



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PR Contact:

Sarah Larkin

Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy

Sarah@bfloparks.org | 716.861.0716

OLMSTED CONSERVANCY TO INVEST \$19.5 MILLION OVER FIVE YEARS

Projects Planned for all Olmsted's Parks and Several Parkways in Latest Capital Plan

Buffalo, N.Y. – The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy has announced plans to invest \$19.58 million over the next five years on roughly 42 capital improvement projects designed to enhance the city's renowned Olmsted-designed parks and parkways.

The list of Olmsted projects, revealed at a meeting Tuesday evening at the Burchfield-Penney Art Center, is the next five-year planning installment coming out of the Conservancy's 2008 master plan for the parks. That plan identified 280 worthy projects needed in the Olmsted parks system.

Since 2008, the Conservancy has invested a total of \$35.9 million on improvements to Olmsted's six parks, seven circles and eight parkways, a system which spans over 850 acres and is owned by the City of Buffalo. Another \$1.75 million in park projects are underway for 2019.

This latest five-year plan started in early 2018 and emerged from a series of public meetings in five park "districts" around the city. Those districts included Riverside, Martin Luther King Jr., South, Delaware and West. The Olmsted Conservancy board will officially vote on July 25th on the project list, after any final modifications are made based on Tuesday's public input.

"Thanks to our planning process this is a logical and responsive menu of projects identified by the communities these parks serve," said Stephanie Crockatt, the Conservancy's executive director. "We followed our mission while incorporating the question – 'What would Olmsted do today?' – to fruitful conclusions."

Some park projects are systemwide, like path restorations, pedestrian lighting and seating, or playground enhancements throughout. Others are park-specific, like rehabilitating a building or restoring a special historic feature, like the lake and Arboretum at South Park.

"All this planning and public input provided a road map, a way forward," said board member James D. Newman, president of NOCO Energy Corp., and chair of the capital projects working group. "We have parks, we have projects and we will need money."

The working group included board members, city officials, Conservancy staff, and representatives of the University at Buffalo's Regional Institute. Grant funding for the meetings and planning came from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.

Funds for the capital projects will be sought from federal, state, county and city governments, foundations, corporations and public contributions. Crockatt said an important step is to finalize their work with a professional fundraising consultant on funding feasibility for capital as well as endowment and sustainability considerations.

The proposed projects break down as follows:

- System-wide improvements, 11 projects, \$3.01 million.
- Riverside Park, three projects, \$540,000.
- Front Park, Prospect/Columbus, three projects, \$1.02 million.
- Days Park, one project, \$75,000.
- Delaware Park, eight projects, \$4.2 million.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Park, eight projects, \$6.75 million.
- South Park, three projects, \$1.85 million.
- Cazenovia Park, four projects, \$1.2 million.
- Heacock Place/South Circles, two projects, \$3.07 million

“Our next steps, after finalizing the capital improvements list will be to hold several concurrent meetings with City of Buffalo departments and Common Council for their review and input as well as our final board approval,” said 2019 BOPC Board Chair Elizabeth McPhail. “Then it becomes a function of donor interest, fundraising and project management.”

Lessons were learned by the Conservancy over the past ten years since the publication of the 2008 Master Plan, particularly in the area of sustained maintenance. The core criteria for this segment of five-year projects from 2020-2024 has been based on: community identification, a reduction or no change to maintenance burden, and revenue potential. The Conservancy in partnership with the city has also focused on the need to address safety and access issues, long term sustainable funding, and will continue in its policy to seek public input and to not remove a park amenity unless an equal or better replacement is provided.

As a result, the new Olmsted Community Alliance will be activated throughout Buffalo to continue this important conversation. A first meet and greet for those interested citizens will be held on August 22 at Community Beer Works and will be facilitated by the Conservancy.

“The extensive work on this plan has identified not only projects but the opinion of park users that maintenance and sustaining the investment is a priority,” said Crockatt. “The Conservancy is grateful to all who have been involved, shared, and given their time to this effort. Our staff has worked tirelessly to present a plan representative of Buffalo and one which will continue to incrementally position us for smart growth and responsive care for the foreseeable future.”

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About the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is the first nonprofit organization in the nation to manage and operate an entire urban park system consisting of more than 850 acres of beautifully designed historic parks, parkways and circles. The Conservancy is an independent not-for-profit, community organization whose mission is to promote, preserve, restore, enhance, and maintain the Frederick Law Olmsted-designed parks and parkways in the Greater Buffalo area for current and future generations. More than

2.5 million visits occur in Buffalo's Olmsted Park system annually for recreation, relaxation and rejuvenation. Designed by America's first landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted more than 150 years ago, it's our nation's first urban park system. Since the 2004 groundbreaking public-private partnership between the Conservancy, City of Buffalo and Erie County, the Conservancy has held responsibility for the management and care of these nationally registered historic green spaces and continues today to assist the City in bringing recognition to its collective renaissance. Most recently, the American Planning Association recognized Delaware Park as one of the 2014 Great Places in America, The Guardian publication named Buffalo's Olmsted park system as one of the best park systems in the world, and in 2018 the Conservancy set a Guinness World Record in historic Bidwell Parkway. www.bfloparks.org

The Buffalo Olmsted Park System includes:

Six parks: Cazenovia Park, Delaware Park, Front Park, Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, Riverside Park at, and South Park

Seven parkways: Bidwell, Chapin, Lincoln, McKinley, Porter, Red Jacket, and Richmond

Eight landscaped traffic circles: Agassiz, Colonial, Ferry, Gates, McClellan, McKinley, Soldiers, and Symphony