



# Niagara River Greenway Annual Report

2024

P.O Box1132, Niagara Falls, New York 14303

# *Table of Contents*

Message from the Executive Director.....	3
Commissioners.....	4
2024 Highlights and Accomplishments.....	5
Financial Highlights.....	20
Partners.....	21
Contact Us.....	22





## Message from the Executive Director

December 31, 2024 was not only the day we closed the exciting Niagara River Greenway Commission's (NRGC) 17<sup>th</sup> year, but also the day the Wheatfield and LaSalle Shoreline Trail gaps were closed. For the past 12 years our top priority has been to provide a multi-use greenway trail connecting all our Niagara Shoreline greenspaces to create a region wide network, safely accessible to all our communities. With the addition of these 4.7 miles of completed world class trail, we now have continuous trail all along our waterfront from Buffalo Harbor State Park on Lake Erie travelling north both around and across Grand Island, Niagara Falls, along the Niagara Gorge State Parks to Lewiston and the north entrance of Joseph Davis State Park. We are very hopeful to extend the last leg north through Youngstown to arrive at our northern terminus at Old Fort Niagara on Lake Ontario very soon.

We are proud that the Niagara River Greenway led the charge to accomplish this goal along with strong and vital partnership from six state agencies, two counties, and 13 local municipalities as well as funding partners from the private sectors such as the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, Niagara Region Rotaries, The East Hill Foundation and Highmark. We continue to work with all of these groups to help develop projects that will grow, enhance and sustain all the work we have done to date.

As we turn our attention slightly away from trail development, we focus on how to be sure that EVERYONE has a chance to enjoy the fruits of our labor and how to integrate the trails with a through stewardship and recreational opportunities in all our communities. Our incredibly successful Youth Environmental Summit which has taken place in Erie County for the past two years is now growing into Niagara County. Our partnership with the Create a Healthier Niagara Falls Collaborative has brought hundreds of residents out to enjoy walks and bike rides along the Niagara Gorge and public art projects like the Village of Lewiston Academy Park project.

On behalf of all of us at the NRGC, thank you for your ongoing support and we look forward to another year of growth, partnership and wonderful times in the Greenway.

*Gregory Stevens*

## Niagara River Greenway Commission Members



*Lisa Chimera, Senate appointment 2020*

*Treasurer Sean Edwards, Governor appointment, 2010*

*Jim Sharpe, Governor appointment 2024*

*Sam Magavern, Assembly appointment, Community Liaison, 2014*

*Steve Broderick, Senate appointment- Municipal Government Liaison, 2017*

*New York Power Authority, Lou Paonessa 2013*

*Department of Environmental Conservation, Erin Redding 2022*

*Department of Transportation, Jim Cuozzo 2020*

*New York State Parks, Mark Mistretta 2018*

*Department of State, Jennifer Dunn 2024*

*Empire State Development, Lynn Marinelli 2019*

# 2024 Accomplishments and Highlights

## Habitat Restoration Projects

### 1. Sheridan Park Living Shoreline



### 2. River line- Invasive Species Management



### 3. Niagara Wheatfield Eco-Campus



### Habitat Restoration Projects along the Niagara River Greenway

1. The purpose of the Sheridan Park Living Shoreline project is twofold: to create high quality shoreline habitat within the Two Mile Creek watershed, and to provide additional opportunities for local community members in the Parkside and Riverview neighborhoods to engage with their natural heritage

2. The River line is a project of the Western New York Land Conservancy that will transform the former DL&W rail corridor in Buffalo into a 40-acre, 1.5-mile multi-use nature trail and greenway. Habitat restoration will be central to The River line.

3. The Niagara Wheatfield Central School District has been working for the past several years to develop and advance their vision for the Niagara Wheatfield Eco-Campus Revitalization Project. The purpose of the Niagara Wheatfield Eco-Campus Revitalization Project is to transform the campus from a series of buildings, parking lots and open spaces into a campus that integrates nature and ecology, nature-based recreational features, and education and engagement opportunities related to the ecological, historical and cultural importance of Cayuga Creek and the Niagara River Watershed





## Protecting the Bedell Meadows

The Western New York Land Conservancy will purchase and permanently protect property on Grand Island which includes approximately 43 acres of ecologically important land. We will then transform the land into The Bedell Meadows Nature Preserve, which will be part of an emerging network of conserved lands on Grand Island.



GRAND ISLAND, NY

*The Heart of the Niagara*



## Niagara Falls Municipal Parks



This project launches a transformational initiative to enhance Niagara Falls City Parks, including all aspects of Hyde Park from functionality, community accessibility and aesthetic appeal to ecological resilience and sustainability. The proposed work over the next three years includes advancing design of 3 priority ecosystem restoration projects and investments in ecological stewardship of existing green infrastructure and living shoreline projects in Hyde Park.



## Placemaking and Public Access Projects

### Academy Park Pavilion

Lewiston is one of the crown jewels of Niagara County celebrated by residents and visitors alike. Within Lewiston, Academy Park hosts many popular events including the Niagara County Peach Festival, weekly farmers markets, bandshell concerts, fireworks and many other events all accessible via the Greenway Trail. The need for a pavilion has been expressed by the public and event organizers for years. The pavilion will be a great asset to the community celebrating the history and heritage of the community and the Niagara River Greenway



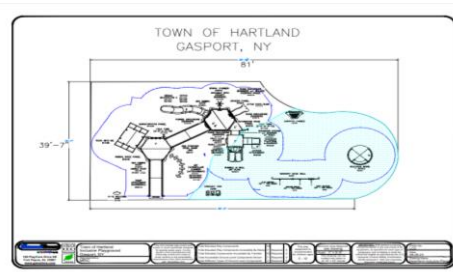


## Expanding Blueway/Greenway Connections

The Buffalo Niagara Blueway will link the Niagara River Greenway to our waterfront in an expanded network of public access and recreation points. This Blueway-to-Greenway network forges together history, culture and nature. By connecting these prized assets, the Buffalo Niagara Blueway will spur tourism and revitalization, bring together communities, and improve the social well-being and health of residents.



## Town of Hartland Park- Enhanced Recreational Access



The Town of Hartland project proposal supports the Niagara River Greenway mission of improving public access for all by enhancing several assets of the Town's sole recreational park with strategic enhancements of inclusive playground equipment, connecting walkways, centrally located pavilion, and increased ADA-compliant parking capabilities complimented by the installation of Greenway and wayfinding signage throughout the park. Hartland Town Park is an integral part of the community, known as one of the "cornerstone of the Town's community activities," which facilitates the development of social connections, outside recreational activity, and improves the overall quality of life in the Niagara River Greenway area.



# Trail Development, Wayfinding and Signage Projects

## Wheatfield Trail



### LEGEND

- Proposed Multi-Use Trail
- Existing Niagara River Greenway Trail

This project is a 10-foot-wide multi-use Trail within the Seaway Trail Corridor connecting the Niagara Falls Greenway Trail from Griffin Park to Gratwick Park.

This section of the Niagara Shoreline Trail will be shady, peaceful and very safe for family riding. We are so excited for its completion



## Riverwalk Parkway Multiuse Trail Project

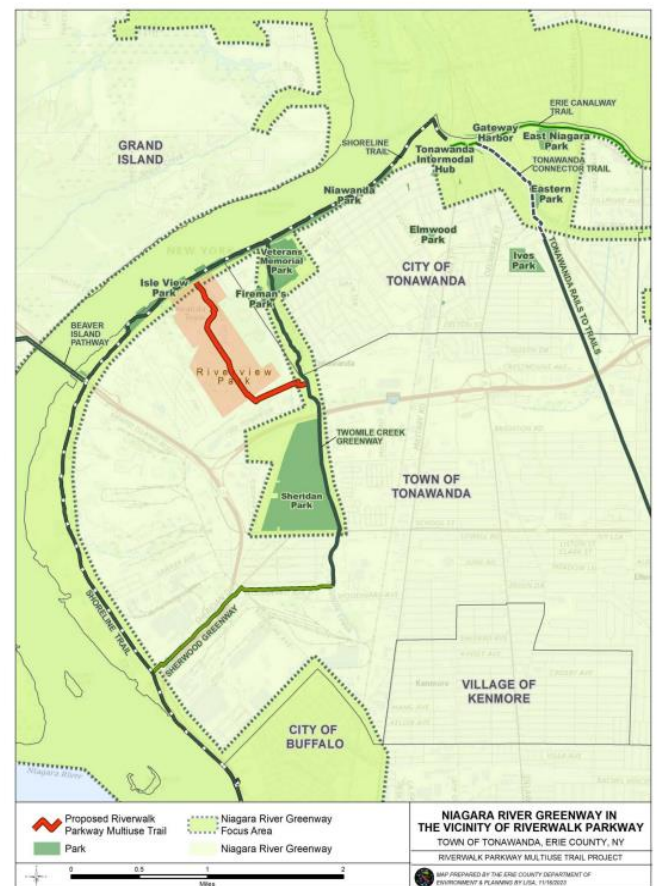
The section of the Shoreline Trail adjacent to the Project is among the most heavily used trail systems in Western New York. Developing a trail connection between the Shoreline Trail and the Two-Mile-Creek Greenway Trail fosters an improved regional quality of life by connecting population centers to employment centers and recreational opportunities.



Trails would be an integral part of the area's alternative transportation network



Illustration of trail system near Riverwalk Parkway including a pedestrian bridge over Rattlesnake Creek







## Niagara Falls State Park Wayfinding and Signage Project

The parks focused on in this project include Niagara Falls State Park, Whirlpool State Park, Devil's Hole State Park, and DeVeaux Woods State Park. NYSOPRHP has received significant capital investments in recent years, including the creation of Riverway, Gorgeview and the Niagara Falls State Park Welcome Center. The current signage has evolved over decades through various phased projects and is inconsistent. The wayfinding signage project will upgrade in phases all signage to the current NYSOPRHP standards, provide standardization throughout the Niagara River Corridor parks, and properly integrate the Niagara River Greenway Shoreline Trail.

Appendix A: Project Area Maps



Figure 1 is the Niagara Gorge State Parks map found on the NYSOPRHP website. It includes many points of interest and trails, including the Shoreline Trail marked in teal. This trail connects Niagara Falls State Park to Devil's Hole State Park and beyond.

Appendix B: Excerpts from Phase 1 and 2 – Wayfinding & Park Identity

### Wayfinding Plan GORGEVIEW 1 - EXISTING

The Gorgeview trail system is unique in its rustic character which is a delightful contrast to the more formally developed areas of the park. As such signage should be kept minimal and focus telling park visitors about the trail system, the lengths and difficulty of the trails and history of the Great Gorge rail line which once ran along the lower shores of the Niagara River.

The Shoreline Trail runs north-south through the Gorgeview area and will likely have increased usage with the near term completion of the Robert Moses Parkway de-mapping.

#### Key Signtypes Include:

- Kiosk with Map
- Trail Signs
- Regulatory
- Interpretative

#### LEGEND

- Existing Attraction (1)
- Interpretative (2)
- Pedestrian (3)
- Shoreline Trail (3)
- Hike Route (1)
- Conservation Map (4)
- Recommended Removal (2)
- Trail Sign Direction (7)
- Gateway Entry (4)
- Other (1)
- Regulatory (4)
- Vehicular Direction (2)



Figure 3 is an example of the signage study completed in Phase 1 of the project. All signs throughout the Niagara Gorge parks were inventoried, categorized, and mapped like the image shown above.

10





# Public Art Projects

## Our Place, Our Purpose Public Art Project

This project will engage high school students, community members, emerging and resident artists, environmental groups, and community- based organizations in the creation of public art murals along the Niagara River Greenway. Three murals will provide a cohesive, interconnected set of interactive artwork - spanning Buffalo, Tonawanda, and Grand Island - designed and created by the community to highlight the beauty and importance of our ecological, cultural and historical landscape.

**Proposed Site Locations**

BEFORE

Black Rock Canal Park

AFTER

BEFORE

Aqua Lane Shoreline Trail

AFTER

\*\* Images are examples to show which areas will be part of the mural installations.

\*\*Final designs will be submitted for approval to the appropriate agencies for each site.

\*\* An example interactive component would be a code to scan that employs augmented reality to animate the mural.

\*\* Another example interactive component would be a code to scan that would open media that highlights the community engagement pieces that went into creating that portion of the mural, why an element was chosen (perhaps a lake sturgeon), and community organizations who are working in that space. In this example, featuring the sturgeon could raise awareness about the importance of protecting aquatic biodiversity in the river.

BEFORE

Beaver Island Parkway Shoreline Trail

AFTER

## Town of Niagara Welcome Mural

This project consists of a Mural to be painted on the west side of the Extra Space Property located at 2590 Military Road in the Town of Niagara.

The mural will provide direct visibility an inclusion of the Niagara River Greenway Trails visible from the NYS Thruway, the City of Niagara Falls, Canadian traffic to and from the Lewiston-Queenston bridge and all local traffic. It will highlight all Niagara County has to offer.





# Niagara River Greenway Funded Projects

## 2021 - 2024

### 2021

#### Niagara County Host Community Standing Committee

Wheatfield Veterans Memorial	\$100,000	Niagara County
Aquarium of Niagara - Whirlpool Commons	\$ 250,000	City of Niagara Falls
Veterans Memorial Community Park	\$3, 369,000	Town of Niagara
Lock Tenders Tribute- Phase III	\$100,000	Niagara County
Youngstown Water Street Shoreline Project	\$10,000	Niagara County
Pletcher Road Playground	\$550,000	Town of Lewiston
Sanborn Park Playground	\$100,000	Town of Lewiston
Kiwanis Park Baseball Court	\$28,000	Town of Lewiston
Sanborn Park Playground	\$91,250	Town of Lewiston
Riviera Theatre Expansion- Phase III	\$175,000	Niagara County
Old Fort Niagara Structure Preservation	\$75,000	Niagara County
Gratwick Riverside Park Improvement- Phase II	\$100,000	Niagara County

#### Buffalo Erie County Greenway Standing Committee

Buffalo Heritage Carousel	\$264,820	BECGSC
BPOC Pathways and Furnishing Project	\$500,000	BECGSC
Buffalo Scholastic Rowing Association -Phase I	\$61,000	BECGSC
Erie County Shoreline Trail Enhancement-Phase II	\$315,000	BECGSC
Sail Buffalo Sailing School Capital Improvements	\$31,400	BECGSC

#### Greenway Ecological Standing Committee

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper (BNW) Restore Corp	\$195,000	GESC
BRAA Wildlife Certification	\$90,000	GESC
BNW Ellicott Living Shoreline	\$162,900	GESC
WNYLC- Escarpment Land Protection	\$114,000	GESC



## 2022

### Niagara County Host Community Standing Committee

Aquarium Gorge Discovery Center	\$300,000	City of Niagara Falls
Tatler House- Porter Mansion Restoration	\$235,000	City of Niagara Falls
Wheatfield Lions Nature Trail & Pond	\$115,000	Niagara County
NCCC Veterans Memorial Park	\$100,000	Niagara County

### Buffalo Erie County Greenway Standing Committee

Buffalo Heritage Carousel	\$21,000	BECGSC
Buffalo Lighthouse Restoration	\$137,800	BECGSC
BOPC- Grand Staircase Restoration	\$220,000	BECGSC
BOPC- Point of the Meadow Shelter	\$425,500	BECGSC
BOPC- Arboretum & Clubhouse Project	\$92,000	BECGSC
Buffalo Museum of Science Tifft Project	\$400,00	BECGSC
City of Buffalo- RCW Centennial Park	\$1,100,000	BECGSC
WNYLC- Riverline -Red Jacket Habitat	\$75,000	BECGSC

### Greenway Ecological Standing Committee

BNW- Gill Creek Master Plan	\$47,000	GESC
TOL Stone Haven Nature Preserve	\$226,200	GESC

### New York State Parks Standing Committee

RMP Removal Scoping Phase 2	\$1,500,000	NYS Parks
Art Park Trail Connector Project	\$1,500,000	NYS Parks





## 2023

### Niagara County Host Community Standing Committee

SAHS School House Museum	\$130,000	Town of Lewiston
Royalton Ravine Memorial Pavilion	\$189,352	Niagara County
Town of Porter Fitness Park	\$135,000	Niagara County
Lewiston Council of the Arts Mural	\$30,000	Town of Lewiston
Academy Park Community Pavilion	\$190,000	Town of Lewiston
Lewiston Town Park	\$1,460,000	Town of Lewiston
Veterans Memorial Community Park	\$500,000	Town of Niagara
Gratwick Riverside Park Improvements	\$100,000	Niagara County
Hartland Recreational Access	\$180,000	Niagara County
Carousel Society Music Room	\$170,000	Niagara County

### Buffalo Erie County Greenway Standing Committee

Buffalo Lighthouse Safety and Access Project	\$105,000	BECGSC
BOPC Point of the Meadow Shelter Project	\$225,000	BECGSC
Buffalo Scholastic Rowing -Inclusive Rowing	\$314,310	BECGSC
COB- Ralph C. Wilson Centennial Park	\$400,000	BECGSC
Erie County Greenway Parks signage Project	\$165,000	BECGSC
Erie County Isle View Enhancement	\$500,000	BECGSC

### Greenway Ecological Standing Committee

BNW Restore Corp	\$249,400	GESC
Friends of Silo City- Urban Management	\$308,900	GESC
Buffalo Society of Natural Science-Tifft	\$555,300	GESC
WNYLC- Protecting Pfohl Property	\$893,300	GESC

### New York State Park Standing Committee

Joseph Davis Park Site Improvements	\$700,000	NYSP
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## 2024

### Niagara County Host Community Standing Committee

Academy Park Community Pavilion	\$190,000	Town of Lewiston
Lewiston Town Park	\$1,460,000	Town of Lewiston
Veterans Memorial Community Park	\$500,000	Town of Niagara
Gratwick Riverside Park Improvements	\$100,000	Niagara County
Hartland Recreational Access	\$180,000	Niagara County
Carousel Society Music Room	\$170,000	Niagara County

### Buffalo Erie County Greenway Standing Committee

Buffalo Lighthouse Site Stabilization	\$105,000	BECGSC
BOPC Wayfinding and Signage Phase 2	\$420,000	BECGSC
BNW Expanding Blueway/Greenway	\$56,650	BECGSC
Buffalo Scholastic Rowing	\$257,792	BECGSC
Sail Buffalo Classroom	\$118,000	BECGSC
Alt Nature Trail and Center Improvements	\$95,000	BECGSC

### Greenway Ecological Standing Committee

BNW Sheridan Park Living Shoreline	\$637,400	GESC
Alt Nature Trail	\$60,500	GESC
BNW Niagara Wheatfield Eco Campus	\$204,400	GESC
WNYLC Bedell Meadows Project	\$648,750	GESC

### New York State Park Standing Committee

Crow's Nest Stairway Construction	\$1,000,000	NYSP
NYS Parks Wayfinding and Signage	\$550,000	NYSP



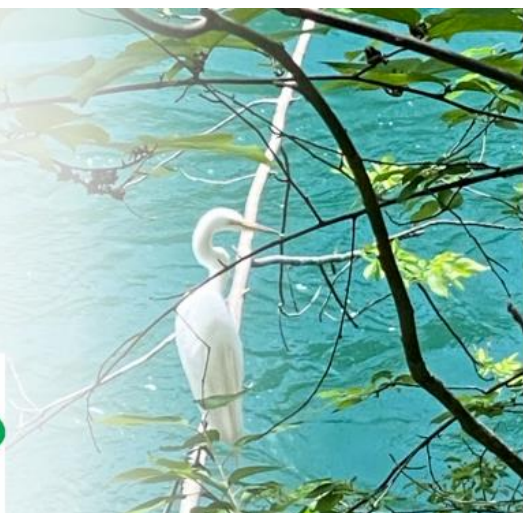
## Community Engagement and other Highlights

### Highmark Grass Roots Community Outdoor Active Wellness

A Partnership to  
Expand Niagara  
Friends of Parks and  
Trails to promote  
Active Outdoor  
Recreation



**HIGHMARK  
HEALTH**



Current Highmark Health Grant Initiatives





# Aqua Lane Park Signage



A partnership between the Ken-Ton School District, Town of Tonawanda, and Niagara River Greenway has resulted in a long-awaited project centered around three ecologically significant islands in the Niagara River and the species of birds that inhabit them.

The islands go by different names but are commonly referred to as Strawberry Island, Tern Island, and Motor Island. They are located between the Town of Tonawanda and the southern tip of Grand Island. Throughout the year, a variety of species of migratory birds live and nest on these islands such as Bald Eagles, Great Egrets, Common Terns, and Great Blue Herons. Thanks to the work of Ken-Ton School District students and staff in partnership with the Town of Tonawanda and Niagara River Greenway, Aqua Lane Park is now home to signage with information about the birds and viewfinders to allow guests to observe them.



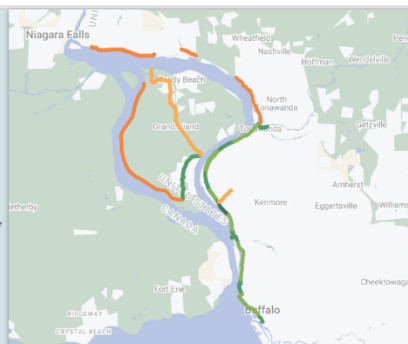
# Pollinator Gardens

Last year alone, our groups planted 53 trees and 365 native plants in 3 planting sessions



## Clubs Involved:

- Kenmore Rotary
- Tonawanda Rotary
- BNMC Rotary
- Buffalo Rotary
- Grand Island Rotary
- Buffalo Sunrise Rotary
- Niagara County Central Rotary
- Lockport Rotary
- Lewiston / NOTL Rotary
- UB Rotaract
- Canisius Rotaract



Adopted Greenway Sections



## Pollinator Gardens





# Freedom Park Can-Am Bike Ride

On the sunny and brisk Saturday morning of October 26<sup>th</sup>, East Side Bike Club (ESBC) and Friends of Freedom Park (FOFP) held the Freedom Park Can-Am Ride, honoring those who crossed into Canada in search of freedom during the Underground Railroad. Niagara River Greenway assisted ESBC and FOFP in the promotion and coordination of this event to ensure that the riders were safely guided through the Peace Bridge.

The eager riders journeyed from Freedom Park Buffalo to Freedom Park Fort Erie, Ontario, symbolizing the final stretch of the Underground Railroad journey from America to Canada. On the day of the ride, The Peace Bridge Authority closed off an entire lane on the Peace Bridge so we could ride over the bridge as one big group. This unique experience was unforgettable and representative of enslaved people who bravely crossed over into Canada to reach their destination.

This 15.5-mile bike ride not only commemorated those who sought freedom, but also celebrated the international connection between the US and Canada





# 2025 Environmental Ambassador Summit



Niagara River Greenway

NEWSFLASH

Winter 2025



*Pictured above are the 2025 winners of Niagara River Greenway's third annual Environmental Ambassador Summit! Niagara Falls High School blew away the judges with their "Hyde Park Native Planting Project", which will enhance biodiversity at Hyde Park in Niagara Falls through native plantings and a long-term maintenance plan.*

## 2025 Environmental Ambassador Summit

On the icy morning of Thursday, February 6th, Linde, M&T, and Rotary volunteers gathered with Niagara River Greenway's staff to begin the preparations for the third annual Environmental Ambassador Summit. Thanks to the support of our generous host and sponsor, Linde, we were able to invite seven local high school teams to attend this year's summit. McKinley High School, Mt. St. Mary Academy, North Tonawanda High School, Riverside High School, Niagara Falls High School, Niagara Wheatfield High School and Big Picture / Crossroads Academy from Ken-Ton School District had the opportunity to connect and engage with local environmental and academic professionals, gaining valuable insights into real-world environmental work and career opportunities!



## The Birds on the Niagara INTERNATIONAL Winter BIRD Festival February 16th- February 19th



Paddles Up Niagara is a family friendly and safe way to experience the natural areas and unique habitats of the Niagara River. Whether you are a novice or an experienced paddler, you will enjoy spending the morning with an enthusiastic paddling community. Guides and safety paddlers will be on hand to assist and answer your paddling questions.



Starting at **Beaver Island** on Grand Island, enjoy the **West River Shoreline Trail** as we ride through **Buckhorn State Park**, over the northbound **GRAND ISLAND BRIDGE** which will be closed to traffic and visit **Niagara Falls, Whirlpool, Devils Hole and Ft. Niagara State Park** (Depending on the length of ride you choose) Following the ride, join us for the after party at Beaver Island State Park! Net proceeds from the event will support future NY State Parks community programs.

# Niagara River Greenway Budget Outlook

## Financial Highlights



	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	NRG FY2025-26-27 budget forecast		000\$			
2		FY2025 A		FY2026B	FY2027 F	
3						
4	carry over from previous year	42		130	33	
5	new EPF funding for this year	300		300	300	
6	HighMark grant net staff funding*	68			100	
7	carry over grant funding*	105				
8	total cash available	515		430	433	
9						
10	known expenses total year	385		397	433	
11	salary and fringe greg, michelle, lisa	298		305	320	
12	sal and fringe for Erin FT	43		45	52	
13	NHT admin fees	17.6		20	22	
14	insurance	2.2		2.2	2.4	
15	consulting	10		10	15	
16	printing & communications	6		6	10	
17	travel and conferences	8		8	12	
18						
19	fcst surplus as of 01apr25	130		33	0	
20						
21	*does not include pass thru funds					
22						
23						



## Our Partners



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



**RALPH C. WILSON, JR.**  
FOUNDATION



KATHY HOCHUL  
Governor  
MARIE THERESE DOMINGUEZ  
Commissioner



**REDDY** bikeshare



**Community Foundation**  
for Greater Buffalo

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR GENEROSITY



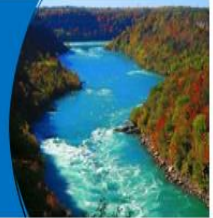
**GObike**  
BUFFALO







## Get in Touch



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[Niagara River Greenway Commission - Home](#) | [Facebook](#)

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**(Executive Director)**

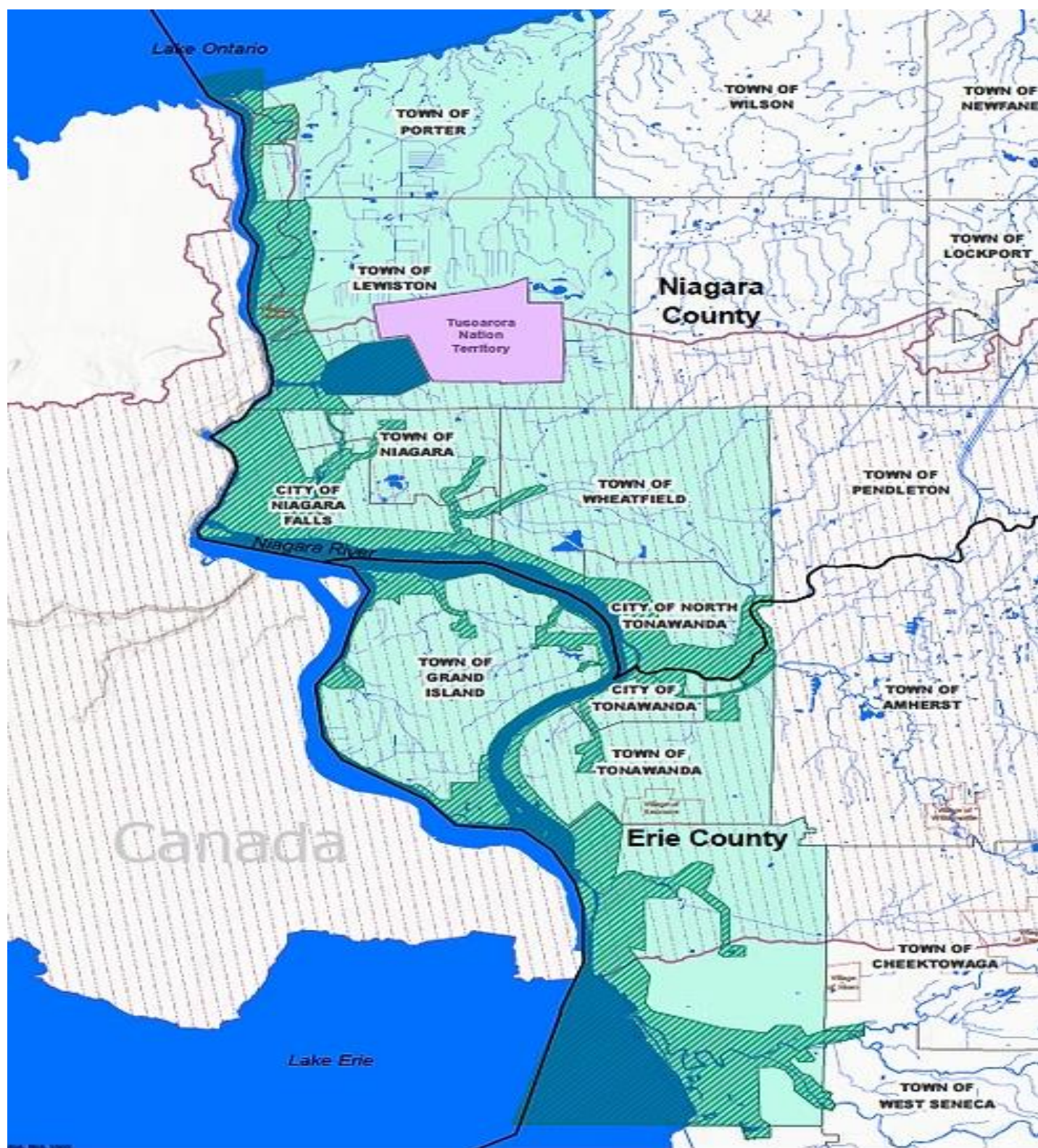
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**(Administrative Manager)**

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**(Community Engagement Manager)**





### Legend

- |                                   |                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Niagara River Greenway            | Niagara River Watershed |
| Niagara River Greenway Focus Area | Town Boundary           |
| Streams and Rivers                | Indigenous Territory    |
| Waterbody                         | County Boundary         |

## Niagara River Greenway

