

## **Niagara River Greenway Commission Consultation and Review Form**

Date of Submittal: 9/4/2025

Project Registration Number (*office use only*):

Type of Review Required (please check one):

- ☐ Mandatory Consultation for proposals seeking Greenway Funding  
☐ Voluntary Review and/or Endorsement for proposals not seeking Greenway Funding

### **PROJECT SPONSOR INFORMATION**

|                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Name:                     | Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy |
| Mailing Address:          | 84 Parkside Avenue, Buffalo       |
| State:                    | NY                                |
| Zip Code:                 | 14214                             |
| Federal ID#:              | 22-2720927                        |
| Charities Registration #: | 056775                            |

### **PROJECT TYPE** (Please check only ONE)

- ☐ Trail Development / Improvement ☐ Interpretation / Cultural Monuments  
☐ Ecosystem / Riparian Habitat Restoration ☐ Stewardship  
☒ Niagara River Greenway Placemaking / Public Access / Wayfinding

### **FUNDING COMMITTEE**

- ☐ Host Community Standing Committee ☐ Ecological Standing Committee  
☒ Buffalo and Erie County Standing Committee ☐ State Parks Standing Committee  
☐ Unsure at this time / N/A

### **TOTAL AMOUNT REQUESTED**

\$132,000

### **ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES**

| Source                                                                                                                                                   | Amount                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b><u>Preservation Opportunity Fund through the<br/>Preservation League of NYS – LOI submitted<br/>September 2025; final decisions February 2026</u></b> | <b><u>\$20,000</u></b> |
|                                                                                                                                                          |                        |

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

|                                                                      |                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Project Name:                                                        | <u>Restoration of Stairs at MLK Jr. Park</u> |
| Location (include GPS coordinates if possible):                      | MLK Jr. Park<br>42.904665, -78.842345        |
| Project Site Address:                                                | MLK Jr. Park                                 |
| State:                                                               | NY                                           |
| Zip Code:                                                            | 14211                                        |
| Minor Civil Division(s):                                             | City - Buffalo                               |
| County:                                                              | Erie                                         |
| Project Proponent Property Interest (own, lease, easement or other): | Management agreement                         |

**AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL**

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Name:             | <u>Catie Stephenson</u>     |
| Title:            | Executive Director          |
| Business Address: | 84 Parkside Avenue. Buffalo |
| State:            | NY                          |
| Zip Code:         | 14214                       |
| Work Number:      | (716) 838-1249              |
| Cell Number:      | (202) 355-4843              |
| E-Mail Address:   | catie@bfloparks.org         |

**PROJECT POINT OF CONTACT**

|                      |                                   |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Name:                | <u>Charlene Secondo</u>           |
| Title:               | Special Projects Manager          |
| Organization / Firm: | Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy |
| Business Address:    | 84 Parkside Avenue, Buffalo       |
| State:               | NY                                |
| Zip Code:            | 14214                             |
| Work Number:         | (716) 838-1249                    |
| Cell Number:         |                                   |
| E-Mail Address:      | Charlene@bfloparks.org            |



## **Niagara River Greenway Commission**

### *Consultation and Review Form: Project Narrative*

#### *Restoration of the MLK Jr Park stairs*

1. If approved, funding will be used to restore granite stairs and a connective stone wall that have eroded over time and can no longer be used. These stairs are an original feature in MLK Jr. Park and serve as a vital connection and access point between trails and recreational amenities on the eastern side of the park and the playgrounds, splash pad, and natural, tree-covered areas on the western side of the park. BOPC has closed these stairs to public use. This project can begin as soon as funding is secured. Restoration includes the following scope of work:
  - For stairs: Demo, salvage and reinstall stone treads and cheek walls, including 24 tread stones, 22 cheek wall units
    - Pin, epoxy and patch treads
    - Inspect stringers (additional costs may apply if stringers are compromised)
    - Install joints sealant to all tread joints
    - Repair tread and cheek wall units
    - Add 1 stone tread pin, epoxy and patch
  - For center stone wall connecting Stairs
    - Rake out and repoint all stone joints
    - Remove coping stone end joint material
    - Install silicone joint sealant

This project is important because MLK Jr. Park is one of the most active parks in the City of Buffalo. The park is historically significant as it is one of the six major parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as part of his connected park system. The park is activated by community groups who host more than 20 events each year with an estimated attendance of over 40,000. Many of these events are culturally significant and managed by members of the community, including the Juneteenth Festival, Pine Grill Jazz Reunion, the Pappy Martin Legacy Masten Jazz Festival, and more. It is activated by park neighbors and city-wide residents to host family events. In 2025, there have been almost 100 shelter rentals, with an estimated attendance of about 5,000 people.

2. This project aligns with the Niagara River Greenway vision through the following goals, principles, and criteria.

The project aligns with the following **goals**:

- i. *Improve access* – With these historic granite steps closed for public use, access to both sides of the park is hindered. This project will restore connection within the public and enhance public access.
- ii. *Extend Olmsted's Legacy* – Restoration of a historic, Olmsted-design park feature extends and ensures Olmsted's legacy for future generations.

This project aligns with the following **principles**:

- i. *Excellence* – Restoration of this feature ensures excellence in meeting a world-class standard. Having critical park features, especially those that are historic, closed off for public use and in extreme disrepair, negatively impacts the pride the community can take in their park.
- ii. *Accessibility* – Restoration of this stairway provides needed accessibility between the eastern and western sides of the park.
- iii. *Authenticity* – Historic park features provide a connection to the character and history of the location. This original stairway connects this generation with Olmsted's legacy.
- iv. *Community Based* – While this project was not part of BOPC's Five-Year Planning effort for capital enhancement within the Olmsted system, the organization must, at times, prioritize new projects that are critical to park user safety and access. This is one such project. This project has been vetted through the Olmsted Community Alliance, the community feedback process that was established through BOPC's Five Year Plan.

This project aligns with the following **criteria**:

- i. *Consistency with Principles* – This project is consistent with four Greenway principles.
- ii. *Focus Area* – This project is within the focus area of the Greenway.
- iii. *Implementable* – This project is implementable, as explained above under scope of work.
- iv. *Local sponsor* – BOPC has assumed responsibility for this project through an operations and maintenance agreement with the City of Buffalo. The City has also been consulted and agrees that this project is a priority.
- v. *Matching Funds* – BOPC is also applying for matching funds from the Preservation Opportunity Fund through the Preservation League of New York State.

3. The budget for this project is as follows:

|                                  |                  |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Planning                         | \$               |
| Construction                     | \$120,000        |
| Acquisition                      | \$               |
| Administration                   | \$12,000         |
| Operation and Maintenance / Year | \$               |
| <b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>        | <b>\$132,000</b> |

BOPC has requested \$20,000 from the Preservation Opportunity Fund through the Preservation League of New York State. Funding from the Greenway would help BOPC complete a dollar-for-dollar match requirement for the Preservation League funds. This

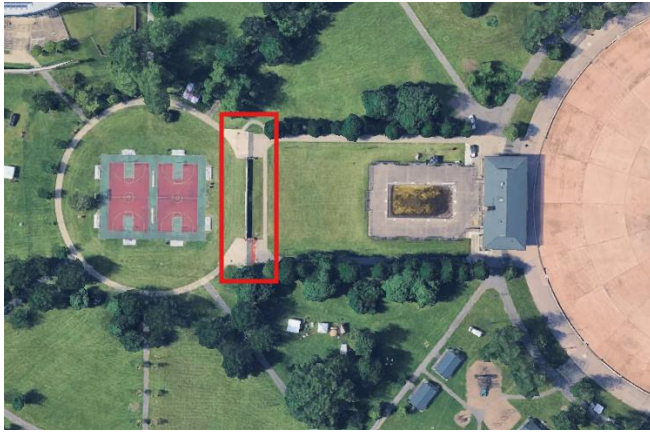
project will be operated and maintained by BOPC.

4. In 2008, BOPC published the Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century after a four-year community input process. With over \$428 million estimated in implementation costs, BOPC decided to launch an update to this plan in 2018, creating a more realistic five-year implementation plan. This update kicked off in 2018 and followed a similar but expedited course of community engagement. Extensive community outreach and feedback was performed including survey activities and deep-dive discussions with governmental leaders. A working group of key representatives, consultants, and stakeholders was formed and led by BOPC. Guided with advisement from the University at Buffalo Regional Institute, data was collected and analyzed with set measurables. The results were reviewed extensively by the Working Group and the Long Range Planning Committee of the Conservancy's Board of Trustees, as well as the Board, Conservancy upper management, and city representatives. The planning process concluded not only with the final report and its priority findings, but also with the return of the Olmsted Community Alliance (OCA), which today serves as the main mechanisms for community input into BOPC's work. While BOPC has not formally updated the Five-Year Plan, the organization has made necessary and important adjustments to the plan based on community feedback through the OCA.

This condition of the stairs worsened significantly in the last three years, which is why this project was not included in the original Five Year Plan. It has, however, been vetted through the OCA as a project that is critical to the connectivity of the park. It has, therefore, been added to the list of priority projects for MLK Jr. Park.

BOPC staff will manage and oversee this project with support and approval from the organization's Design Review Committee and Board of Trustees. The City of Buffalo will provide feedback on the design throughout the process through three critical feedback points - monthly meetings with the city's engineer for parks and BOPC's capital project manager, monthly coordination meetings between the city's deputy commissioner of parks, and a meeting at the end of the project to provide final approval. The public will have the opportunity to provide feedback through the OCA process.

5. Photos of the existing conditions are below.



Ariel view



South stairs – cracked and loose treads



South stairs – lacking joint connections



Example - cracked tread, completely loose stairs



Cracked and loose treads

6. The timeline for this project is as follows:

- Funding Decisions – February/March 2026
- Quotes/Bid – April 2026
- Determine construction start date in partnership with chosen contractor
  - BOPC's assessment is that if the contractor can start in 2026, the project can be completed before year end

