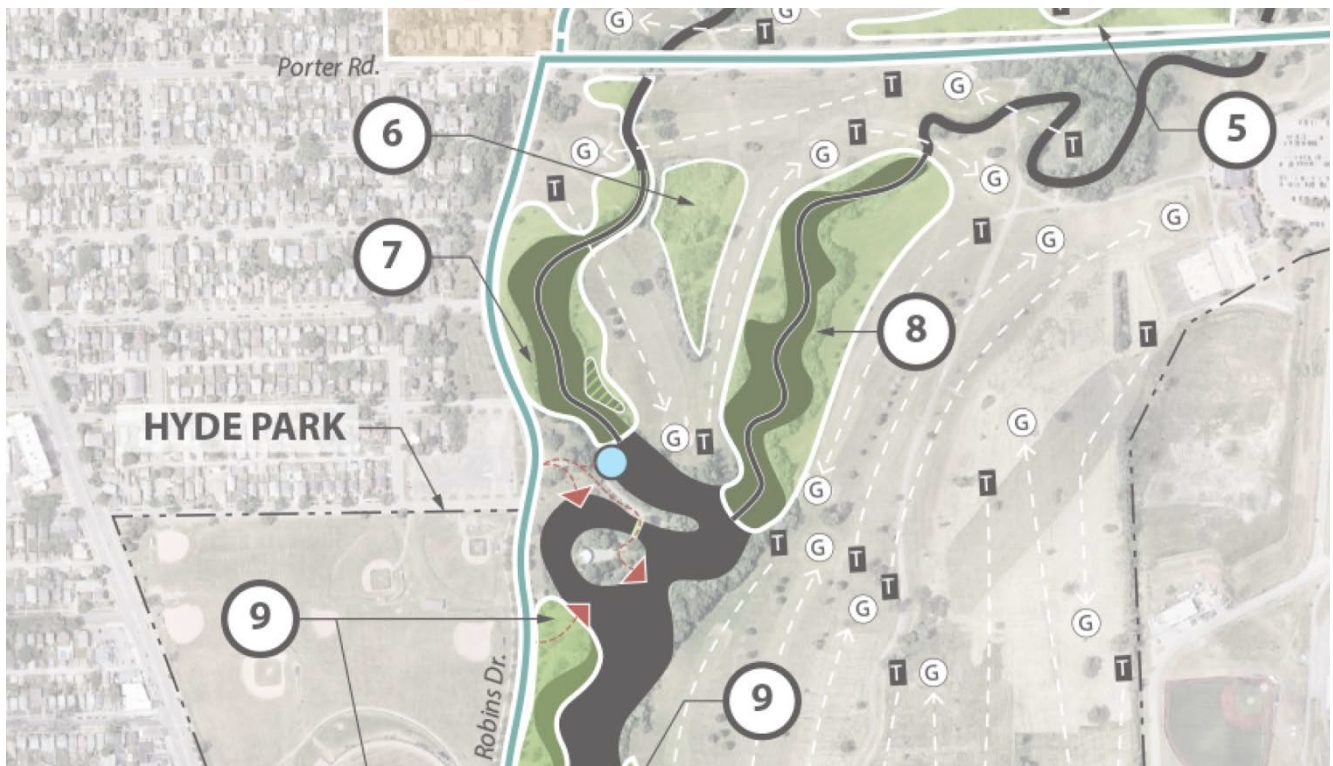




Niagara River Greenway Commission
Project Consultation & Review Submission

Gill Creek Master Plan and Hyde Park Lake Living Shoreline

November 2021



Cover Image: Excerpt from the Gill Creek Masterplan.



PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name: Gill Creek Master Plan and Hyde Park Lake Living Shoreline

Location: Entire Gill Creek corridor from the Niagara River Strait to the NYPA reservoir. Also included, is a priority living shoreline project located along the shoreline of Hyde Park Lake near the intersection of Robbins Drive and Porter Road.

Site Address: Master plan covers large area, address not applicable. Living shoreline site located in Hyde Park.

State: New York **Zip Code:** Multiple, Living shoreline priority area: 14305

Minor Civil Division(s): City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Lewiston

County: Niagara

Project Proponent Property Interest (own, lease, easement or other): Other

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

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PROJECT POINT OF CONTACT

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1. IN A BRIEF PARAGRAPH, DESCRIBE THE PROJECT AND ITS PURPOSE, HOW AND WHEN IT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED, AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT.

Project Description:

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper (Waterkeeper) has identified Gill Creek as a priority waterway in need of revitalization within the Niagara River Greenway. As with many waterways in this region, Gill Creek has undergone extensive modifications related to heavy industrial, commercial, and residential development. These modifications have negatively impacted natural stream function, habitat, water quality, and quality of life for residents adjacent to this waterway.

To address the revitalization needs of Gill Creek, Waterkeeper has invested in drafting a preliminary masterplan vision for the Gill Creek corridor. The masterplan is an overall framework that outlines the basic strategies for achieving holistic waterway revitalization. The main strategies identified in the master plan include: 1) the design and implementation of several living shoreline restoration projects along Gill Creek and Hyde Park Lake; 2) improved golf course management practices that reduce fossil fuel, nutrient, and chemical inputs; 3) targeted community outreach about water-smart landscape practices and fostering stewardship of restored areas; and 4) improved connectivity and access to surrounding regional assets and trail systems.

Waterkeeper is seeking Niagara River Greenway consistency approval for the first draft of the Gill Creek masterplan and additional resources to support the next phase of masterplan development. The next phase includes partner/ stakeholder engagement and incorporating feedback into the final masterplan vision. In addition, we are also seeking consistency approval for a new living shoreline project located along Hyde Park Lake, which is consistent with the aforementioned Gill Creek masterplan. This living shoreline restoration project will utilize similar techniques to the ones that have proven successful in other living shoreline projects accomplished by Waterkeeper as part of our Living Shorelines Program.

Project Purpose / Why it's important:

Over the past 30-years, Waterkeeper has utilized conceptual master planning to garner public support, rally project partners, and obtain funding to carry projects from concept to completion. Many funding sources require projects to show alignment with larger master plan visions and projects that have assessed preliminary feasibility prior to award. Garnering support and consistency for this master plan will ensure a strong foundation for implementing on-the-ground projects in the future.

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's Riverwatch Program has confirmed Harmful Algal Blooms in Hyde Park Lake nearly every year since 2017. Frequent algal blooms, degraded ecosystem function, and other water quality impairments negatively impact aquatic life, recreational uses, and economic development. Revitalizing this waterway, in addition to the larger Gill Creek corridor, will not only serve the fish and wildlife species which rely on healthy shoreline environments, it can also act as a catalyst for community and economic revitalization.

Waterkeeper has identified a priority site along Hyde Park Lake for a proposed living shoreline project. We believe this site will be especially impactful because its location receives a large amount of runoff which directly contributes to harmful algal bloom frequency and intensity in the Lake. The site lacks adequate vegetation, receives nutrient inputs from a surrounding golf course, and is impacted by multiple stormwater outfall pipes. The proposed project will intercept stormwater runoff before it enters the waterway and introduce a diverse shoreline plant community, capable of absorbing excess nutrients and reducing harmful algal blooms.

Methods:

Gill Creek Masterplan:

Waterkeeper has already finished a first draft of the masterplan for the Gill Creek corridor. The next steps will be to engage with project partners, such as the Town of Niagara, Lewiston, and the Tuscarora Nation to gather input on the first draft of the Gill Creek Masterplan. This will be accomplished through either in-person or virtual meetings. In addition, Waterkeeper will host a community input session to hear from residents that live along the creek corridor. After input is gathered, a final masterplan document will be produced which will reflect the needs and wants of the community members that surround this waterway.

Living Shoreline Project:

Waterkeeper will lead this project in collaboration with the City of Niagara Falls. Waterkeeper has already invested in a preliminary concept design for the proposed living shoreline site, which has been shared with project partners for comments and feedback. This concept will serve as the starting point for further design development by a design professional.

A design consultant, selected through a competitive bid process, will lead design development with input and guidance from Waterkeeper and project partners, from the schematic phase to full construction documents. Schematics will be based upon the conceptual site design developed by Waterkeeper. The consultant will also be responsible for identifying and completing data collection and surveys (including but not limited to topography and bathymetry), identifying and securing all necessary permits, and performing construction contract administration services. Waterkeeper will maintain close coordination with the consultant throughout design development to ensure all elements and details are effectively designed and remain consistent with the goals and objectives laid out in this proposal.

Upon completion of final design, construction bidding documents will be developed, and a competitive bid process will be initiated to secure a construction contractor for project implementation. The design consultant will be kept on contract to perform construction contract administration services and Waterkeeper will provide support by conducting frequent site observation visits, processing payments, and participating in construction progress meetings. In addition, Waterkeeper will develop educational signage and monitor plant establishment through the one-year period of establishment after substantial completion.

Timeline:

Gill Creek Masterplan

Waterkeeper's goal will be to meet with all project partners, hold a community input meeting, and finalize the masterplan within one-year after funding award.

Living Shoreline Project

Below is a rough timeline for how the proposed living shoreline site may progress. It should be noted that this timeline is speculative based on past experience with similar projects and is reliant of a start date in Spring of 2022. All subsequent milestones may shift in response to potential changes to the anticipated start date dependent on when funding is applied for and secured. Also, the construction timeline is reliant on the selected contractor's availability during the winter months and weather restrictions. Waterkeeper has accomplished winter construction for several projects in the past, but weather can be unpredictable and result in changes to construction progress.

November 2021 - March 2022:

Work through Greenway consistency process and secure project funding from various funding sources (potential Greenway Ecological Fund, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, City of Niagara Falls Match).

March 2022 - May 2022:

Execute access agreement with landowner, write and release a request for proposals (RFP) for design services, evaluate bids and secure design consultant.

May 2022 - July 2022:

Complete preliminary data collection (including but not limited to topography and bathymetry).

July 2022 - November 2022:

Schematic design through final construction documentation, identify and secure all permits, prepare construction bidding materials, and release bid for construction. Waterkeeper will be actively involved in design reviews at the 60%, 90%, and 100% design phases to ensure the design remains true to project goals.

November 2022 - December 2022:

Review bids, select construction contractor, execute construction contract, and begin construction.

December 2022 - April 2023:

Perform heavy construction tasks throughout the winter as weather allows. Waterkeeper will be actively involved in observing construction and participating in construction progress meetings.

April 2023 - June 2023:

Finish heavy construction and install seed and plants. Waterkeeper will be actively involved in observing plant installation.

September 2023 - September 2024:

Project reaches substantial completion in September and enters one-year period of establishment. During this time Waterkeeper will monitor plant establishment and project performance. Contractor will repair or replace faulty work during this time. In addition, Waterkeeper will design project signage and have it installed by the contractor or landowner.

September 2024 - December 2024:

Project ends, close out all contracts and pay remaining invoices. In addition, Waterkeeper will develop a landscape maintenance and management plan and share it with the landowner.

2. REFERRING TO THE NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY PLAN, CLEARLY DOCUMENT AND DESCRIBE HOW THE PROPOSED PROJECT WILL ADVANCE THE NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY VISION INCLUDING THE GOALS, PRINCIPLES, AND CRITERIA THAT DEFINE THAT VISION.

Waterkeeper is seeking Niagara River Greenway consistency for the Gill Creek masterplan, which charts a course for holistic waterway revitalization, and a priority living shoreline restoration site located in Hyde Park Lake. The living shoreline project is consistent with Waterkeeper’s Living Shoreline Program which has been found consistent with the Greenway Plan and the Settlement Agreement by the Greenway Commission. A more detailed description of how the masterplan document and living shoreline project align with the Niagara River Greenway Plan is outlined below:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The proposal meets all eleven principles as defined by the Niagara River Greenway Plan:

Excellence

In congruence with the history of success of our Living Shorelines projects, Waterkeeper is committed to ensuring that this project is completed with excellence. The masterplan outlines several restoration

opportunities throughout the corridor, one of which has been identified as a priority living shoreline site and is included in this proposal. These restored and enhanced natural amenities will serve the residents and visitors to Niagara Falls, improving overall quality of life and the experiences visitors have in Western New York. The priority living shoreline site, in addition to future sites as specified in the masterplan, will be held to the same standards of excellence as Waterkeeper's past living shoreline sites at Tiff Nature Preserve, Ellicott Creek Park, Hyde Park Lake, Sandy Beach Park Club, Beaver Island State Park, and North Tonawanda Botanical gardens.

Restoration

One of the key strategies outlined in the masterplan document is shoreline restoration in several areas along Gill Creek and Hyde Park Lake. These restoration sites, including the priority site in Hyde Park Lake, will utilize a nature-based solution to recreate a healthy and higher-functioning shoreline environment. Restoration outcomes of the priority living shoreline will include improved habitat, reduced nutrient loading, and improved water quality.

Celebration

This project will be designed to celebrate the natural water resources and native plants that typify this region in Western New York. As beneficiaries of this environmental restoration, residents and visitors to Gill Creek and Hyde Park will experience the beauty, tranquility, and joy generated from visiting a thriving natural setting.

Sustainability

Every effort will be made to ensure that the priority living shoreline site, and future restoration sites as outlined in the master plan, incorporate design concepts that have proven successful in other living shoreline restoration sites. The goal for all Waterkeeper's living shoreline sites is to transform degraded shorelines into a more natural, resilient, and self-repairing environments. We have successfully accomplished this at several locations within the Niagara River Greenway, one of which is located along Hyde Park Lake, south of the proposed living shoreline site discussed in this proposal. The lessons learned about sustainability and plant establishment from the previous Hyde Park Lake living shoreline project will be applied to the proposed project area.

Authenticity

The Master Plan promotes authenticity as it directly addresses and reverses degradative effects on the Gill Creek system. Human activities which have altered the natural setting, such as mowing to the shoreline, will be halted and the site will return to its authentic ecological conditions.

Accessibility

The living shoreline priority site is located along the Hyde Park Golf Course. Due to hazards (golf balls) this living shoreline site will not include any public access components. It will however use thoughtful design strategies to enhance rather than hinder golf play. The Gill Creek masterplan specifies improved connectivity and access to surrounding regional assets and trail systems. Enhancements will facilitate further amplification of already-growing visitor presence along the shoreline in designated public access points, including kayak launch areas, while also ensuring shoreline protection measures are successful and sustained.

Ecological Integrity

The masterplan specifically prioritizes targeted community outreach about water-smart landscape practices; improved golf course management practices that reduce fossil fuel, nutrient, and chemical inputs; and the design and implementation of several living shoreline restoration projects along Gill Creek and Hyde Park Lake. These efforts will have a transformative effect on Gill Creek, which in effect, will lead to a healthier Niagara River system.

Partnerships

Waterkeeper has partnered with the City of Niagara Falls for many planning and design efforts in the past and this project will be a continuation of an already productive relationship. In addition, Waterkeeper will work with other partners, such as local residents, the City of Niagara Falls, the Town of Niagara, and Lewiston to garner more support for the masterplan and set-up future restoration projects as they are described in the masterplan documents. Waterkeeper will also coordinate and solicit input from the Tuscarora and Tonawanda Nations to ensure that considerations are incorporated into the plan to address ecosystem degradation and effects on indigenous communities.

Public Well-Being

This project seeks to restore ecosystem services and address water quality concerns in Gill Creek and Hyde Park Lake. Frequent harmful algal blooms in Hyde Park Lake pose a public health crisis and this masterplan lays a foundation to address these water quality issues. Altered landscape management practices and proposed shoreline restoration will help alleviate water quality concerns and make the waterbody safer for public access and enjoyment.

Community Based

It is our intention to find opportunities for community involvement through kayak and walking tours, school workshops, and potentially through supplemental planting efforts throughout Waterkeeper's RestoreCorps Program.

Connectivity

The purpose of the Gill Creek Master Plan is to think about restoration efforts along Gill Creek as they are related to each other. By taking a comprehensive approach, we are ensuring that restoration projects and area improvements are linked to one another and contribute to a larger whole. In addition, the masterplan identifies links and connections to surrounding regional assets and trail systems.

NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY GOALS

The proposal meets several goals as defined by the Niagara River Greenway Plan:

Improve Access and Make Connections

Gill Creek is a main connector to the Niagara River through the City of Niagara Falls. Improvements to this corridor will create connections through the city to the larger Greenway spine and network. The masterplan identifies this and build a framework for connecting to surrounding regional assets and trail systems. Waterkeeper also recognizes the need to coordinate with the Tuscarora Nation to ensure that improved access and connections will benefit the Nation and won't cause any unintended impacts to indigenous communities.

Promote Long Term Sustainability

Sustainability will be achieved by using proven restoration techniques and careful plant selection to ensure we are creating ideal conditions for rapid plant growth. Once established, the restoration project will be resilient to disturbance and colonization from aggressive invasive species. Strengthening the hydrology and ecology of the will foster the growth of natural systems that are self-sustaining and self-repairing.

In addition, the masterplan identifies opportunities to educate landowners about water-smart landscape management practices that will improve ecological health of the entire creek corridor. Also, as with many of our living shoreline sites, we seek to model best management practices and share our success with other entities. Sharing success allows others to be inspired to carry out similar projects, creating a ripple effect of positive impacts in other areas of the Niagara River Greenway.

Protect and Restore Environmental Systems

The main strategies identified in the master plan include: 1) the design and implementation of several living shoreline restoration projects along Gill Creek and Hyde Park Lake; 2) improved golf course management practices that reduce fossil fuel, nutrient, and chemical inputs; 3) targeted community outreach about water-smart landscape practices; and 4) improved connectivity and access to surrounding regional assets and trail systems. Together these strategies will result in positive impacts throughout the entire Gill Creek Corridor.

In addition, the priority living shoreline site will use proven restoration techniques to restore a degraded shoreline environment in Hyde Park Lake. The proposed project will intercept stormwater runoff before it enters the waterway and introduce a diverse shoreline plant community, capable of absorbing excess nutrients and reducing harmful algal blooms.

Celebrate History and Heritage

Waterkeeper strives to use Western New York native plant species in all our Living Shoreline Projects. Using native plants and showcasing them in thoughtful designs is an expression of pride in our local flora and natural heritage. In addition, the masterplan includes connections to cultural assets and surrounding heritage trails. Waterkeeper recognizes the need to connect with the Tuscarora Nation to ensure that the proposed ecological enhancements are accomplished in a way that benefit native values.

Spark Revitalization and Renewal

As part of the Living Shorelines Initiative, this project is a component of a larger effort that is inspiring ecosystem revitalization throughout the Niagara River Corridor.

NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY CRITERIA

The proposal meets nine of the ten criteria as defined by the Niagara River Greenway Plan:

Consistency with Principles

The project addresses the guiding principles of: *ecological integrity and restoration* through upland habitat creation and in-stream habitat and water quality improvements; *connectivity* in connecting to surrounding regional assets and filling a gap in an important riparian corridor along Gill Creek; *partnerships* between landowners, local partners, and Waterkeeper; and *community-based* as local residents will be drawn to the restored area and will be educated about the importance of natural landscapes in the community.

Priority Status

Gill Creek and Hyde Park are included in the Niagara River Greenway focus area. This indicates that ecological restoration of this stream system should be considered as a priority.

Focus Area

The project is in the Greenway focus area.

Environmental Soundness

Through the implementation of the Niagara River Riparian Restoration Program, Waterkeeper's team has gained extensive knowledge, partnerships, and technical expertise required to administer and lead restoration projects like those proposed here as part of the masterplan. The success of previous restoration projects in Hyde Park and elsewhere demonstrate this.

Implementable

Waterkeeper has experience in implementing large-scale and complicated projects throughout the region. This includes previous Living Shoreline and restoration projects within Hyde Park. We will consult with local

partners and utilize the expertise of our consultant and contractor throughout project development and implementation to ensure all aspects remain feasible and implementable.

Economic Viability

Waterkeeper has identified several potential funding sources for the design and construction of the priority living shoreline site in Hyde Park Lake making this project economically viable. In addition, the long-term sustainability and success of the project will be ensured through maintenance activities provided by the landowner and potentially community members through Waterkeepers RestoreCorps Program. This type of landscape management keeps cost low and helps ensure the long-term persistence of this and future restoration sites.

Local Sponsors or Partners

Waterkeeper will be the lead sponsor of the project and will work closely with the Niagara River Greenway Commission, City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, and Lewiston to build consensus on the masterplan document. Our primary partner for the living shoreline component will be the City of Niagara Falls. This will include close communication with relevant departments within the city including but not limited to Engineering, Planning, the Mayor's Office, Parks Department (including golf course maintenance personnel), and the Water Board. The city of Niagara Falls has already reviewed and expressed support for the overall masterplan and the concept design for the priority living shoreline site in Hyde Park Lake. Waterkeeper will also coordinate and solicit input from the Tuscarora and Tonawanda Nations to ensure that considerations are incorporated into the plan to address ecosystem degradation and effects on indigenous communities.

Consideration of Other Planning Efforts:

The water quality and habitat improvements that will be achieved through this project will advance the goals outlined in numerous local and regional planning documents. These include the Healthy Niagara: Niagara River Watershed Management Plan (which is the state approved Watershed Management Plan for the Niagara River watershed), the NYS Great Lakes Action Agenda, Niagara River Remedial Action Plan, and the Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy.

Once granted consistency from the Niagara River Greenway Committee, the Gill Creek Masterplan will serve as another guiding document to help achieve holistic waterway revitalization. The masterplan will help Waterkeeper and partners garner public support, rally project partners, and obtain funding to carry projects from concept to completion

Clear Benefits:

The priority living shoreline project along Hyde Park Lake, and the other projects described in the Master Plan, have clear benefits to both the ecological health of this system and to the Niagara Falls community. Riparian buffers and living shorelines have proven to be effective at improving water quality by reducing extracting, containing, or immobilizing contaminants and excess nutrients before they enter a waterbody. Newly created aquatic, riparian, and upland habitats will provide beneficial resources for a multitude of fish and wildlife species. Enhanced public access and experiences will also help connect the community to the unique ecological and cultural assets that the Niagara River Greenway has to offer.

3. IDENTIFY ALL SOURCES OF FUNDING AND THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING EXPECTED FROM EACH SOURCE. IDENTIFY AND QUANTIFY FUNDS THAT ARE ALREADY ON HAND OR HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT. EXPLAIN HOW THE PROJECT WILL BE OPERATED AND MAINTAINED.

Estimated Project Budget:

The first draft of the Gill Creek Masterplan is complete and next steps will include sharing the vision with the project partners to gather comments and feedback. We have shared the first draft with the City of Niagara Falls and they have expressed support for the plan, but other project partners such as the Town of Niagara, Lewiston, the residents along the Gill Creek Corridor, and the Tuscarora Nation need to review and provide input. Additional resources will enable Waterkeeper to engage with these partners and generate a final masterplan which truly represents the needs and wants of the communities that surround this waterway. Initial budget estimates for coordination with partners and finalizing the masterplan document is estimated to be \$20,000.00.

During the master planning effort, a priority living shoreline site was identified in Hyde Park Lake. This living shoreline project will revitalize approximately 1,607 linear feet of shoreline and replace nearly 2.25 acres of mowed lawn with functional wetland and riparian habitat. The total cost for this living shoreline site is estimated at \$768,000.00 for design and construction, which equates to a square foot cost of approximately \$7.83. These numbers are based-off a preliminary concept design and may change as the concept is refined and focused. For more details on the design, refer to question number 5 and the attached concept plan. **Note - The proposed living shoreline design contains some green infrastructure components. Should Greenway Ecological Funds be secured, these funds will only be used to cover the design and construction of ecological project elements. Match funding will be pursued to cover the costs associated with stormwater management project components such as pipes or catch basins.**

Matching Funds:

The City of Niagara Falls will be an important cost share partner for the living shoreline project, and they have agreed to contribute up to \$300,000.00 in match to support the contractual costs associated with construction. In addition, Waterkeeper plans to pursue supplemental project funding sources to cover the green infrastructure components of the project. Additional matching funds for the project may be provided through in-kind services, materials, or volunteer hours through Waterkeepers RestoreCorps Program. Details on matching contributions will be determined as the project progresses.

Operation and Maintenance Plan:

Waterkeeper strives to create low maintenance shoreline restoration sites, but there is no such thing as no maintenance when it comes to landscape. Waterkeeper recognizes the importance of ongoing landscape management for shoreline restoration projects to reach their full potential. For this reason, a four-pronged approach for comprehensive landscape management has been developed. When possible, Waterkeeper tries to include each of the four items listed below when scoping restoration projects:

- **One-year period of establishment:**
After substantial completion of the restoration activities, the project enters a one-year Period of Establishment (POE). During this time, the site is monitored for defective work, and if observed, the contractor is contractually obligated to replace or repair it, so it aligns with the standards set forth in the construction contract documents.
- **Landscape management plan:**
Waterkeeper will develop an easy-to-use guide for maintenance activities and will review them on site with maintenance personnel prior to the end of the period of establishment. The guide is intended to be simple to read and easy to understand for current and future Parks Department personnel.

- **Invasive species guide:**
An invasive species guide will also be produced to share with Parks Department personnel to help them identify and manage invasive species within the project area.
- **Community engagement:**
Waterkeeper can also mobilize members from their vast network of volunteers (RestoreCorps program) if needed to provide additional landscape management tasks to help keep the project developing in the right direction. Note - The ability to mobilize RestoreCorps volunteers will be reliant on future funding sources.

4. DESCRIBE THE MEASURES TAKEN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO GAIN COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR THIS PROJECT (HEARINGS, PETITIONS, PUBLIC SURVEYS, RESOLUTIONS OF SUPPORT OR OTHER METHODS). IF THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN CITED OR DESCRIBED IN A LOCAL PLANNING DOCUMENT OR SOME EQUIVALENT THEREOF, ATTACH COPIES OF THAT DOCUMENTATION HIGHLIGHTING THE SECTIONS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT. DESCRIBE THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL AGENCIES, STAKEHOLDER GROUPS, CONSULTANTS, VOLUNTEERS OR OTHERS WHO WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT.

Waterkeeper’s primary partner for the living shoreline priority project will be the City of Niagara Falls. We have met with the City Mayor, Engineer, Planner, and Water Board to discuss this proposed project and all are in support. We have also discussed this project with the NYSDEC as the stormwater pipes are DEC permitted outfalls, and they have no concerns on the project. We will work closely with these contacts as well as representatives from permitting agencies and other partners like the Greenway Commission throughout design development. Waterkeeper plans to share the Gill Creek masterplan with the other project partners including the Town of Niagara and Lewiston to build consensus on the masterplan vision which will set the stage for future on-the-ground restoration projects throughout the creek corridor.

The restoration of shoreline and coastal habitats is a regional priority outlined in numerous local and state-wide planning efforts. The vitality of shoreline habitats provides a broad range of social, ecological, and economic benefits including protection and improvement of water quality, improved community resiliency, mitigation of climate change impacts, reduced runoff and shoreline erosion, enhanced enjoyment of local water resources, and sustained populations of native wildlife species.

The Niagara River Remedial Action Plan cites the loss of fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity along with degradation of nearshore habitats as major issues affecting the health of the Niagara River ecosystem. The Gill Creek masterplan and the priority living shoreline project area directly addresses this, while advancing goals found in other important documents including: the Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy, Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, NY State Forest Action Plan, NY State Open Space Plan, NY Wildlife Action Plan, Great Lakes Action Agenda, and NYS Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

5. DESCRIBE AND DOCUMENT THE ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND EXISTING CONDITIONS AT THE PROPOSED PROJECT SITE. IF YOU ARE NOT THE OWNER OF THE PROPERTY INCLUDE A LETTER(S) OR RESOLUTION(S) EVIDENCING SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT BY THE OWNER. PROVIDE PHOTOGRAPHS, CONCEPTUAL PLANS AND DRAWINGS THAT SHOW THE SITE AS IT PRESENTLY EXISTS AND HOW THE SITE WILL CHANGE WITH THE ADDITION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR PROJECT WILL COMPLY WITH THE STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT (SEQRA). THE EXISTENCE OF WETLANDS, SIGNIFICANT UPLAND AND AQUATIC HABITATS, AND PLANT OR ANIMAL SPECIES THAT ARE CLASSIFIED AS RARE, THREATENED, OR ENDANGERED SHOULD BE NOTED. EXPLAIN HOW SUCH NATURAL RESOURCES WILL BE PROTECTED AND/OR ENHANCED. CITE ANY RELEVANT PROJECT-RELATED STUDIES.

Existing Conditions:

Gill Creek Corridor:

Gill Creek originates in the Tuscarora Nation and flows south before emptying into the Niagara River, just above Niagara Falls. The creek is 7.6 miles in length and has a total drainage area of 13.9 square miles (NYPA, 2005). As with many waterways in this region, Gill Creek has undergone extensive modifications related to heavy industrial, commercial, and residential development. The headwaters have been displaced by hydropower infrastructure, riparian and floodplain areas have been replaced with residential homes and lawns, toxic waste has been buried along its banks, the creek bed has been channelized, and the waterway has been dammed to create an artificial lake in Hyde Park. These modifications have negatively impacted natural stream function, habitat, water quality, and quality of life for residents adjacent to this waterway. Harmful algal blooms are a frequent occurrence in the lake which have grown in size and severity since Waterkeeper started monitoring the lake in 2017.

Living Shoreline Project Area:

The priority living shoreline site is located within Hyde Park near the intersection of Robbins Road and Porter Road. This area of Hyde Park Lake experiences frequent algal blooms due to nutrient runoff from the adjacent golf course, stagnant flow due to hydrologic alterations, several stormwater outfall pipes discharging directly into the Lake, and inadequate shoreline vegetation. The Living Shoreline site has been subdivided into three project areas; more details on the existing conditions of each are described below. Existing condition photos have also been included with the attachments for reference.

- **Area A** is approximately 13,024 sf (.3 acres) of mowed lawn that extends right up to the shoreline. This project area also contains two stormwater outfalls (a 24" diameter, and 12" diameter) which drain untreated stormwater from the adjacent roadway directly into Hyde Park Lake. As we do not have a mapping of this storm drain, we cannot say for sure how much stormwater is being conveyed by this pipe, but its size suggests a similar discharge amount as the outfall located in Project Area B (described below).
- **Area B** is approximately 53,543 sf (1.23 acres) in size, is mowed up to the shoreline, and contains a 15" diameter stormwater outfall pipe. The shoreline in Area B is very steep and eroding where it meets the water's edge. The sewer map for this outfall reveals that this pipe is discharging approximately ~590,976 gallons of untreated stormwater directly into Hyde Park Lake during a typical rainfall year (approx. 37" of precipitation).
- **Area C** is approximately 30,827 sf (.7 ac) of mowed lawn and a thin strip of riparian vegetation (<10' wide buffer), which is a mixed species composition of native and invasive species. Area C is down slope from a golf course fairway which is capable of shedding ~795,000 gallons/yr of nutrient loaded stormwater into Hyde Park Lake.

Proposed Conditions:

Gill Creek Corridor:

To address the many impairments along Gill Creek, Waterkeeper has invested in drafting a preliminary masterplan vision for achieving holistic waterway revitalization. The main strategies identified in the master plan include: 1) the design and implementation of several living shoreline restoration projects along Gill Creek and Hyde Park Lake; 2) improved golf course management practices that reduce fossil fuel, nutrient, and chemical inputs; 3) targeted community outreach about water-smart landscape practices and fostering stewardship of restored areas; and 4) improved connectivity and access to surrounding regional assets and trail systems.

Living Shoreline Project Area:

The goals for this living shoreline project will remain consistent with those of similar projects implemented through Waterkeeper's Living Shoreline Program which are to restore ecological function to degraded shoreline areas. This typically includes modifying shoreline contours to create a gradual transition between the land and water and support robust native shoreline plant communities which include aquatic, emergent, and riparian plant species.

Implementing living shoreline projects have numerous ecological benefits that include: the establishment of diverse native plant communities and associated biodiversity; improved water quality and erosion control through bank stabilization and increased absorption of nutrients and pollutants from runoff; reduced harm to surrounding aquatic plant communities by reducing suspended sediments in the water column; improved resiliency of the shoreline to natural and un-natural disturbances; and reduced presence of invasive species. The project will be designed to be self-sustaining habitat that will grow stronger over time and will provide important spawning, resting, and feeding areas for a variety of fish, wildlife, and pollinator species.

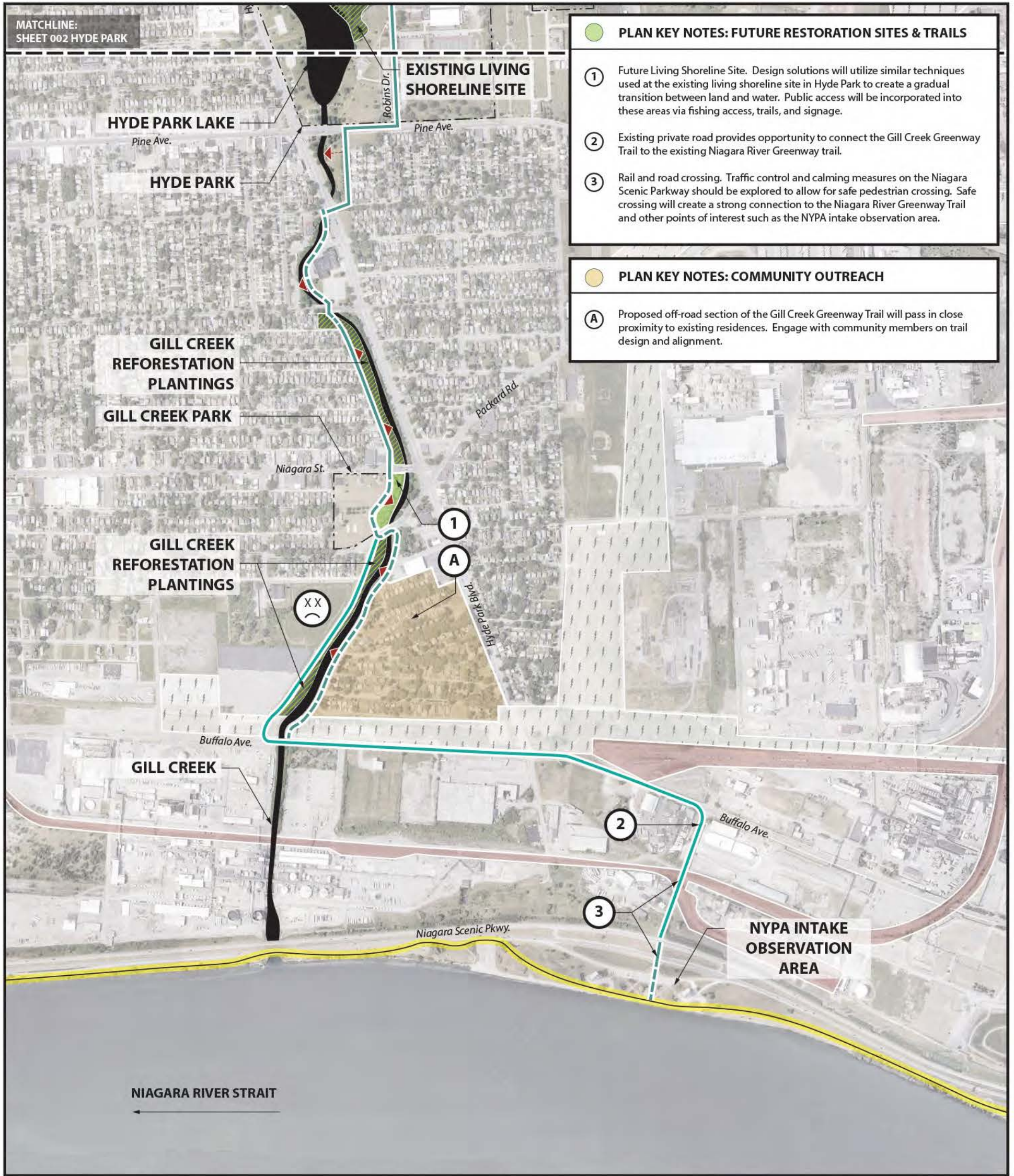
A brief description of the design concepts for each project sub-area are listed below.

- **Area A**
A new wetland/floodplain area will be created adjacent to Hyde Park Lake by cutting into the upland slope. In addition to improved habitat and erosion control, it will also serve an important stormwater management function. Overland flow will be captured in the new wetland area and a new catch basin will be installed at end of the existing stormwater outfall which will redirect stormwater via perforated pipe into this newly excavated area. A french drain system will evenly distribute the stormwater throughout the wetland/floodplain making it available for plant uptake. This area will be densely planted with native wet meadow species, live stakes, trees, shrubs, and emergent wetland plants which will provide critical habitat, stormwater absorption, and nutrient uptake.
- **Area B**
The excavated materials from Area A will be utilized as fill to create a new wetland/floodplain bench within the Hyde Park Lake footprint. Using a similar method as described above, a new catch basins and perforated pipes will redirect stormwater away from the waterbody into our new wetland/floodplain area making it available for plant uptake. The created landform will be densely planted with native plant species which will provide critical habitat, stormwater absorption, and nutrient uptake.
- **Area C**
This area will utilize an infiltration trench, a common edge of field practice, to intercept surface flow runoff coming from the golf before it can reach the waterbody. In addition to an infiltration trench, a wide regeneration buffer (designated no mow zone) will be established in coordination with golf maintenance crews to add extra stormwater filtering and absorption capacity. There are some pockets of existing emergent vegetation growing along this bank meaning the conditions are suitable for supplemental planting. Addition emergent plant species will be installed to as part of this effort to introduce more plant diversity along this part of the shoreline.

Waterkeeper does not anticipate the requirement of SEQR for the proposed project. We will hold a pre-application consultation with US Army Corps of Engineers, DEC, and any other relevant entities prior to submitting a joint application for the project to determine the required state and federal permits and approvals. Waterkeeper will also seek necessary permits and approvals from Niagara Falls prior to construction. Waterkeeper is not the owner of this property; a letter of support from the City of Niagara Falls is provided in the attachments. These sites are highly degraded and no rare, threatened, or endangered species have been observed in the living shoreline project area.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachments A.1 - A.4** _____ Gill Creek Masterplan
- Attachment B** _____ Living Shoreline Site: Location
- Attachment C** _____ Living Shoreline Site: Concept Design
- Attachment D.1 - D.3** _____ Living Shoreline Site: Existing Conditions Photos
- Attachment E.1 - E.2** _____ Living Shoreline Project Example
- Attachment F** _____ Letter of Support



- PLAN KEY NOTES: FUTURE RESTORATION SITES & TRAILS**
- ① Future Living Shoreline Site. Design solutions will utilize similar techniques used at the existing living shoreline site in Hyde Park to create a gradual transition between land and water. Public access will be incorporated into these areas via fishing access, trails, and signage.
 - ② Existing private road provides opportunity to connect the Gill Creek Greenway Trail to the existing Niagara River Greenway trail.
 - ③ Rail and road crossing. Traffic control and calming measures on the Niagara Scenic Parkway should be explored to allow for safe pedestrian crossing. Safe crossing will create a strong connection to the Niagara River Greenway Trail and other points of interest such as the NYPA intake observation area.
- PLAN KEY NOTES: COMMUNITY OUTREACH**
- Ⓐ Proposed off-road section of the Gill Creek Greenway Trail will pass in close proximity to existing residences. Engage with community members on trail design and alignment.

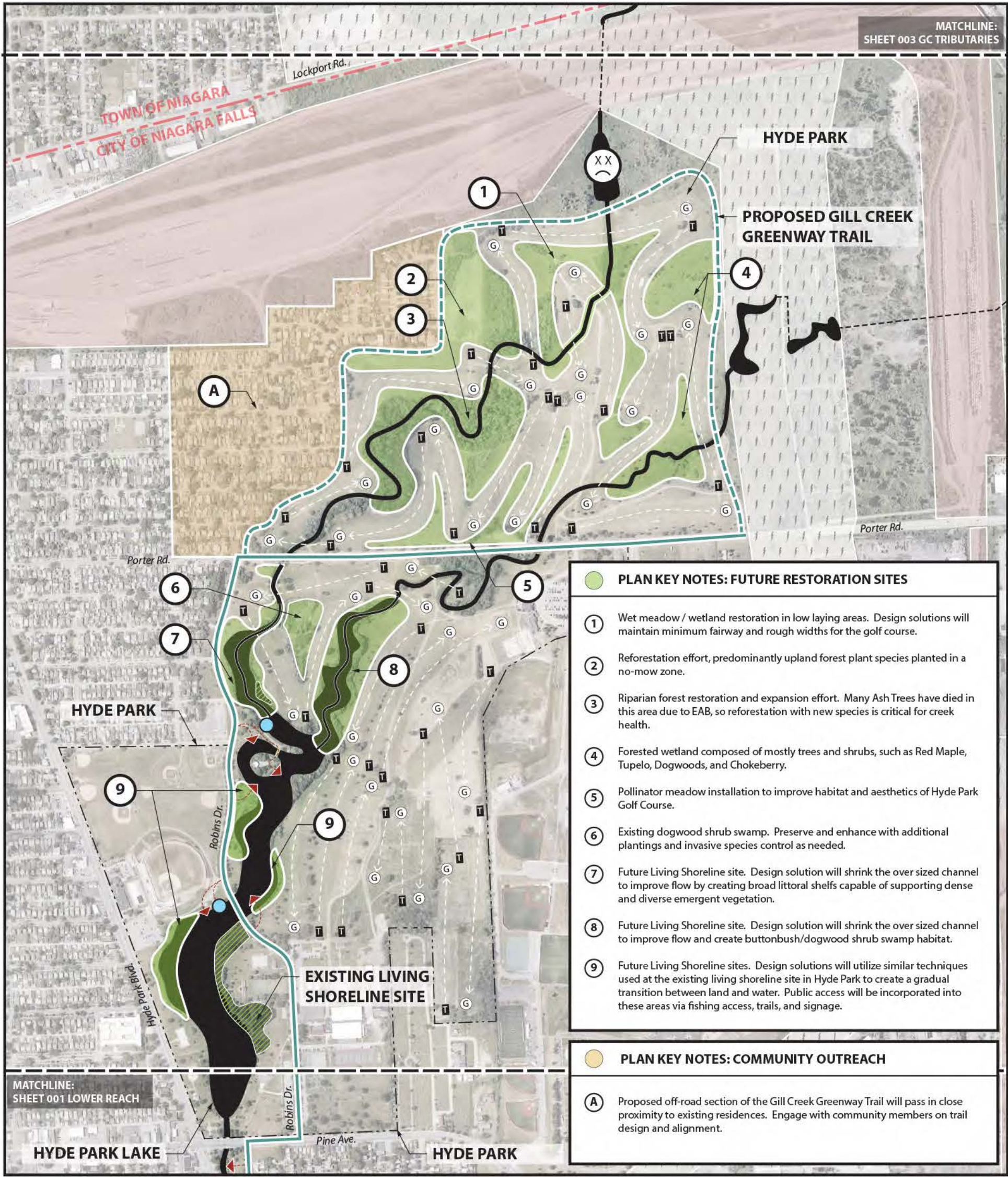
GILL CREEK: LOWER REACH NORTH 0' 500' 1000'

EXISTING RESTORATION SITES Volunteer Planting / Living Shorelines	RAIL CORRIDOR Rail Right-of-Way	EXISTING TRAIL Niagara River Greenway Trail	PASSIVE FISHING ACCESS Limestone Stackers Along the Water's Edge
FUTURE RESTORATION SITES Living Shorelines / RestoreCorps	TRANSMISSION LINES Power line Right-of-Way	PROPOSED TRAIL Solid = On street / Dashed = Off Street	EX. GOLF HOLES T = Tee Box / G = Putting Green
COMMUNITY OUTREACH Trail Design Public Input / Landscaping for Water Quality	CONTAMINATION Landfill / Settling Pond	CREEK	PADDLE CRAFT LAUNCH Improvements to Existing and New.
		BURIED CREEK	
		INTERPOLATED CREEK	



DRAFT - JUNE 2021
GILL CREEK MASTER PLAN
 RESTORATION, TRAILS, AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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- PLAN KEY NOTES: FUTURE RESTORATION SITES**
- ① Wet meadow / wetland restoration in low laying areas. Design solutions will maintain minimum fairway and rough widths for the golf course.
 - ② Reforestation effort, predominantly upland forest plant species planted in a no-mow zone.
 - ③ Riparian forest restoration and expansion effort. Many Ash Trees have died in this area due to EAB, so reforestation with new species is critical for creek health.
 - ④ Forested wetland composed of mostly trees and shrubs, such as Red Maple, Tupelo, Dogwoods, and Chokeberry.
 - ⑤ Pollinator meadow installation to improve habitat and aesthetics of Hyde Park Golf Course.
 - ⑥ Existing dogwood shrub swamp. Preserve and enhance with additional plantings and invasive species control as needed.
 - ⑦ Future Living Shoreline site. Design solution will shrink the over sized channel to improve flow by creating broad littoral shelves capable of supporting dense and diverse emergent vegetation.
 - ⑧ Future Living Shoreline site. Design solution will shrink the over sized channel to improve flow and create buttonbush/dogwood shrub swamp habitat.
 - ⑨ Future Living Shoreline sites. Design solutions will utilize similar techniques used at the existing living shoreline site in Hyde Park to create a gradual transition between land and water. Public access will be incorporated into these areas via fishing access, trails, and signage.

- PLAN KEY NOTES: COMMUNITY OUTREACH**
- A Proposed off-road section of the Gill Creek Greenway Trail will pass in close proximity to existing residences. Engage with community members on trail design and alignment.

GILL CREEK: HYDE PARK NORTH 0' 500' 1000'

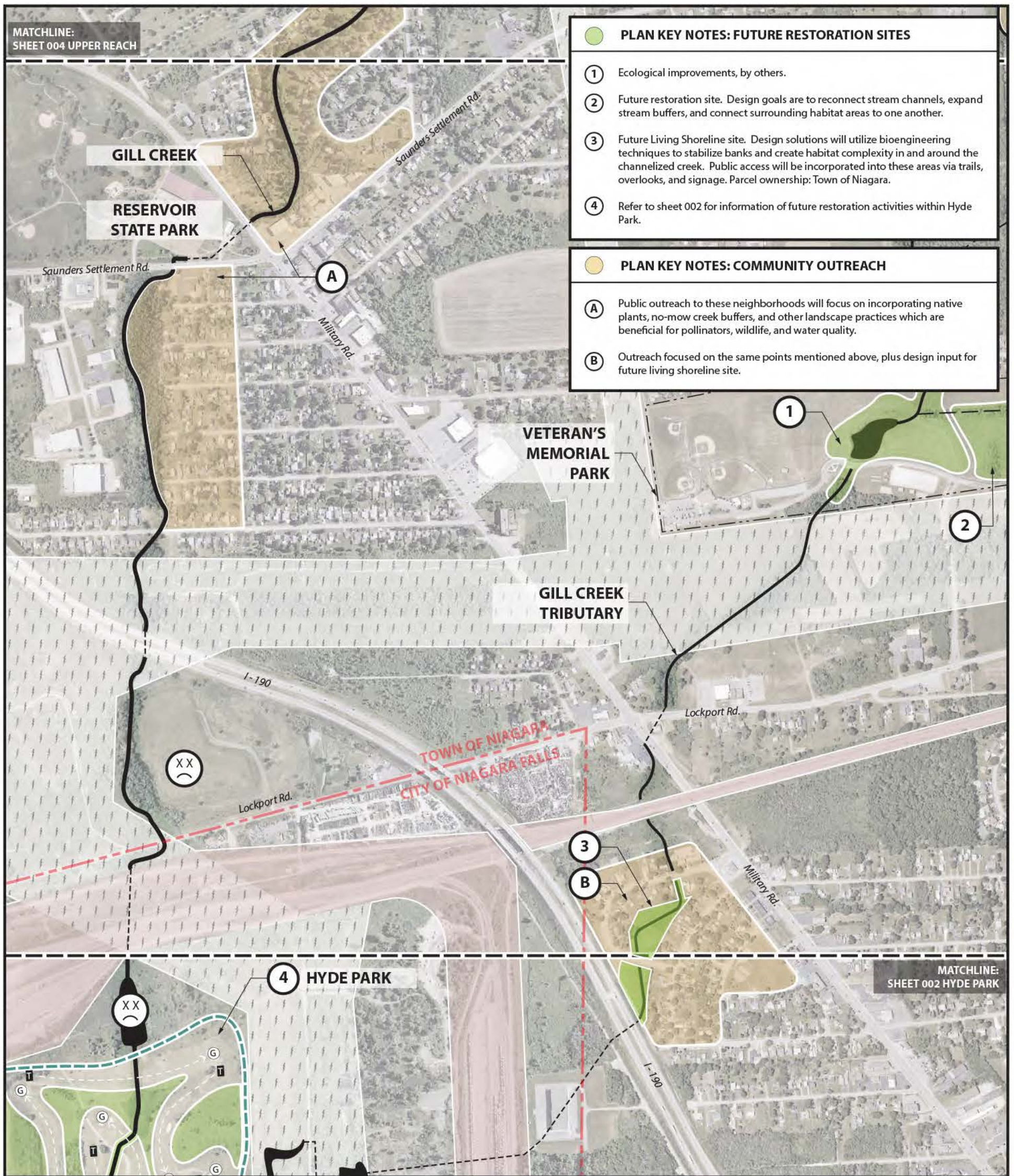
EXISTING RESTORATION SITES Volunteer Planting / Living Shorelines	RAIL CORRIDOR Rail Right-of-Way	EXISTING TRAIL Niagara River Greenway Trail	PASSIVE FISHING ACCESS Limestone Stackers Along the Water's Edge
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GILL CREEK MASTER PLAN
RESTORATION, TRAILS, AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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MATCHLINE:
SHEET 004 UPPER REACH



- PLAN KEY NOTES: FUTURE RESTORATION SITES**
- ① Ecological improvements, by others.
 - ② Future restoration site. Design goals are to reconnect stream channels, expand stream buffers, and connect surrounding habitat areas to one another.
 - ③ Future Living Shoreline site. Design solutions will utilize bioengineering techniques to stabilize banks and create habitat complexity in and around the channelized creek. Public access will be incorporated into these areas via trails, overlooks, and signage. Parcel ownership: Town of Niagara.
 - ④ Refer to sheet 002 for information of future restoration activities within Hyde Park.

- PLAN KEY NOTES: COMMUNITY OUTREACH**
- Ⓐ Public outreach to these neighborhoods will focus on incorporating native plants, no-mow creek buffers, and other landscape practices which are beneficial for pollinators, wildlife, and water quality.
 - Ⓑ Outreach focused on the same points mentioned above, plus design input for future living shoreline site.

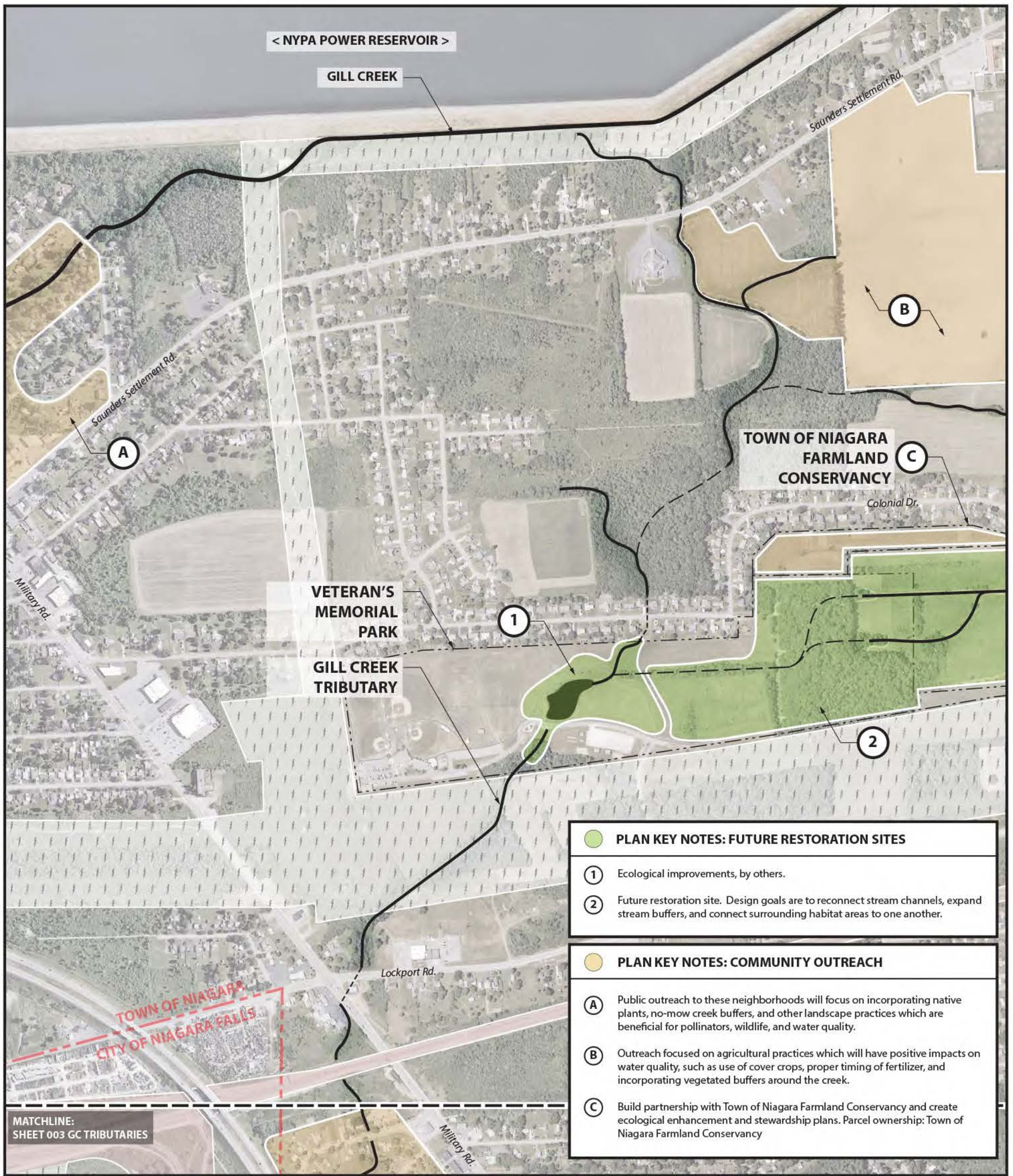
GILL CREEK: TRIBUTARIES NORTH 0' 500' 1000'

EXISTING RESTORATION SITES Volunteer Planting / Living Shorelines	RAIL CORRIDOR Rail Right-of-Way	EXISTING TRAIL Niagara River Greenway Trail	PASSIVE FISHING ACCESS Limestone Stackers Along the Water's Edge
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GILL CREEK MASTER PLAN
RESTORATION, TRAILS, AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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- PLAN KEY NOTES: FUTURE RESTORATION SITES**
- ① Ecological improvements, by others.
 - ② Future restoration site. Design goals are to reconnect stream channels, expand stream buffers, and connect surrounding habitat areas to one another.
- PLAN KEY NOTES: COMMUNITY OUTREACH**
- Ⓐ Public outreach to these neighborhoods will focus on incorporating native plants, no-mow creek buffers, and other landscape practices which are beneficial for pollinators, wildlife, and water quality.
 - Ⓑ Outreach focused on agricultural practices which will have positive impacts on water quality, such as use of cover crops, proper timing of fertilizer, and incorporating vegetated buffers around the creek.
 - Ⓒ Build partnership with Town of Niagara Farmland Conservancy and create ecological enhancement and stewardship plans. Parcel ownership: Town of Niagara Farmland Conservancy

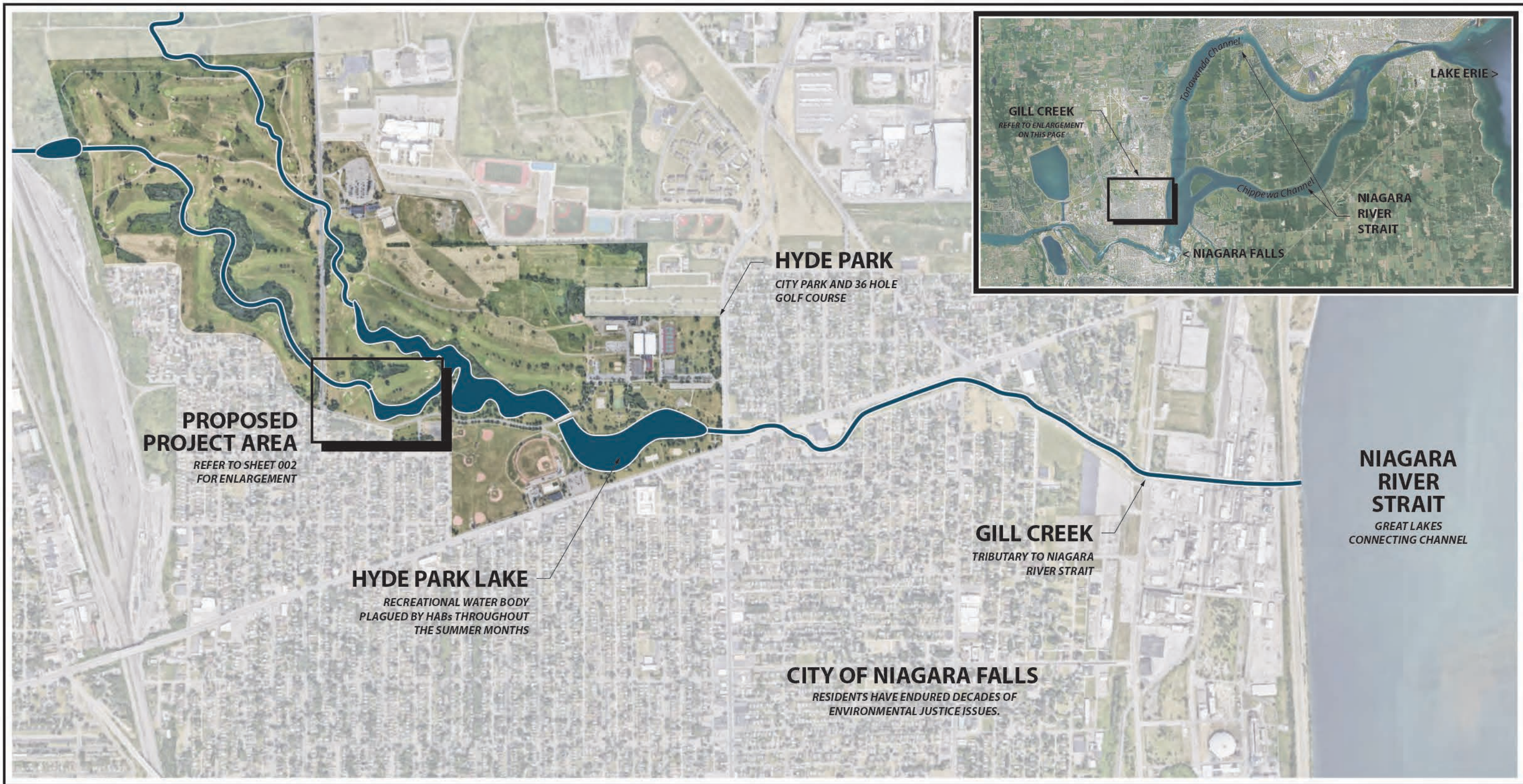
GILL CREEK: UPPER REACH NORTH 0' 500' 1000'

EXISTING RESTORATION SITES Volunteer Planting / Living Shorelines	RAIL CORRIDOR Rail Right-of-Way	EXISTING TRAIL Niagara River Greenway Trail	PASSIVE FISHING ACCESS Limestone Stackers Along the Water's Edge
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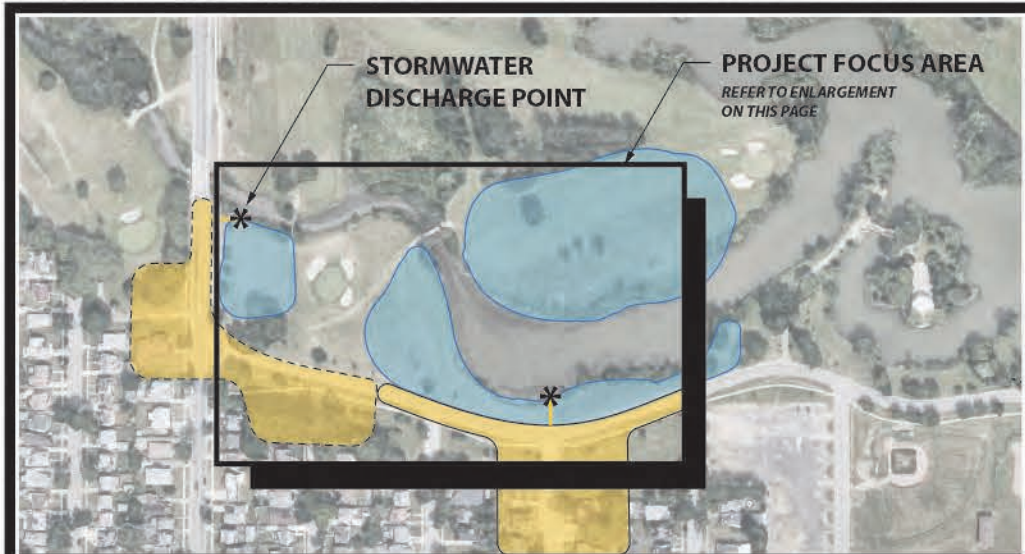
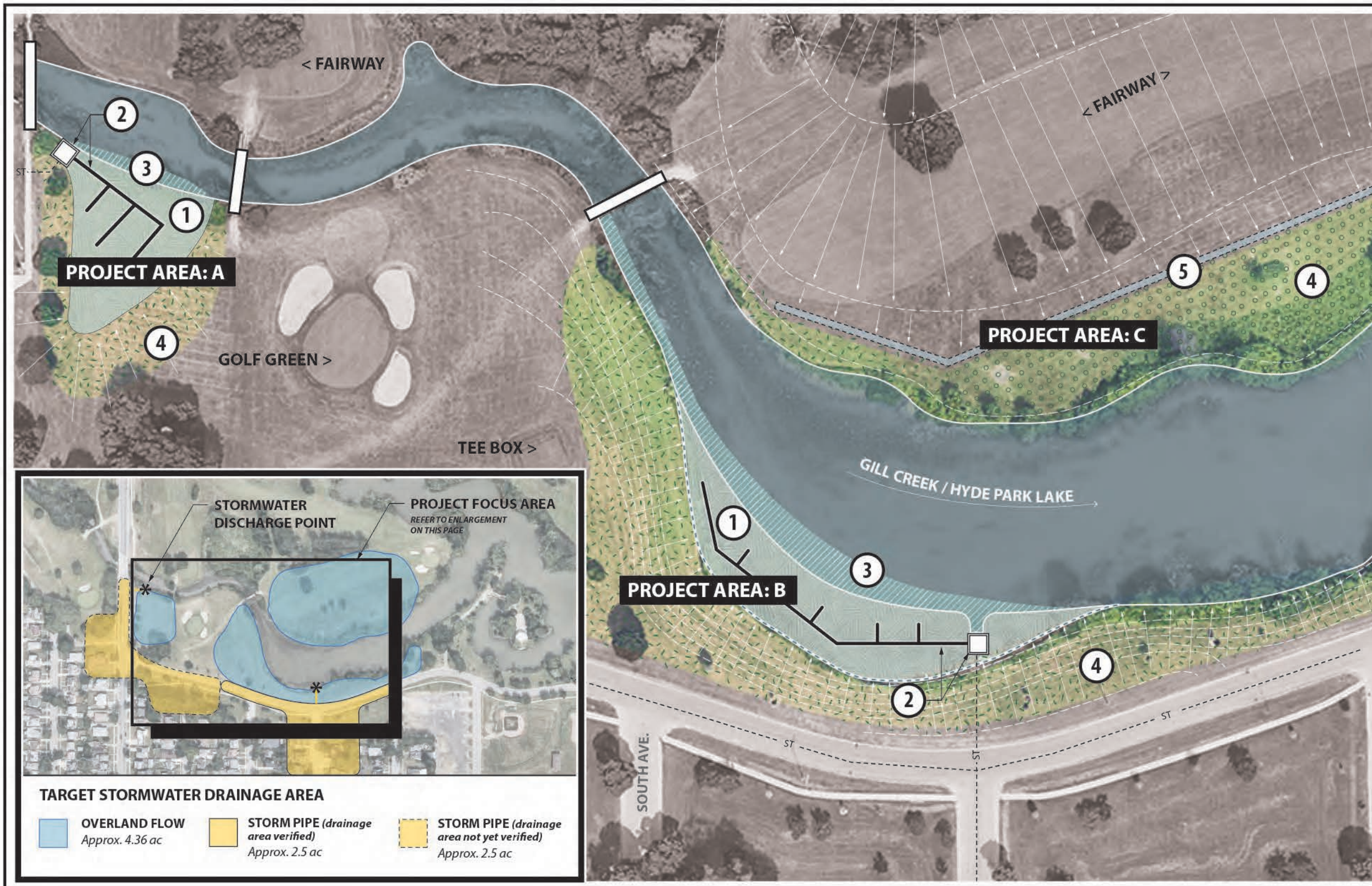
AUG 2021

HYDE PARK LAKE - NATURE BASED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

SITE CONTEXT



ATTACHMENT B



TARGET STORMWATER DRAINAGE AREA

- OVERLAND FLOW**
Approx. 4.36 ac
- STORM PIPE (drainage area verified)**
Approx. 2.5 ac
- STORM PIPE (drainage area not yet verified)**
Approx. 2.5 ac

CONCEPT PLAN NOTES

- 1 SHRUB SWAMP / FLOODPLAIN:**
Two floodplain benches are proposed. One will be cut back from the existing shoreline into an upland area, and the other will utilize fill material to extend out into the waterbody from the existing shoreline. These new floodplain benches will intercept stormwater from both point and non-point sources. Dense plantings will absorb and transpire stormwater, uptake nutrients, and provide many habitat benefits for fish and wildlife.
- 2 STORMWATER DIVERSION:**
New catch basins will divert stormwater via perforated pipes and french drain system away from the waterbody and into the proposed floodplain bench areas.
- 3 FRINGE WETLANDS:**
Shallow water areas will be planted with diverse emergent wetland species. Emergent plants offer many valuable ecological services, one of which is nutrient absorption.
- 4 NATURAL REGENERATION AREA:**
In partnership with golf course maintenance crews, we will establish herbaceous meadows and broad no mow zones which will help reduce the amount of stormwater runoff reaching the waterbody. Additional plantings of native trees and shrubs will be incorporated with any remaining funds after construction to maximize stormwater absorption and habitat value in areas that don't interfere with golf play.
- 5 INFILTRATION TRENCH:**
This common edge-of-field practice will capture sheet flow runoff from the golf course before it enters the waterbody.

CONCEPT PLAN KEY

- PROPOSED MEADOW AREAS
- PROPOSED RIPARIAN PLANTING AREAS
- PROPOSED EMERGENT WETLAND
- PROPOSED SHRUB SWAMP / FLOODPLAIN

EX. SHORELINE PROPOSED SHORELINE



CONTOUR* SURFACE RUNOFF



EX. STORM PIPE PROPOSED PERF. PIPE



PROPOSED CATCH BASIN



* Contours on plan are not from a survey and represent approximate site conditions. Actual site contours will be determined from a field survey during design development.



AUG 2021

HYDE PARK LAKE - NATURE BASED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

CONCEPT - PLAN



0' 30' 60'

ATTACHMENT C



AREA B: LOOKING SOUTH

Existing conditions photo taken August, 2021. Steep slopes direct runoff directly into Hyde Park Lake. A thin buffer of mostly Buckthorn and Black Alder (invasive species) occupy the edge of the waterbody.



AREA B: LOOKING NORTH

Existing conditions photo taken August, 2021. The Parks Department has altered mowing procedures in this area, but it has benefit mostly invasive species which have germinated from the existing seed bank. The good news is that this can be improved through more intensive seeding and meadow management efforts. Also, the current conditions show a tolerance for taller plant growth in this area which aligns with our living shoreline proposal.



AREA A: LOOKING SOUTH

Existing conditions photo taken August, 2021. A 15-inch storm pipe and concrete catch basin, visible at the bottom of the image, discharge stormwater directly into the waterway. A narrow band of mostly Canada Thistle (an invasive species) clings to the edge offering limited habitat or water quality benefits.



AREA A: LOOKING EAST

Existing conditions photo taken August, 2021. This expansive lawn area funnels stormwater towards Hyde Park Lake, carrying with it grass clippings, goose droppings, and other pollutants.



AREA C: LOOKING SOUTH

Existing conditions photo taken June, 2021. Hyde Park Lake is located beyond the narrow strip of trees to the right of this image. The low-mow area is a recent development which stemmed from previous conversations between Waterkeeper staff and golf course management. Note the wide golf fairway to the left of this image which contributes large volumes of runoff to Hyde Park Lake.



STORM DRAIN AT AREA A AND B

Existing conditions photo taken August, 2021. These 15-inch stormwater out fall pipes discharge directly into Hyde Park Lake. These harmful inputs are having negative impacts on water quality and are one of the contributing causes of the harmful algal bloom that plague this body of water throughout the summer months.



Hyde Park Lake: Before



Hyde Park Lake: After

Project photographed after project completion in 2018. This living shoreline site is located on the same body of water (Hyde Park Lake) as the proposed priority living shoreline site near Robbins Drive. This area was previously mowed lawn and was transformed into a higher-functioning shoreline. Similar to what is being proposed at the priority living shoreline site near Robbins Drive, a stormwater pipe was diverted into the wetland area which acts as a living filter and buffers the lake from the pollutants carried in the stormwater.



Tifft Nature Preserve: Before



Tifft Nature Preserve: After

Project photographed after project completion in 2020. Fill material was placed within the Lake Kirsty footprint to create suitable conditions for floodplain and wetland plant species. Using fill material in such a manner is proposed in Area B of the priority living shoreline site in Hyde Park.



City of Niagara Falls, New York

Robert M. Restaino
Mayor

August 18, 2021

U.S. EPA Great Lakes National Program Office
77 West Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

To Whom it May Concern,

The City of Niagara Falls is pleased to offer this letter of support for Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper in their application to the EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for implementation of green infrastructure within Hyde Park Lake. Hyde Park Lake and Gill Creek, which runs through the lake, represent critical ecological resources within the Niagara River watershed, and restoration of these waterbodies is both a regional and local priority for improving the health of the Niagara River and larger Great Lakes ecosystem.

Hyde Park is an important community resource, and addressing the degraded water quality and recent algae blooms within the lake is an important priority for the City. Studies of the lake have identified streambank and soil erosion, combined with non-point source pollution, as major issues adversely affecting its overall health. As a result, both critical ecosystem services and recreational use by the community have been negatively affected. In addition to this project being a local priority, Hyde Park Lake and Gill Creek have also been identified as priorities for restoration in many regional documents including the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan.

The scope of this project focuses on priority locations along Hyde Park Lake that receive a significant amount of runoff and nutrients from stormwater infrastructure and the adjacent golf course. As the owner and operator of Hyde Park, the City of Niagara Falls fully supports the implementation of green infrastructure solutions within these areas to reduce the amount of nonpoint source pollution entering the lake, therefore improving water quality and nearshore health. This project will greatly improve the health of Hyde Park Lake, Gill Creek, and the Niagara River.

The City of Niagara Falls has partnered with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper on a similar restoration project along another portion of Hyde Park Lake, which was very successful and received well by the community. We look forward to continuing this partnership through their proposed project. The City commits \$300,000 in funds secured from the Greenway Ecological Fund as match for this project. Waterkeeper has connected with all local entities that will need to be involved (me as the Mayor, the City Engineer and Planner, and Water Board) and has received support for moving forward with this project in partnership together. We are committed to working with Waterkeeper throughout the development and implementation of this project, and will be responsible for long-term maintenance of the project area once the project is complete.

I am pleased to offer support to Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper for this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Restaino
Mayor