

Buffalo Niagara's Strategic Plan for Prosperity

JANUARY 2017



Empire State
Development



→ The Buffalo Blueway



This project will create a network of public access along the waterways of Buffalo. The “Buffalo Blueway” will enhance and expand waterfront access for all communities and will be strategically connected to existing sites and attractions. Along with constructing new access points, the project will add wayfinding and public art installations to guide and attract visitors. The project will also work to improve water quality, remove physical barriers, enhance the natural environment and improve safety. The Blueway will be promoted through a coordinated marketing program, including the development of a brand, a Blueway Trail guide and smartphone application. By connecting with a green jobs training program, the operations and maintenance of the network will catalyze economic and social impact for the community.

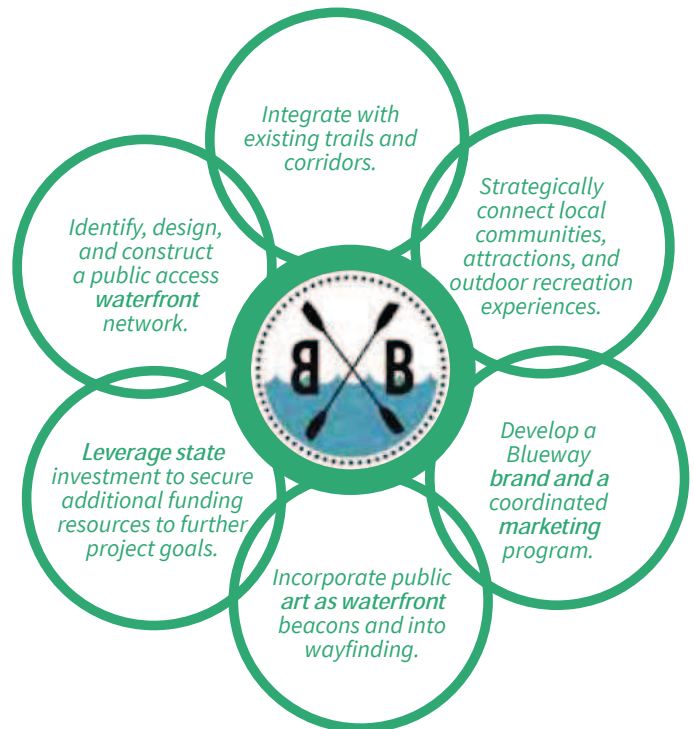
WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

The Buffalo Blueway is envisioned to become a backbone and connector of three of Buffalo Niagara’s most unique and important economic development assets—history, culture and nature. Many of Buffalo’s most prominent tourism destinations, historical sites, cultural institutions, and natural spaces are already along a navigable waterway. By connecting these prized assets, the Buffalo Blueway will spur tourism and revitalization, bring together communities, and improve the social well-being and health of local residents. By enhancing connections between Buffalo’s waterfront and Niagara Falls and combining the marketing power of these destinations with outdoor recreation, the Blueway would promote tourism and extend visitor stays.

Entrepreneurship opportunities for waterfront recreation, such as paddlesport rentals, will spread to sites with enhanced waterfront access. Spin-off impacts like this will benefit community-based business development through public-private-nonprofit partnerships that were effective in Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper’s Rust to Blue initiative.

Increasing commercial activity along the waterfront will help revitalize surrounding neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the green infrastructure restored or enhanced by the initiative will improve water quality. In order to maintain the Buffalo Blueway, the project will provide workforce development “on-ramps” for under-employed or unemployed residents by connecting with the “Green Jobs” workforce training program. The Buffalo Blueway will provide communities that have been disproportionately affected by physical, social, and economic barriers with enhanced waterfront access and help promote healthy lifestyles.

The 6 interconnected goals of the Buffalo Blueway





PROJECT DETAILS

Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper identified a number of existing sites that can be integrated into the Blueway. An additional 18 sites were identified as potential future access points to connect communities that are disproportionately cut off from the waterfront. This includes three high priority “anchor sites” that could be established in the short term. Opportunities exist on both public and private properties that lie along the Buffalo River, Scajaquada Creek, Union Ship Canal, Cazenovia Creek, and other connected waterways.

- A** Black Rock Canal Park
- B** Broderick Park
- C** 1660 Niagara Street Paddlesport Launch
- D** Buffalo State College Launch
- E** Delaware Park Launch
- F** LaSalle Park
- G** Times Beach Nature Preserve
- H** Michigan Street Bridge North
- I** Michigan Street Bridge South
- J** City Ship Canal
- K** Red Jacket Riverfront Park
- L** Riverbend
- M** Seneca Bluffs
- N** Harlem Road
- O** Cazenovia Park
- P** Outer Harbor

Blueway Access Points
 ● Proposed ● Existing
 ● Priority





Potential Partners and Leverage Opportunities

Planning, Design & Implementation Marketing & Promotion Workforce Training and Development "Green Jobs" Stewardship & Maintenance Other

LOCAL

AKAG Museum	✓	✓			✓
Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation	✓				✓
City of Buffalo	✓			✓	
Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) (workforce re-entry with DOL and DOC)			✓	✓	✓
County of Erie	✓			✓	
Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (Canalside, Outer Harbor)	✓	✓		✓	✓
Town of Grand Island	✓				✓
PUSH Buffalo			✓	✓	
Town of Tonawanda	✓				✓
Visit Buffalo Niagara		✓			
Town of West Seneca	✓				✓

STATE

Canal Corp	✓				✓
NYSDEC	✓				✓
ESD	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Health Department					✓
Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation	✓	✓		✓	✓

FEDERAL

US Army Corps of Engineers	✓				✓
US Coast Guard	✓				✓
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor	✓	✓			
US Environmental Protection Agency					✓
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	✓	✓			✓
US Dept of the Interior	✓			✓	✓

OTHERS

American Canoe Association	✓				
American Rivers	✓				
Great Lakes Seaway Trail	✓	✓			
Niagara River Greenway	✓	✓		✓	✓
Various philanthropic	✓		✓	✓	✓
Great Lakes Seaway Trail	✓	✓			

IMPLEMENTATION MILESTONES

The Buffalo Blueway

Existing Conditions and Opportunities and Gaps Analysis

Conduct an Existing Conditions Assessment.

Complete an “Opportunity, Constraints & Gaps Analysis” to provide a baseline assessment for the WNY Blueway Guide and identify short and long term action items and projects through public engagement.

Blueway Trail Implementation Plan

Develop a “WNY Blueway Implementation Plan” to produce a waterfront development strategy using anchor sites. Planning process will engage the public and strategic partners to foster opportunities.

Update WNY Blueway Implementation Plan.

Physical Enhancements to Existing Sites

Enhance existing sites (seven currently identified) through capital improvements using partner organizations and leverage. Involves planning, design and construction.

Marketing & Promotion

Develop marketing plan and promotional campaign.

Roll out marketing campaign.

Develop “Blueway App” smartphone application.

Launch “Blueway App” smartphone application.

Expanding Access in Underserved Communities

Plan and design new anchor/priority sites.

Acquire new sites or easements.

Construct new priority sites (up to three).

Identify and enhance community connections to Blueway corridor.

Public Art and Wayfinding

Activation & Programming of sites using leverage from potential partners, and engaging entrepreneurs.

Operations, Maintenance & Stewardship

Commence Stewardship, Operations and Maintenance program and continue it.

BUDGET & IMPACT

Budget Request: \$10M

With significant catalytic investment through the Buffalo Billion program, the Blueway initiative will open the door to multiple local, regional and federal resources that, when leveraged appropriately, will enhance both the experience and multiply the impact of investment in numerous sectors. The list of potential project partners presents a diverse set of significant funding opportunities that a closely coordinated regional effort could secure and leverage to promote public access, public health, tourism, art and culture, social impacts, environmental restoration and job training. Studies throughout the country show the strong economic impacts that Blueways in similar areas have had on visitor spending on entertainment, accommodation, restaurants, and retail. The Blueway Initiative would also expand and develop the local workforce by connecting with a “Green Jobs” training program. In addition to the recreational services and economic benefits generated from a blueway system, clean and healthy waterways provide critically important habitat connectors for fish and wildlife allowing them access to key forage, breeding, and refuge areas.