhood; \$7 million to build a terminal for a proposed ferry from Cleveland to Fort Stanley, Ontario; and \$5 million for a pedestrian bridge from the Great Lakes Science Center to Voinovich Park at the end of East 9th Street.

Each is critically important. The Towpath project is more than just a great amenity that will help set Greater Cleveland apart from competitor cities chasing creative people with lots of options; it reflects the central role of the Cuyahoga River in this region's history and its ecological future. Revitalizing the Flats will spur the continued transformation of this region's centerpiece neighborhood — downtown Cleveland — into a place where people choose to live, work and play.

But for the moment, let's focus on a critical piece of downtown land, just north of the science museum and Browns Stadium. For decades, this property has been used by the Port of Cleveland and has been off-limits to the general public — except on football days, when it becomes a parking lot.

Almost a year ago, the eastern third of the property, known as Dock 32, was returned to control of the city after Mayor Jane Campbell's administration insisted that it was critically

important to the mayor's lakefront plans. Despite City Hall's urgent tone at the time, little has been done at Dock 32, though a temporary promenade is finally in place.

At the opposite end of the property is Dock 28, where the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority and its private-sector partner, the Dutch firm Royal Wagenborg, hope to operate a ferry to Canada, possibly as early as next year. Port officials envision a terminal for customs and ticketing, and possibly some public areas such as restaurants, shops and an observation deck.

Now they have federal money to build the terminal, and the city has money to link its property with chronically underused and underappreciated Voinovich Park, on the opposite side of North Coast Harbor.

Rather than operating in a vacuum, city and port officials need to collaborate closely. With the federal dollars as a carrot, they need to invite architects, developers and ordinary citizens to suggest plans for this stretch of lakefront that are both dynamic enough to inspire and pragmatic enough to get done. The bridge and terminal must be woven into an exciting mix of public areas and private development. Think of Toronto's Harbourfront district.

What must not happen is that the port does its thing on one piece of land, and the city does its several hundred yards away.

Almost two years, this newspaper, along with Kent State University's Urban Design Collaborative and the American Institute of Architects' Cleveland chapter, invited suggestions for the parcel. The outpouring of ideas showed how intensely interested people are in the lakefront and its potential. Now is the time to harness that intensity and creativity to develop a great new downtown space.

Washington, thanks to lots of lobbying by the mayor and the congressional delegation, has provided the catalysts. Now Cleveland must seize this opportunity to reshape its future.