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Harbor study

I am writing in response to the letter of Nov. 6 by Mayor Hyde and city leaders concerning Waukegan Harbor cleanup. Among other things, that letter stated that a 2004 economic study of harbor cleanup is "discredited" and "ridiculous". It also inferred that the study lacked credibility because it was funded by USEPA.

I led that study. Your readers deserve information with which to evaluate their leaders' claims.

First, here is what the study concluded: The most important finding was that the residential property market in Waukegan could realize increases in value on the order of \$400 million to \$500 million from harbor cleanup. This result was supported by two different methods of analysis.

The study also found evidence that the benefits might spill over into other parts of Lake County. However, the evidence on this point is less definitive, as the study makes clear.

Second, the study was funded by USEPA as a grant, not a contract. This means that USEPA had no substantive control over its findings.

The study was conducted without political agenda by university and nonprofit researchers. The findings are solidly backed by data.

Third, the study has survived peer scientific review for publication in four different scholarly journals. Thus, the characterization of it as "discredited" and "ridiculous" falls far from reality. I have invited city officials to substantiate their claims.

Finally, on a personal note, having followed the Waukegan Harbor situation for several years and with the benefit of serious study of the property market and citizen opinions, I am troubled and disappointed that city officials appear poised to reject the current opportunity to end the city's legacy of contamination and open a new chapter in its relationship to its greatest natural asset, Lake Michigan.

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