

A Project Submission from

Friends of Silo City



Presented to the
Niagara River Greenway Commission



March 20, 2018

Project Description- Silo City Trailways

The Friends of Silo City is a newly formed New York non-profit corporation (501c3) whose mission is the "Creative Regeneration of a Historic Buffalo Site." This group formed in response to the increased attention and demand that has been recognized over the past few years for this unique and historic former industrial site along the Buffalo River.

This application aims to further explore improved access and better connectivity opportunities for bicycles and pedestrians to this one-of-a-kind attraction. It also considers ecological restoration and enhancement to the shoreline of the river and surrounding trail areas.

Silo City sits on the south shore of the Buffalo River just 600 yards from Lake Erie, and is a significant industrial heritage site that is comprised of the grandest collection of concrete grain elevators in the world. Today the massive structures that once provided grain and flour for much of the world now stand silently, connecting the water and the land to the sky. Reclaimed by nature and wildlife, and now engaged as a cultural space, Silo City has taken on a unique identity as a part of Buffalo's work towards a sustainable and dynamic city. The transformation of this property from an industrial hub to a recognizable cultural center has been remarkable, and it is still in its infancy of redevelopment and transition. It has become an active venue for cultural tourism, the arts, and recreation. It is a unique combination of Buffalo's ecological, cultural, recreational, scenic and heritage resources. With several buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the site is a regional treasure and an embodiment of our region's industrial past and regenerative future.

The Friends of Silo City are requesting \$40,000 for a Feasibility Study to determine how a trail can be best constructed in the short term that provides access from the Ohio Street Greenway into the facility, and that connects Silo City to Tiff Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor. A second phase and expanded opportunity would extend the trail along the south side of the Buffalo River, connecting to the impressive Concrete Central and Cargill Superior Elevators. The Concrete Central Elevator sits on a 45-acre site that was identified as a key location for habitat restoration in the Buffalo River Ecological Restoration Master Plan. This River trail could then continue on to link with the DL&W Greenway trail and bridge crossing, and then connect to Solar City, South Park Avenue and the entire South Buffalo community. We envision this trail providing access to formerly inaccessible areas along the river, and opening up a whole new world to cyclists, nature enthusiasts, and history buffs alike.

At quick glance, the trail to from Silo City to Tiff Nature Preserve has two possible locations: along the shores of the Buffalo River or along the abandoned railroad tracks that used to service Silo City. We are currently in preliminary negotiations with the adjacent private landowners to acquire the necessary property rights or easements for this project.

We also understand the potential complications and complexities of dealing with the rail companies. However, we hope to consider creative solutions that allow the trails to co-exist

with the adjacent rails, and to look to innovative solutions along the river, such as boardwalks and bridge structures.

Already a destination for its raw industrial beauty and its architectural importance, the addition of a formalized trail that would connect Silo City to surrounding amenities and attractions such as the Tifft Nature Preserve, Outer Harbor, DL&W corridor, Solar City, Larkinville, and much more, would be consistent with Niagara River Greenway principles of connectivity, improved access to the river, and environmental enhancements which support Eco-tourism. It would also promote the continuity of open space and habitats and provide for connections to related corridors and resources.

This project will also complement and add to previous investments by the Greenway Commission to Riverfest Park, Mutual Riverfront Park, Times Beach and Tifft Nature Preserves and other Buffalo River sites that are turning a once industrial and polluted river into a thriving recreational and ecological destination on the waterfront that the public wants to explore.

We envision a trail would link the many layers of history and interest together - - a trail that would include restoration of the land through native plantings and organic soil amendments, wayfinding signage that would include reference to the original inhabitants of the land, the Native American's, and that would optimize the symbiotic relationship between people and nature through a biodiverse ecosystem that will be reclaimed from its industrial past.

Project Location

Silo City is located along the Buffalo River at 85 Silo City Row. A portion of the site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012, called the American Grain Elevator Complex. The proposed trails would be built in phases: Phase 1 would link Silo City to Tifft Nature Preserve and Phase 2 would create a river trail that would extend beyond the Concrete Central to the DL&W trail at a minimum. This vital link would then open up further connections to South Buffalo, Larkinville and much more.



2. Consistency with the Niagara River Greenway Plan

The Silo City Trail system advances the Niagara Greenway Vision and Principles in the following categories: Sustainability, Accessibility, Ecological Integrity, Public Well-Being, Connectivity, Restoration, Authenticity, and Celebration, which will include community-based partnerships. It will improve access to waterfront resources and include restoration aspects along with interpretive and educational signage that will tie in with the area’s history as a Native American site as well as its industrial past.

Niagara Greenway Commission Principles

Sustainability

The proposed trail system would be designed to promote ecological sustainability by re-establishing a native and natural shoreline setting, including clearing the pathway of invasive plants. This would also include compost as a soil amendment to help to restore former industrial land. In recent years, Silo City has partnered with PUSH Blue to create a food-waste composting facility on the site that diverts 110 tons of organic waste from landfills annually,

and a native plant nursery to boost the biodiversity of our region. Having access to these resources would be a key attribute to the proposed trails.

Accessibility

The trail system would be accessible from both land and water (Blueway Trail), as there is a kayak launch currently at Silo City and many other launches nearby. The intention is to connect the Buffalo River to the Outer Harbor, increasing physical access between the two waterways. The trails would utilize the existing Ohio Street Greenway and Outer Harbor Trails as the starting framework, and extend the linkages to numerous other area sites and attractions. Accessibility between Silo City and Tifft Nature Preserve would transform the riverfront in this area. The linkages to and past the Cargill Superior and Concrete Central Elevators would provide dramatic new opportunities to the public. A linkage to the proposed DL&W Greenway and River crossing would provide a very desirable trail loop and access.

Ecological Integrity

Silo City has undergone an amazing transformation in recent years. We have collaborated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Tifft Nature Preserve, NYSDEC, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, and many schools, youth, and community groups to design and implement projects that ecologically enrich the post-industrial landscape. A pollinator meadow, planted and tended by Elmwood Village Charter School students, flourishes around the award-winning beehive called Elevator B. Our latest collaboration with the Rupp Family Foundation has seen the transformation of a gravel parking area into a series of vegetated ponds that filter stormwater run-off, surrounded by hedgerows of native trees to provide habitat for migratory birds. We have seen a plethora of wildlife return to the area, including fox, deer, coyote, waterfowl, peregrine falcons, and eagles. It is this sense of renewal that captivates and inspires wonder in the natural world, and which can be replicated along a River Trail that could potentially connect to a future Nature Preserve at Concrete Central.

Public Well-Being

Silo City, with its silos and grain elevators, has become an integral and unique part of any visit to Western New York. The proposed trails would allow the public to enjoy all that this site has to offer, while also connecting users to our important waterways and historic waterfront grain elevators and other attractions.

Connectivity

Silo City is an important node between the Inner and Outer Harbor. It is strategically located along the Ohio Street Greenway and is also an important visual icon as part of Elevator Alley along the Buffalo River. The local “Blueway” initiatives include Silo City and Elevator Alley as key attractions. To highlight, Silo City is a vital part of a cohesive experience to the City’s industrial and waterfront heritage. Connecting it to Tifft Nature Preserve and beyond would create a connection that does not now exist, as well as create a new and enhanced Riverside experience for hikers and bicyclists.

Restoration

The ecological restoration that has taken place at Silo City in recent years is remarkable and could serve as a catalyst for the surrounding area in the future. The former brownfields properties along the Buffalo River are all candidates for a similar transformation. This creative vision of Urban Regeneration could expand along the future trailways and beyond to create a Nature Trail that could potentially span all the way to the proposed “Highline” on the former DW & L railroads.

Authenticity

It is doubtful that a more authentic site exists in Western New York, with the silos and grain elevators essentially as they were at the beginning of the last century. The Erie Canal and the grain industry were instrumental in putting Buffalo on the map and the challenge of storing and moving grain efficiently spurred many engineering and architectural innovations in our backyard. Architects once studied the marvels of the Buffalo Grain Elevators. The history of the transformation of the silos, and Buffalo’s emergence from a small trading post to a western boomtown, are represented by Silo City. A trailway from here to the natural beauty of Tiff Nature Preserve, and to points along the Buffalo River and beyond, would create a very unique and authentic experience for users of the trail.

Celebration

Silo City is already a place to celebrate Buffalo’s industrial past and to create its bright future. The people of the region have enthusiastically embraced the site, with thousands attending events that celebrate the arts, music and the spirit of our community. From the Blues Festival to the Americana Sportsmen Festival to this year’s Bleu Fleuve Festival, the ambiance of live music reverberating off of the massive silos is a sight and sound to experience. Torn Space Theater, Boom Days, string quartets, opera, poetry readings and a soon-to-open restaurant and bar all add to the celebratory vibes of the site. Creating more access via a river trail will add to this unique experience. In the future, we envision more and more people accessing Silo City via bikes, kayaks and of course, walking.

Partnerships/Community Based

Silo City has been collaborating with many entities over the years. Partnerships are growing every year. The University of Buffalo, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, WNY Land Conservancy, the Valley Community Association and Old First Ward Community Center and elected officials have all supported and partnered with us and, we hope, will continue to do so in the future. We value and respect our supporters and partners and anticipate a high level of community support for this proposed project.

Niagara River Greenway Goals

We believe this project corresponds very nicely with the following Greenway Goals: improving access, making connections, protecting and restoring environmental systems, celebrating history and heritage and sparking revitalization and renewal, as summarized in previous sections of this submission.

Niagara River Greenway Criteria

Consistency with Niagara River Greenway Principles

This project is consistent, virtually across the board, with the Greenway Plan, especially in the areas of sustainability, accessibility, ecological integrity, public well-being, connectivity, restoration, authenticity, celebration, and partnerships.

Priority Status

This proposed project addresses a number of the priorities of the Niagara River Greenway Commission. It offers improved access to the waterfront, the development of an integrated trail system, including restoration aspects, and education about the region's cultural, natural and historic resources.

Focus Area

This proposed trailway system is located directly on the Buffalo River, one of the highest geographic priority areas. It is also adjacent to an existing trail/Greenway network, extending along the Buffalo waterfront and northwards along the Niagara River.

Environmental Soundness

If completed as envisioned, this nature trail will add benefits to both the environment of the riparian area of the Buffalo River, as well as increased wildlife habitat with the introduction of native plants and naturalized river shoreline areas. This could include establishment of river edge wetlands, similar to other initiatives by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and others along the Buffalo River.

Implementable

The Feasibility Study will commence immediately upon receipt of funding. We estimate it will take approximately 2-3 months to complete. In the interim, funding for construction of the trail will be pursued.

Economic Viability

The Feasibility Study will determine if the trailway is implementable and economically viable.

Availability of a Local Sponsor or Partner

Once the Feasibility Study is funded, we anticipate securing several partners to help with the implementation. Numerous parties are very interested in what this project could do for the waterfront areas.

Availability to match or leverage funds

We continue to seek input from a variety of stakeholders, visitors and various officials, along with neighborhood groups. Our work is ongoing to secure additional funding sources and project partners. This project touches on numerous interest areas, including recreation, history, ecological, entertainment and cultural, etc.

Consideration of other planning efforts

We are closely following the developments along the Buffalo River that our project can enhance, including the potential for a DL & W trailway that WNY Land Conservancy is proposing and a potential nature preserve at Concrete Central. We are also aware of the numerous initiatives completed or underway by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper.

Clear Benefits

Public access to the Buffalo River and connectivity between the Inner and Outer Harbors demonstrate a clear benefit to the public and to the vision of the Greenway as a world-class corridor. The linkages between Silo City and Tifft Nature Preserve and along the south shore of the Buffalo River are exciting prospects to explore.

3) Project Budget

We are requesting \$40,000 for the Feasibility Study, which breaks down to \$10,000 for administrative and planning costs and \$30,000 for Engineering/Landscape Architectural services.

4).Community and Government Support

We are continuing to seek input from a variety of stakeholders, visitors and various officials, along with neighborhood groups. Currently we have the support for the funding of the Feasibility Study from the following:

- Congressman Brian Higgins
- Senator Timothy Kennedy
- Assemblyman Sean Ryan
- Councilmember Christopher Scanlon
- Nancy Smith, WNY Land Conservancy
- Marisa Wigglesworth, President and CEO of Buffalo Museum of Science & Tifft Nature Preserve
- Peg Overdorf, Valley Community Association

Attachments:

- Context Map of project area
- Community letters of support
- About Silo City articles

Contact Information

Rick Smith, President of Rigidized Metal Corp and Friends of Silo City
658 Ohio St.
Buffalo, NY 14203

Phone: 716-849-4780

Fax: 716-849-0401

Email: KateGorman@rigidized.com

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
P. O. BOX 2508
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: **OCT 16 2017**

FRIENDS OF SILO CITY INC
658 OHIO STREET
BUFFALO, NY 14203-0000

Employer Identification Number:
82-2584517
DLN:
26053678001767
Contact Person:
CUSTOMER SERVICE ID# 31954
Contact Telephone Number:
(877) 829-5500
Accounting Period Ending:
November 30
Public Charity Status:
170(b)(1)(A)(vi)
Form 990/990-EZ/990-N Required:
Yes
Effective Date of Exemption:
July 20, 2017
Contribution Deductibility:
Yes
Addendum Applies:
No

Dear Applicant:

We're pleased to tell you we determined you're exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donors can deduct contributions they make to you under IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. This letter could help resolve questions on your exempt status. Please keep it for your records.

Organizations exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined you're a public charity under the IRC Section listed at the top of this letter.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that you're required to file Form 990/990-EZ/990-N, our records show you're required to file an annual information return (Form 990 or Form 990-EZ) or electronic notice (Form 990-N, the e-Postcard). If you don't file a required return or notice for three consecutive years, your exempt status will be automatically revoked.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that an addendum applies, the enclosed addendum is an integral part of this letter.

For important information about your responsibilities as a tax-exempt organization, go to www.irs.gov/charities. Enter "4221-PC" in the search bar to view Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, which describes your recordkeeping, reporting, and disclosure requirements.

FRIENDS OF SILO CITY INC

Sincerely,

Stephen a. martin

Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements



**New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

www.nysparks.com

Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Rose Harvey
Commissioner

August 17, 2012



Sir or Madam
RiverSullivan Corp.
658 Ohio St.
Buffalo, NY 14203

Re: American Grain Elevator Complex
87 Childs Street, Buffalo, NY 14203
Erie County

Dear Sir or Madam :

I am pleased to inform you that the above referenced property was listed August 7, 2012 on the National Register of Historic Places. As you may know, the National Register is the nation's official list of properties worthy of preservation. Listing on the National Register recognizes the importance of these properties to the history of our country and provides them with a measure of protection. *In addition, owners of income producing properties may qualify for federal and/or state income tax benefits. Homeowners in qualifying census tracts may qualify for state income tax benefits for approved work.* Properties owned by municipalities and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to apply for state historic preservation matching grants.

If you would like more information about any of these programs, please contact your field representative, in this case, Dan McEneny, at the *Division for Historic Preservation* (518) 237-8643 ext. 3257. The Division maintains a continuing interest in all registered properties and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Ruth L. Pierpont
Deputy Commissioner for Historic
Preservation

BRIAN HIGGINS
26TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
VICE RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRADE

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

CO-CHAIR, CANCER CAUCUS
CO-CHAIR, NORTHERN BORDER CAUCUS
CO-CHAIR, REVITALIZING OLDER CITIES
TASK FORCE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

2459 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3306
(202) 226-0347 (FAX)

726 EXCHANGE STREET
SUITE 601
BUFFALO, NY 14210
(716) 852-3501
(716) 852-3929 (FAX)

800 MAIN STREET
SUITE 3C
NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14301
(716) 282-1274
(716) 282-2479 (FAX)
higgins.house.gov

March 16, 2018

Mr. Gregory Stevens
Chairman
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

Re: Support for Silo City trail planning funding application

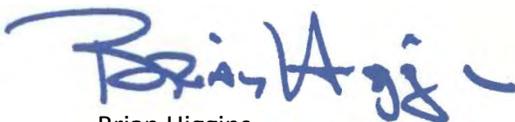
Dear Mr. Stevens:

It has been conveyed to me that the Friends of Silo City is advancing a planning process for the development of trail infrastructure to connect Silo City to other, nearby public recreational and habitat resources. Further, it has been conveyed to me that they are seeking or will seek a consistency determination from the commission and subsequent funding for their initial planning efforts from the standing committees. I write today to convey my support for their efforts.

Silo City has captured the imagination of the public and has successfully reconnected thousands of Western New Yorkers and visitors to our rich industrial heritage. Further, providing public access to the improving but still fragile ecosystem of the Buffalo River helps to foster a sense of ownership and stewardship toward the river on the part of the general public which is a necessary component of an overall strategy to protect the health of the river prospectively.

This trail infrastructure planning initiative is plainly consistent with the 2007 *Plan* and is worthy of support from the commission and the standing committees. Thank you very much for your ongoing leadership and commitment to the responsible stewardship of our region's most important natural resources.

Sincerely,



Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

BUFFALO SOCIETY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

BUFFALO MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND TIFFT NATURE PRESERVE

1020 HUMBOLDT PARKWAY, BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14211-1208 (716)896-5200 FAX(716)897-6723

March 15, 2018

Mr. Gregory D. Stevens, Chair
The Board of Commissioners
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

Dear Mr. Stevens and Commissioners,

I would like to offer my support for the Friends of Silo City's proposal for funding to complete a feasibility study to assess the potential construction of a multi-use trail to connect Silo City to Tifft Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor. Beyond the successful completion of the first phase of such a trail, a second phase could potentially extend the trail along the Buffalo River to Concrete Central, a 45-acre site that was identified as a key location for habitat restoration in the Buffalo River Ecological Restoration Master Plan.

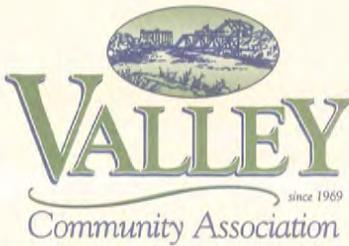
Silo City is a significant industrial heritage site and an active venue for cultural tourism, the arts, and recreation. It represents a unique combination of Buffalo's natural, cultural, recreational, scenic and heritage resources. With several buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the site is a regional treasure and an embodiment of our area's industrial past and regenerative future. Already a destination for its raw industrial beauty and its architectural importance, the addition of a trail that would connect it to the amenities at Tifft Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor and beyond would be consistent with, and would effectively forward, Greenway goals of connectivity, improved access to the River, and eco-tourism.

Investing in a feasibility study is a highly strategic initial step. On behalf of Tifft Nature Preserve, and as neighbors on the Outer Harbor with a shared commitment to our community and the good stewardship of our region's natural resources, we are pleased to support this proposal.

Sincerely,



Marisa Wigglesworth
President and CEO



March 12, 2018

Mr. Gregory Stevens, Chair
The Board of Commissioners
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

Dear Mr. Stevens and Commissioners,

I am writing to recommend funding for Friends of Silo City to request a feasibility study to determine if a multi-use trail can be constructed that will connect Silo City on Childs Street to Tift Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor. Silo City, once a series of vacant grain elevators with one working elevator has become a significant active industrial heritage site.

Silo City currently hosts cultural and recreational tourism. The tours to the top of the grain elevator offer education of the inner workings of the grain industry while offering scenic views of Buffalo's waterfront. A Blues Festival draws thousands for a daylong celebration of blues music while a long list of vendors related to the ecological habitat of the waterfront are on site.

Several of the buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The site is a regional treasure offering public access embodying the region's industrial past and demonstrating what can be done to maintain these treasures into the future.

Photographers come from around the world several times each year for a symposium on the raw industrial beauty and the architecture. The proposed project would draw more people to connect with the many amenities at Tift Nature Preserve and the Out Harbor which includes a New York State park, Erie Canal Harbor, Wilkinson Point Park, and the Buffalo Ornithological Society bird watching park. Torn Space Theater performs productions and Just Buffalo offers literary performances. The Sportsman American Festival offers American music. Silo City is a venue reaching all segments of the community.

The project is consistent with the goals of the Buffalo Niagara Greenway Commission of connectivity, improved public access to Buffalo's waterways, celebrating Buffalo heritage and enhancing eco-tourism in Buffalo. I highly recommend and deem Friends of Silo City is consistent with Niagara Greenway and hope you give your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Margaret Overdorf
Executive Director

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Buffalo River Community
with
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Senior Programs
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Neighborhood
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FAX 716-823-4254

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SEAN M. RYAN
Assemblyman 149th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

65 Grant Street
Buffalo, New York 14213
716-885-9630
FAX: 716-885-9636

Room 540
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12248
518-455-4886
FAX: 518-455-4890

ryans@nyassembly.gov

March 14, 2018

Niagara River Greenway Commission
Attn: Gregory Steven, Commissioner
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

Dear Mr. Stevens:

I would like to offer my support of this funding application from the Friends of Silo City. The Friends of Silo City are requesting funding for a Feasibility Study to determine if a multi-use trail can be constructed that will connect Silo City to Tiffit Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor. A second phase of the trail could potentially continue along the Buffalo River to Concrete Central, a 45-acre site that was identified as a key location for habitat restoration in the Buffalo River Ecological Restoration Master Plan.

Silo City is a significant industrial heritage site and an active venue for cultural tourism, the arts, and recreation. It is a unique combination of Buffalo's natural, cultural, recreational, scenic and heritage resources. With several buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the site is a regional treasure and an embodiment of our region's industrial past and regenerative future.

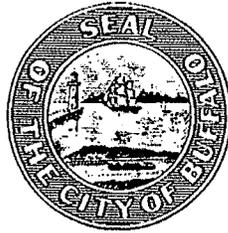
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Sincerely,

SEAN M. RYAN
MEMBER OF ASSEMBLY

cc: Greenway Board of Commissioners

The Buffalo Common Council



CHRISTOPHER P. SCANLON
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE
SOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBER
65 NIAGARA SQUARE, 1401 CITY HALL
BUFFALO, NY 14202-3318
PHONE: 97160 851-5169 • FAX (716) 851-4294
E-mail: cscanlon@city-buffalo.com

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WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT
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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
LEGISLATION
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LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANTS
PEGGY SHEA
RACHEL REID

March 12, 2018

Mr. Gregory Stevens, Chair
The Board of Commissioners
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

Dear Mr. Stevens and Commissioners,

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher P. Scanlon".

Christopher P. Scanlon
South District Council Member
President Pro-Tempore

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY
SENATOR, 63RD DISTRICT

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND SMALL BUSINESS
INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL
INVESTMENT

COMMITTEES

BANKS

CULTURAL AFFAIRS, TOURISM, PARKS
AND RECREATION

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FINANCE

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RULES

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STATE-NATIVE AMERICAN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE

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LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
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(518) 426-6851 FAX

□ **DISTRICT OFFICE:**
2239 SOUTH PARK AVENUE
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14220
(716) 826-2683 OFFICE
(716) 826-2793 FAX

E-MAIL ADDRESS:
KENNEDY@NYSENATE.GOV

March 15, 2018

Mr. Gregory Stevens, Chair
The Board of Commissioners
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

Dear Mr. Stevens and Commissioners,

I write to express my strong support for the application for funding from the Friends of Silo City. As the State Senator representing much of the area that would be impacted by this funding, I appreciate the organization's commitment to our region's betterment and beautification.

The Friends of Silo City are requesting funding for a Feasibility Study to determine if a multi-use trail can be constructed in order to connect Silo City to Tiffit Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor. A second phase of the trail could potentially continue along the Buffalo River to Concrete Central, a 45-acre site that was identified as a key location for habitat restoration in the Buffalo River Ecological Restoration Master Plan.

Silo City is a significant industrial heritage site and an active venue for cultural tourism, the arts, and recreation. It is a unique combination of Buffalo's natural, cultural, recreational, scenic and heritage resources. With several buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the site is a regional treasure and an embodiment of our region's industrial past and regenerative future.

Already a destination for its raw industrial beauty and its architectural importance, the addition of a trail that would connect it to the amenities at Tiffit Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor and beyond would be consistent with Greenway goals of connectivity, improved access to the River, and eco-tourism.

Again, I strongly support this funding request from the Friends of Silo City. Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, I welcome your call.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy M. Kennedy".

Timothy M. Kennedy
New York State Senator, 63 District



March 15, 2018

Mr. Gregory Stevens, Chair
The Board of Commissioners
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

Dear Mr. Stevens and Commissioners,

I would like to offer our support for this application from the Friends of Silo City. The Friends of Silo City are requesting funding for a Feasibility Study to determine if a multi-use trail can be constructed that will connect Silo City to Tifft Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor. A second phase of the trail could potentially continue along the Buffalo River to Concrete Central, a 45-acre site that was identified as a key location for habitat restoration in the Buffalo River Ecological Restoration Master Plan.

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, not-for-profit land trust that works with landowners, municipalities, and other organizations to help them conserve their most cherished natural areas and working farms. Since we were founded in 1991, we have helped protect more than 6,500 acres of land on more than 80 properties throughout Western New York. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of 1000+ land trusts nationwide, including 90 in New York State. Land trusts have protected 56 million acres of land. Much of our conservation work is focused along the Niagara River Greenway, and we have recently been working more in the City of Buffalo.

Silo City is a significant industrial heritage site and an active venue for cultural tourism, the arts, and recreation. It is a unique combination of Buffalo's natural, cultural, recreational, scenic and heritage resources. With several buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the site is a regional treasure and an embodiment of our region's industrial past and regenerative future.

Already a destination for its raw industrial beauty and its architectural importance, the addition of a trail that would connect it to the amenities at Tifft Nature Preserve and the Outer Harbor and beyond would be consistent with Greenway goals of connectivity, improved access to the River, and eco-tourism. The proposed trail also perfectly complements our own efforts to create a new trail along the abandoned DL&W railroad corridor that connects Canalside to the Buffalo River across from Solar City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy R. Smith".

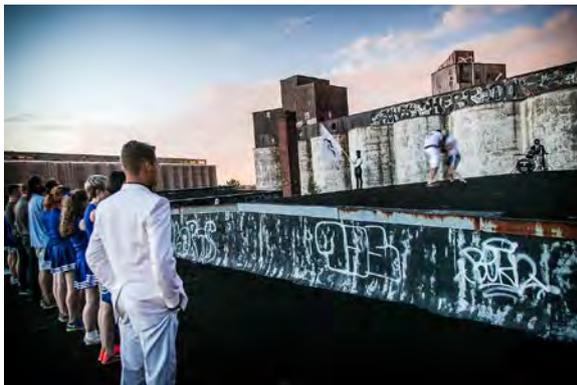
Nancy R. Smith
Executive Director



SILO CITY BUFFALO

The grain elevators of Buffalo comprise the most outstanding collection of elevators in the United States and collectively represent the variety of construction materials, building forms and technological innovations that revolutionized the handling of grain. Although a small number of sites have been demolished, nearly twenty elevators dating from 1897 to 1954 have survived the collapse of the Great Lakes grain trade. Most are abandoned and only a few are still being used in the grain industry. Together, they form an extraordinary landscape of dense, sculptural verticality clustered along the Buffalo River.

Rick Smith bought the group of four elevators behind his metal workshop in 2005. Having prevented their demolition, removed commercial pressure and spent a decade clearing rubble, Rick and his team reopened the gates and invited people from Buffalo and beyond to help determine Silo City's future. The site has become a laboratory for the arts and industry, with cavernous spaces and dramatic landscapes transformed through the arts, horticulture, education, urban sport and heritage tourism.



The privately-funded initiative gives the grain elevators of Silo City time and public access to see if they can find their own way forwards. One has been repaired and returned to use as a commercial grain store while the others are now part of an extraordinary experiment in slow-burn regeneration. New uses are evolving organically and intuitively through the interest of local people, underpinned by a strong sense of shared custodianship. University of Buffalo students are regular visitors. Visual arts and music festivals welcome 15,000 visitors over a single weekend. The dramatic industrial landscapes that ebb and flow between the elevators are being gradually transformed through wild

flower meadows, bee gardens and sustainable riparian landscapes designed for phytoremediation, biodiversity and water management.

The project is at a critical stage, on the brink of securing pioneer tenants from which a colony can grow. The regenerative potential of the site is intertwined with the wider city, still in transition from industrial predominance with growing strengths in higher education, banking, life science and food production. As part of a potential regeneration mix, it is exciting to imagine how some of the 23 million annual visitors to Niagara Falls can be encouraged the few miles upriver to Buffalo. Material evidence of a prosperous past, Silo City has a critical role to play in pursuit of a vibrant, post-industrial future for itself and the city.



Miriam Kelly RIBA, ARB, AABC

Miriam is a British architect experienced in the adaptive reuse of heritage sites. She first visited Silo City in 2013 as part a Winston Churchill Fellowship during which she visited sixty industrial regeneration projects in Europe and the USA. She works as a preservation architect in New York City, and writes, teaches and lectures on industrial heritage issues.

Photos courtesy of Torn Space



Building Silo City

Recipe for industrial redevelopment:
Take empty grain elevators, add vision.

For years, Rick Smith C'83 worked in the shadow of a cluster of concrete grain elevators in Buffalo. But like many who grew up in the area, he never gave much thought to the hulking relics of an industrial past that had put New York's second city on the map. Most of them had been abandoned and were deteriorating and splashed with graffiti.

Then one day Conagra Brands, the packaged-food manufacturer that owned three of the elevators, responded to Smith's request for an easement to accommodate the expansion of his family business by inviting him to check out the elevators.

"The elevators turned out to be way cooler than I thought," Smith says. "Standing under them, I really got a sense of their castle-like structures and how the river has shaped their geometries."

Smith learned that the company was looking to unload its 12-acre site altogether. He bit, picking up the land and the elevators for \$120,000. It was a great deal, but he didn't quite know what to do with his new acquisition.

"I was mostly overwhelmed," he says. "I thought, 'Wow, this is a lot of stuff!' The sheer scale, the height, the volume." The elevators typically rise higher than 150 feet, and each one can hold more than a million bushels of storage.

Today, the chirp of birds hiding in native grasses and the *lap-lap-lap* of kayakers on the Buffalo River accompany the crunch of gravel underfoot as visitors arrive



to enjoy anything from a performance to an art exhibit to a wedding. It's all part of what the 56-year-old Smith has dubbed Silo City, which operates a thriving performing and visual-arts program and, increasingly, rents itself out for private functions. But that wasn't originally the plan.

Smith and his partners first latched onto an idea of using the facility to make ethanol. The notion floundered when they discovered that the city's infrastructure—its rail lines, its natural gas system—might not be up to the task. "Plus," says Smith, "the neighborhood didn't really want to become industrial again."

In 2011, an enthusiastic group of preservationists and architects toured the complex and "confirmed what we had begun thinking," Smith says. "The conference served as a catalyst

to open up the elevators and get people in to see if they liked them." The next Spring, Boom Days—an annual festival to shoo away winter that Smith and others had created a decade before—moved to Silo City, finding a permanent home.

Then came the artists, at Smith's invitation. In 2012, a local theater company, Torn Space, staged *Motion Picture*, using the exterior of one grain elevator as a surface to project both video and light, telling the story of a soldier preparing for and engaging in battle. Other colorful productions have since followed.

Last summer, architecture students at the University of Buffalo created 10 small "reflection spaces" from which to contemplate the silos and their surrounding meadows. Other artists have shot videos and created temporary installations inside the silos themselves; poets and chamber

"We want to help heal these old industrial grounds."

musicians revel in their moodiness and their reverberations.

In a way, Smith and the elevators were made for each other, each asset-rich but difficult-to-peg, each in need of a boost. Born in Cleveland, he relocated with his family to Buffalo as a kid and stayed there until college. After graduating from Penn, where he majored in economics, Smith bounced around the globe, working for a safari outfit in South Africa, as a squash pro in Colorado, writing songs in Ireland, and then pursuing a career in music more seriously, putting out four CDs of what he terms "Americana, not country." Whatever he is, Smith

ALUMNI

says, he's *not* an urban cowboy, despite the 10-gallon hats and dusters he favors.

When family matters brought him back to Buffalo, Smith took the reins of Rigidized, the sheet-metal fabricator that his grandfather founded in 1940. The firm uses a patented process to roll three-dimensional textured patterns onto steel surfaces like elevator interiors, helicopter floors, even SEPTA doors.

"I wrote my final paper at Penn on the demise of the steel industry," Smith says with a laugh, "and I ended up immersed in steel."

Indeed, Bethlehem Steel and Lackawanna Iron and Steel once had large presences in Buffalo. But for more than a century now, those concrete silos have helped define the city.

When the Erie Canal opened in 1825 and eased the transport of Midwestern wheat to the Hudson River, Buffalo boomed. It began building grain elevators, which scooped grain from incoming ships and tossed it down into the cylindrical silos, where it was sorted for delivery throughout the East Coast and overseas. The first silo to be constructed by pouring concrete into slip forms was Buffalo's American Elevator in 1906. Local designers also pioneered silo arrays, gifting Buffalo with an undulating, corrugated form that has proved iconic. During their heyday, more than 30 elevators lined the Buffalo riverfront. Today fewer than half survive, and only

a handful are still used for their original purpose. (That waft of eau-de-Cheerios in the air comes from the Gold Medal flour that General Mills produces here.)

But increasingly, the empty ones are being repurposed. A beer garden has opened amidst the ruins of a grain elevator as part of Riverworks, a complex that offers silo-climbing, an indoor skating rink, a brewery, and a bar retrofitted into an existing grain silo. Elsewhere, another abandoned elevator plays host to a light show. Three miles south of downtown lies SolarCity, a gigantic solar-panel manufacturing operation recently acquired by Elon Musk C'97 W'97 that has become a linchpin of Governor Andrew Cuomo's "Buffalo Billion" economic development initiative.

On weekends, kayakers zip around the waters of "Elevator Alley," where six of the hulking concrete complexes cluster. It's a striking sight for Smith.

"In the old days, we'd see a boat a summer," he says. Silo City itself is constantly changing—this spring, it will unveil a new tapas bar in a rundown office on the property. "For the first time in 10 years, we'll have running water," Smith chuckles.

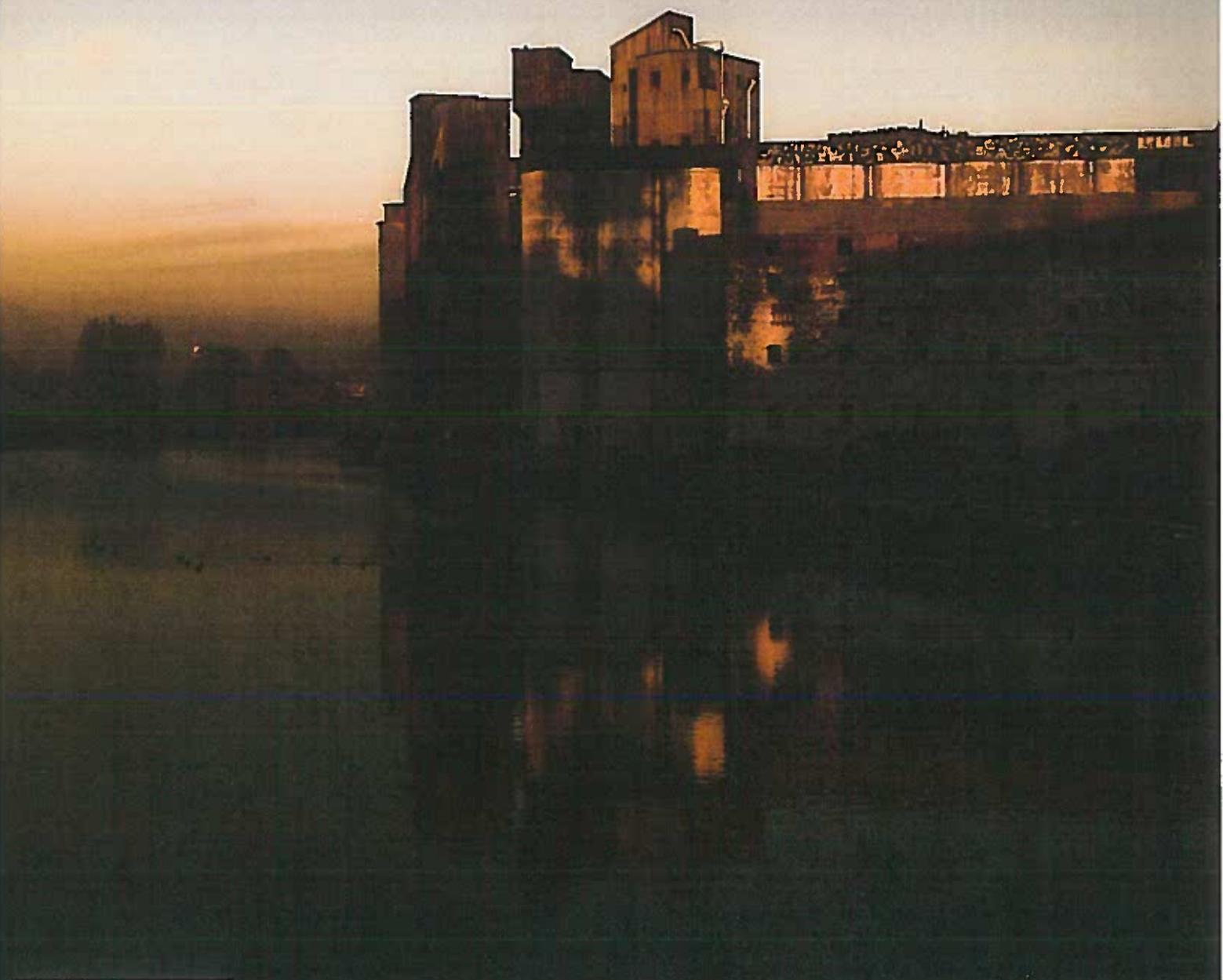
Still, he adds, he wants to take it slow ... and easy. "I want to look around the site for opportunities, but without stepping too heavily. We want to keep growing, but most of all we want to help heal these old industrial grounds."

—JoAnn Greco

traffic

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trafficeast.com



* Excerpt from Traffic East Article

wooden swing, named for his first child, Nora.

Silo City's development as a nature preserve—or at least a laboratory for ecological experiments and a space that encourages healthy biodiversity—has proceeded in a manner similar to the site's evolution as the city's most sought-after alternative arts venue: guided by general but unbending principles and open to, as the poet Carl Dennis once wrote to me in an entirely unrelated matter, "the magic of the happenstance."

You might say the site's artistic and ecological activities are also equally driven by collaboration: Just Buffalo, Torn Space, ELAB, Hollywood location scouts, architects, and individual artists of every medium on one side; PUSH Buffalo, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, and local public school students, Girl Scouts, and aspiring bioengineers and conservationists on the other.

The only difference is that the continued artistic activity depends on artists. Collaboration may be driving ecological projects at the silos—but they'll continue and transform with or without human encouragement. "I love what's happening ecologically on its own, without anyone interfering, even myself," Josh says. He points out that one of the elevators on the site and the railroad allowing access to it were in use up to six months ago. Already it's almost completely vegetated, he says. "You can see it happening."

But there is a difficult balance to strike in this. "We're trying to use the site to its highest potential," Josh says. "Like Rick says, 'It's always becoming.'" That's true for ecology, economics, popular engagement, and aesthetics. And these things are inextricably enmeshed. The site's attraction as an arts venue will fund and generate support for the conservation projects; the conservation projects will offset and mediate the "heavier" footprint of bigger events and permanent alterations like the tapas-and-cocktail bar, or whatever else Rick pulls from under his cowboy hat. A zipline, for example—or a helipad—would destroy this balance.

The concrete is "sacred," as Rick says. The steel is sacred. The natural world, the landscape, the plants and animals native to this former floodplain of the Buffalo River, all that too is sacred. But sacrality depends on a human observer, a sanctifier. To be sacred (from the Latin sacer) is to be consecrated, dedicated, or set aside—as opposed to the profane (from the Latin pro for before or without and fanum for temple), that which has no special purpose, that which lies outside the sacralized space, the sanctum ... the silos. Sacrality is relative to and depends upon a participant—which is why the silos that for years echoed with commerce and profanities can now be "dedicated" by thousands at City of Night; why the meadows, which belong to indifferent nature, can be "consecrated" in the public rituals of Torn Space; and why Rick Smith can hang a rope and a board from a tall tree and name it for his daughter, the set-aside place within the set-aside place, the adyt of his siloed sanctum sanctorum.

How is Silo City different from Riverworks, the Kellogg plant, the empty Gehlue Annex or Concrete-Central, or any

other ruin, venue, or redevelopment project in Buffalo?

I flash back to Swannie telling me about his favorite time of year here: January and early February, he says, the coldest days in our climate. "I wake up in the morning and the air is still, but the sun's up," he says. Snow lies on the ground in "little flakes like diamonds," and "the air is crisp and glittering."

The difference is worship.

The silos will stand, and remain as open to the public as possible, they will attract new artists, architects, engineers, admirers, because of Rick and Swannie. Because of Rick and Swannie they will be kept free from the destructive influences of capital and her cousin, bad taste. This summer, Marine A will reverberate with poetry and music; a stranger to the city will leave, eyes singing because of Noah Falck and Just Buffalo. On another night a crowd will gather to experience catharsis together, reconsider the nature of theatre, of experience, of connectedness because of Dan Shanahan and Torn Space. All across the city, from the Barrel Factory to the Gypsy Parlor to PAUSA to the North Park scores of other artists from every discipline will remake, create, and invite, inspired in their work by experiences they had at Silo City. Without knowing it, the bugs and birds and burrowers will add to the thriving biodiversity of the site, will join in the fecund entanglement of old concrete and new life, because of Josh Smith. Building and engineering students will rely on the site as a laboratory for their experiments—movie directors and South Buffalo retirees alike will rely on the site for inspiring walks—children will continue to come here to learn about their city's past, to talk about the value of food and work and art and preservation and the environment.

I recall something Rick said earlier: "We were the best at something. Let's get back to that." What "that" is doesn't really matter—it's whatever fits in the fingers, whatever falls along the lifelines of a Buffalonian's hand. The point is not to know "what" you're doing, any more than Harry R. Wait knew what his slipform silos of 1906 would inspire and engender. The point is saying "yes," is daring, is being ready to pitch in when the moment comes.

Or, as Rick says, "It's about these collaborations. It's about getting these guys to do stuff together." That's what makes Silo City—and the people who've (re)created it—different, special. "You don't know what you're going to get into, but that's the fun." This doesn't guarantee 10,000 jobs; it doesn't offer any prizes; it promises only what it asks for in return: an unqualified yes.

"And then you say, 'OK. Let's do some stuff.'"

Thanks to Michele Berley, Chuck LaChiusa, the Buffalo History Museum, and staff of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Central Library's Grosvenor Room, as well as the authors of all the books, articles, and web pages dedicated to Buffalo's grain silos, then and now, for their help in telling this story.