



Wednesday, February 19, 2025 • 4:00 PM
Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, 726 Exchange St., Suite 525, Buffalo, NY
AGENDA

1. The meeting was called to order by Chair Daniel Castle at 4:04 PM.

2. Roll Call and Remarks

Members in Attendance: Daniel Castle, (Erie County); Kevin Kelly, (Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy); Nadine Marrero (City of Buffalo) and Carol Jasen Sampson (New York Power Authority).

Chair Castle welcomed Nadine Marrero as the appointed City of Buffalo representative to the Buffalo and Erie County Greenway Standing Committee.

3. Approval of the December 3, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion to adopt the meeting minutes of December 3, 2024.

Moved by Kevin Kelly, Second by Carol Sampson

Abstained: Nadine Marrero

Approved 3-0.

4. Designation of Chair, Vice-Chairs and Secretary for 2025-2026

Chair Castle stated at the first meeting of this Committee in 2025, the designation of Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary is required.

Motion for the continuation of the designation of Daniel Castle Chair, Kevin Kelly Vice-Chair, Nadine Marrero Vice-Chair and Carol Sampson as Secretary.

Moved by Carol Sampson, Second by Nadine Marrero

Approved 4-0.

5. Approval of the 2024 Annual Report: Activity through January 31, 2025

The 2024 annual report was presented by Ba Zan Lin, Associate Vice President, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, summarizing activities through January 31, 2025. The report highlighted the establishment of the Erie County Greenway Fund, supported by the Niagara Power Project relicensing settlement. The fund has received \$36 million and committed \$33 million to 110 projects since 2007.

Chair Castle noted the map on page 3 of the report has a map that shows the locations of all the greenway 110 projects supported by the Buffalo & Erie County Greenway Funds. He stated that those on the sign-in sheet will receive an electronic copy of this impressive map.

Motion to approve and adopt the 2024 Annual Report: Activity through January 31, 2025.
Moved by Kevin Kelly, Second by Nadine Marrero
Approved 4-0.

6. Approval of Modification to the 2025-2026 Buffalo & Erie County Greenway Fund Standing Committee Protocols: Eligibility Requirements, Guidelines, Priorities, Schedule & Application (“Protocols”)

Secretary Sampson specified the minor changes reflected in the Protocols that included updating the year to reflect 2025-2026 and listing Nadine Marrero as the City of Buffalo appointed representative to the Committee. The Grant Schedule for 2026 will be addressed in a future meeting this year.

Motion to approve and adopt the 2025-2026 Committee Protocols.
Moved by Kevin Kelly, Second by Nadine Marrero
Approved 4-0.

7. Public Comment (reserved for agenda items only)- NONE

8. Presentations of Submitted Projects:

Chair Castle explained that applicants will be given 7 minutes to describe your project and how it meets the criteria of what this Greenway Standing Committee is about and the importance of it. Committee members were given the opportunity to ask questions either during or after the presentation. Presentations were in the order as shown on the agenda.

1) **Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park: Master Plan**

Presenters: Paul Marzello and Bill Abbott

Project involves the development of a master plan for environmental and accessibility improvements at the Naval & Military site location. Requesting \$180,000 greenway funds to complete the master plan, with a focus on reconfiguring ship docking, entrance way configuration and improving accessibility. If awarded funding, a start time for the master plan Summer 2025.

The Naval Park is proposing a partnership with VernerJohnson PLLC, Museum Architects and Planners, for the development of a comprehensive Master Plan. VernerJohnson’s proposal includes an initial Site and Area Evaluation and Market Analysis, to familiarize the consultants with existing conditions and operations, as well as introducing them to Niagara River Greenway Plan, local government partners, and with the Western New York cultural, tourism and financial landscape. These studies will be followed by a Visioning and Feasibility Study, designed to identify issues and opportunities, and engaging Naval Park stakeholders in analyzing market data to create a realistic projection of financial factors in play.

Vice-Chair Kelly asked if the master plan will take into account all the moving parts including around the Park site.

Mr. Marzello responded that the master plan will take into account all the moving parts around the Park including the construction and demolition of Marine Drive housing authority buildings,

NFTA bus stop locations as the entranceway is configured.

2) Buffalo Scholastic Rowing Association (BSRA): North End Breakwall Design Engineering & Permitting

Presenter: Eileen Flaherty

The Project focuses on expanding the inclusive rowing program and repairing the break wall. Requesting \$43,940 for design and permitting with the Army Corp. of Engineers, with future construction costs to be determined.

The BSRA seeks to complete the development of its Ohio Street waterfront public access site on the Buffalo River to become the City's only universal access rowing center. BECGFSC awarded BSRA \$61,000 for the Design of the Inclusive Rowing Project in 2021 and \$314,310 to construct Phase One – Structural Improvements in March 2023 and \$257,290 to complete the ADA switchback ramp construction. To fully execute the strategic plan and offer the public a fully inclusive rowing experience, BSRA is in need of funding to complete the North End Break Wall design and ADA construction.

The proposed project timeline would extend from March 2025 to March 31, 2026. BSRA owns the land at 405 Ohio Street and 20 feet of land on the other side of Dead Man's Creek. Chair Castle asked if other funding is secured for the design or is that for construction. He also inquired if the facility is open to the public.

Ms. Flaherty responded that the Greenway request is for the initial design and permitting and it does not include matching funds. The determination and approval of the work scope and requirements associated permitting from the Corp. of Engineers will determine the next step and associated costs. She added that the facility is open to the public for rowing and kayaking.

3) Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper (BNR): Continued Expansion of the Blueway/Greenway Connections through the Buffalo Niagara Blueway

Presenter: Jeanne Beiter

The proposed project will comprise two further phases of the previously funded work (phase one). In phase two, BNW will enhance existing public waterfront sites to connect ecological habitat and existing trail systems by installing Blueway markers and interpretive signs at existing public water access sites that have a paddle craft launch or water access. This work will focus on expanding work in Buffalo and extending into locations along the Niagara River in Tonawanda (City and Town) and along Grand Island, Tonawanda Creek, and Ellicott Creek. Twenty-one Blue Way markers will increase the visibility of underutilized sites and signage will educate the public on topics of interest particular to the site.

BNW is requesting a total of \$331,966 for enhancing public water access throughout the Niagara River Greenway corridor to continue Phase 2 of this project.. Phase 3 includes advancing design for two additional sites for a project cost of \$230,792.

4) City of Buffalo: Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Park Greenway Construction- Phase 2
Presenter: Stephen Buccilli

The proposed project is to enhance Ralph Wilson Park directly and supports the Niagara River Greenway vision by focusing on connectivity, environmental stewardship, and public access. Aligned with the Greenway's goals, the project improves water access, shoreline, and habitat quality along the Niagara River, advancing its environmental sustainability objectives. The creation of Greenway pathways will connect key regional trails such as the Empire State Trail, Greenway, and Shoreline Trail, ensuring a continuous, accessible waterfront corridor. This enhances public access to the river, encourages recreational use, and promotes a seamless connection between Buffalo's urban spaces and natural areas. The project also supports the Greenway's principles of environmental restoration by improving edge habitats and integrating ecological design features. By expanding recreational opportunities, providing pathways for walking and biking, and fostering better interaction with the riverfront, the project contributes to the Greenway's overarching goal of creating a world-class public space that serves the community while preserving the natural environment.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park lies completely within the Niagara River Greenway which follows the entire western edge of the City of Buffalo along the water. Both the Shoreline Trail and Empire State Trail also pass directly through the park. Local, regional, and elected representatives have been actively involved throughout all stages of the project, from the conceptual design phase to schematic design, development, and construction documentation. This collaborative approach ensures that the community's voice is heard and considered at each step.

The City of Buffalo is requesting \$1,500,000 from the Buffalo and Erie County Greenway Fund for Phase 2 construction to enhance Ralph Wilson Park Pathways. The BECGFSC supported the project with awards totaling \$1,500,000 in 2021 and 2022 for the Pathways. The following are also pledged contributors: Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation (\$125 million); Great Lakes Commission (\$13 million); New York State (\$10 million); National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$7 million); Army Corps (\$4 million); Niagara River Greenway (\$3.75 million); City of Buffalo (\$3 million); and more.

5) Rotary of the Tonawanda's: Erie Canal Historic Site Renovation
Presenter: James Jones

The project site is a portion of the original Erie Canal as it was constructed in the 1820s parallel to the easterly shoreline of the Niagara River and between River Road. The site is currently owned and operated by Erie County. The project's landscape designer has prepared conceptual schematics for the revitalization of the historic site which primarily includes replacement of invasive plant species with native plant species along with paved trails to accommodate ADA compliant access within the site. The scope of work necessary would include conducting an update to the wetland delineation, surveying, invasive plant removal, native plant species plantings, interpretive signage and a picnic shelter which would be associated with the adjacent Shoreline/Empire State Trail.

The project is already underway with support from other funding sources and is scheduled to conclude construction and installation of signage by September 2025, prior to the World Canal Conference. Additional work to plan public art features will conclude by December 2025.

Requesting \$150,000 for engineering, hardscaping, and native plantings.

6) The Collaborative Center for Social Innovation, Inc.: Our Place, Our Purpose: Public Art Project

Presenters: Jalen Law and Apryle Schneeberger

The proposed project will engage high school students, community members, emerging and resident artists, environmental groups, and community-based organizations in the creation of public art murals along the Niagara River Greenway. Three murals will provide a cohesive, interconnected set of interactive artwork - spanning Buffalo, Tonawanda, and Grand Island - designed and created by the community to highlight the beauty and importance of our ecological, cultural and historical landscape. Each mural will reflect the individuality of each community, while unifying design elements will provide the continuity that connects them as parts of a greater whole.

Through collaborative visioning and public art days, participants will design and paint murals using eco-friendly polytab fabric, which will be installed on these public spaces. The project will take place in three phases over the course of 5 years, with the first phase beginning in 2025 and concluding June 2026. The first mural will be at the Black Rock Canal Park, with subsequent murals on the Shoreline Trail at Aqua Lane and Beaver Island Parkway. Uniquely, each mural will include interactive media elements that link to media and augmented reality immersive experiences. Like the murals themselves, the media will include storytelling elements such as community commentary and spotlights of the ongoing work of community-based organizations.

Phase one leverages programming for high school students during the 2024-2025 academic year, in which a group of high school students will engage in experiential learning to better understand the ecological and cultural landscape of the Greenway. This will include outings to local parks and waterfront landmarks, as well as a study of public art styles and interpretations. This planning stage programming is partially funded through a contract with the Buffalo Public Schools and through in-kind services of The Collaborative Center. The result of that programming will directly inform the summer 2025 programming in which a cohort of high school students will work with professional artists and educators to design the visuals for the Black Rock Canal Park Shoreline Trail Access point. This will include a minimum of 8 community engagements in ecological and cultural locations, such as Beaver Island State Park, Silo City and Freedom Park.

The Collaborative Center for Social Innovation is requesting \$131,291 for programming and Black Rock mural design and construction (Phase I). However, according to the "Artwork Permit Rider" from the Department of Transportation, the Design must be submitted to proceed with the permitting process. Without a permit, the construction process cannot be commenced. The cost for Phase I Planning and Design is \$67,800. The total cost of the first phase of the project is \$167,291. The total costs of Phases II and III are \$369,189 and \$427,928 respectively.

7) Town of Tonawanda: Riverwalk Parkway Multiuse Trail

Presenter: Matt Sutton

The Riverwalk Parkway Multiuse Trail Project includes the construction of a multiuse trail

through the Riverview Solar Technology Park improving community connectivity, public health, and accessibility. When complete, the Trail will elevate the area into a destination along the Niagara River Greenway by facilitating a connection between the Shoreline Trail, Erie County's Isle View Park, the Two Mile Creek Greenway Trail, and providing a recreational amenity for the 700 plus employees working at businesses within Riverview Solar Technology Park. By providing an off-road travel path and installing two crosswalks with beacons, the Project will enhance safety for those employed at, or passing through, Riverview Solar Technology Park, which sees significant delivery truck and other vehicle traffic.

The project will include a traffic signal and associated crosswalk at the intersection of Riverview Parkway and River Road to safely connect Riverwalk Parkway Multiuse Trail and Isle View Park. The Project will also include various trail amenities such as benches and signages to provide directional guidance. The Riverwalk Parkway Multiuse Trail is currently in the design phase and construction is expected to begin in late 2024 or early 2025.

The section of the Shoreline Trail adjacent to the Project is among the most heavily used trail systems in Western New York. Developing a trail connection between the Shoreline Trail and the Two Mile Creek Greenway Trail fosters an improved regional quality of life by connecting population centers to employment centers and recreational opportunities. The entire project area is within the Tonawanda Brownfield Opportunity Area (TOA), which contains one of the region's highest concentrations of brownfield and abandoned industrial sites. As the TOA Nomination Plan emphasizes, revitalization and enhancement of this area as a recreational amenity for businesses is critical to the redevelopment of Riverview Solar Technology Park. Investment in improvements within the TOA will aid in the economic revitalization and redevelopment of the River Road industrial corridor by enhancing pedestrian safety for employees and by providing an important recreational amenity for businesses in the area.

The Town has received grant funding from the New York State Department of Transportation and T.M. Montante, totaling \$2,120,000 to fund a portion of the Project. It is anticipated that Project costs will be higher than budgeted for and will result in a shortfall of funds. The Project will be owned by the Town of Tonawanda and will be maintained by the Town and adjacent property owners.

The Town of Tonawanda is requesting \$200,000 for construction of the Riverwalk Parkway Multiuse Trail. The construction will occur from July 2025 to March 2026.

9. Other Business

Chair Castle stated that the committee will deliberate and make funding decisions on these presented projects. Additional questions may be asked to the applicant. The next meeting will be on Friday, March 14, at 8:30 AM to announce the awards, at this location.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Keven Kelly, Second by Nadine Marrero.
Meeting adjourned 5:34pm.