



## AAPA Lighthouse Award Project Highlight Port of Albany, NY Expansion Videos



Port of Albany, NY  
Albany, NY

### Project Overview

Port of Albany, NY Expansion Videos

Award Category: Excellence in Print or Digital Media Communications

Completion Date: 9/18/2024

Description: In 2018, the Port of Albany acquired an 85-acre parcel that marked a 25% increase in the Port District's land area. In 2021, the Port of Albany achieved a major milestone when it was selected through NYSERDA's (New York State Energy Research & Development Authority) competitive Round 2 Solicitation to develop the nation's first offshore wind tower manufacturing supply chain facility.

Throughout the project, there were ongoing discussions and challenges from local citizen action groups regarding environmental impacts and the project's feasibility. The Port team worked diligently to communicate and provide reports with full transparency to communities, municipalities, and local, state and federal agencies, yet still inaccurate information and accusations of wrongdoing persisted.

In 2024, the Port was approached by LaBella Associates to be the focus of a project video that LaBella would use/share with prospective clients to showcase their expertise in the Environmental Health Safety (EHS) arena. The Port eagerly agreed and negotiated a concurrent second video that would shift lead perspective and provide more background information on the Port, as well as answers to questions and concerns from the community.

The goals of the video/s were: to highlight the expansion project from both the Port's and LaBella's perspectives using similar messages, footage, and imagery; to underscore the expertise and due diligence that had been critical to the planning and phased construction of the project; to inform audiences of the considerations of the Port and project toward the environment and the community; and to clearly articulate the benefits and economic impact the Port has had since it opened in 1932 as well as LaBella's expertise in the EHS field.

The Port and LaBella came together to strategize tonal direction and content. From the beginning, mitigating the complexity of the project (construction, manufacturing center, landfill reclamation, and in-water, overwater, and wetland permitting considerations that had all been designed and permitted) became paramount, and the decision was made to work with only an outline (vs. script) to keep interviews fresh, spontaneous, and above all, heartfelt.

The Port's video debuted at the Port of Albany's Port Industry Day (Sept 19, 2024), the first maritime-related community celebration at the Port since prior to covid, to more than 160 attendees including Port tenants, politicians and civic leaders, maritime industry experts, community groups including local KidWind middle school students, and more. The day-long program featured a keynote address from American Association of Port Authorities Past Chair and Port of Tampa Bay CEO Paul Anderson, internationally renowned maritime and transportation speakers, a panel discussion on the state of supply chain and economic opportunity, tours, and an Expo Space that included Port tenants, small business and maritime partners, neighbors, and education and workforce partners.

Positive impacts of the video/s were short- and long-term. Web analytics showed that engagement time increased by 8% and new users were up by 500 in the week following the Port Industry Day debut. Social media channel content interactions were up 298.5%, reach by 25%, and visits by 69%. Favorable responses were anecdotally shared by viewers and event attendees. Media coverage shifted to neutral/positive with less rereading of previous coverage. Attacks on the project lessened as people were more informed based on the videos' content. There was an uptick of project inquiries for LaBella's EHS services.

## Inspiration

As with any large construction project, especially a "first of its kind", the Port ran into challenges with navigating permitting at local, state, and federal levels, responding to NIMBY protests of a vocal and litigious minority, and communicating the potential environmental, economic, and community benefits of the project to a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

In addition to a dedicated section of the website, a subscription project-based newsletter, regular community and public Board meetings, media outreach, and an arduous schedule of FAM tours with local, national, and international visitors, the Port continued to seek out new channels to communicate about the project.

## Challenges

Approaching the same project from two vastly different perspectives (a public port with a main focus of maritime terminal activity and landlord responsibilities looking to engage a non-technical community audience, and a commercial engineering firm looking to reach prospective clients with a high level of technical understanding) initially created some stress as to how both partner organizations could meet their communications goals and address separate groups of stakeholders by using interviews and visual components from a single video shoot. In preliminary conversations, the technical aspects of the project became secondary to the pride, passion, and commitment that came across from the individual speakers involved in the project. By creating an outline of prioritized topics to touch on (and/or cover in VO) rather than relying on a traditional script, the individual speakers were able to put their own emphasis on what makes the project unique to them, and the significance of the project to both organizations and their respective audiences came through.

Along with the usual potential challenges of any outdoor video shoot (nervous speakers, weather, regular port operations, essential background noise, etc.), the video was filmed over the course of two days. The production team focused on storytelling tools that included interviews/voice overs, day-of footage in and around the Port and the expansion site, and historic still images that met the needs of both partner organizations.

## Lessons Learned

**Look for opportunities to partner, even if it doesn't seem a perfect match.** While working with LaBella on the engineering/construction aspect of the project has been seamless, the Port hadn't interfaced on the marketing/communications side. Working with that department, and their vendor 4th Coast Productions, reinforced the company's excellence across the board. Also, coming from different perspectives helped share fresh eyes/approaches that made both projects richer.

**Tell the story you know, before others try to tell your story.** The classic lesson from any challenging situation holds true even more in today's fast-paced news/social media cycle. By letting team members go beyond scripted talking points and cut through the noise, viewers were impressed, and opinions were changed because they recognized their neighbors/colleagues/friends and the extension of goodwill.

## Value

As a small port, it was an honor to be considered for such an important role in the development of a domestic supply chain for offshore wind, a new-to-the-US industry. The Port leadership and construction teams stepped up in every way possible to move the project forward responsibly and with an eye to the future. As circumstances shifted beyond the Port's control and the initial project was cancelled, the team also shifted and is now exploring alternative possibilities for the expansion site with equal enthusiasm and curiosity. The team is pushing forward with the same underlying points of pride: showing the highest levels of professionalism and care for the Port district and community, leaving the site environmentally better than when it was acquired, and continuing to reinforce the Port's role of regional and statewide economic driver.

The video project captures an important moment in time, tells a chapter of the Port's story, and shows the team members' pride in being involved.

## Quotes

"We have left the site in a safer, more environmentally friendly condition than it was when the Port of Albany obtained it. At LaBella, we live in the communities that we work in and take pride in that. I live locally. I live five minutes from the project site. My kids play sports on fields that are downwind from the site. It's an area adjacent to my community that we are making better, we're making safer. We're very proud of that."

-- **Ed Larkin, Vice President, LaBella Associates**

"We've seen more than 50% in the growth of the physical land size of the Port. We're now in four municipalities here. We're close to 450 acres. It's been really exciting. To be able to capture a new market in the United States, and to do it in the capital of New York, was an opportunity we couldn't miss."

-- **Megan Daly, Chief Commerce Officer, Port of Albany**

## Additional Information

As 2024 came to a close, political rhetoric heated up in advance of the U.S. Presidential election and the appetite/stability of the offshore wind industry in New York State seemed to falter. The Port maintained its commitment to the project, stressing its economic benefits and environmental stewardship, and adopted a phased-approach to the ongoing earthworks, including improvements to town and state roadways and the completion of the critical ultra-heavy capacity 420-foot span bridge connecting Beacon Island to the existing Port District. In 2025, while still receiving smaller grants toward construction – including an \$18.79 million grant from Empire State Development's FAST NY program for utility infrastructure work including the installation of an electrical substation, sanitary wastewater plant, and fire protection system, the Port of Albany issued a Request For Expressions of Interest (RFEI) for the expansion project. This RFEI's aim was to assess market interest and commercial potential for the site including industrial, maritime, emerging technology, and mixed-use concepts. This move signaled a broadening of the project's focus beyond offshore wind tower manufacturing.

"With five years in development and more than \$170 million already invested into site readiness, the Port is looking to realize Beacon Island's highest and best potential. The Port needs to respond to the shifting priorities at the Federal and State levels and within the maritime industry and be able to take full advantage of the expansion site's strategic location along the Hudson River, its multimodal connectivity, and pad-ready construction status to continue and expand the Port's role as an economic driver for the Capital Region and beyond."

-- **Richard J. Hendrick, Sr., CEO, Port of Albany**

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## Resources

**Port of Albany** video: <https://vimeo.com/1010109899/08930fb903>

**LaBella Associates** video: <https://vimeo.com/1010007980>