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**BUFFALO OLMSTED PARKS CONSERVANCY SAYS ‘CULTURAL CORRIDOR’ FAVORS REUNITING
DELAWARE PARK FOR ‘NEW BUFFALO’**

Scajaquada Corridor an opportunity to ‘get this right, for the right reasons’

(Buffalo, NY) – The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy today unveiled a coalition of cultural influencers who see a *New Buffalo* opportunity in re-considering the design of the Scajaquada Expressway/198 to create a collaborative and comprehensive long-term plan.

Together these organizations have spent, or will spend, upwards of \$300 million on improvements for new buildings and expanded opportunities amidst the Scajaquada Cultural Corridor. These investments would be supported, enhanced and magnified with an appropriate redesign of the Scajaquada Expressway/198 Corridor. The plan includes addressing historic park restoration, cultural district enhancements and vital waterways rehabilitation.

These influential and powerful leaders, institutions and organizations came together to join the larger regional community in expressing the need to respect all residents’ greater vision for the city. Many of these organizations are directly impacted and influenced by the current design and conditions of Scajaquada Expressway/198.

The conservancy worked in recent months to unite cultural, environmental and political leadership in Buffalo in an aspirational groundswell designed to stay state Department of Transportation reconstruction implementation plans for the Scajaquada Expressway/198. To date, the NYSDOT response to the public input session held in February still has not yet been received.

“We have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to correct a 1950s’ mistake: This dividing and intrusive expressway,” said Conservancy Executive Director Stephanie L. Crockatt. “Let’s do this right, by collaboratively establishing Buffalo’s Scajaquada Cultural Corridor. Let’s restore our historic Delaware Park, with its dramatic cultural linkages, and join Canalside and the Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus as iconic successes in the *New Buffalo*.”

She said at a news conference that the conservancy created consensus around redesigning a critical portion of the Scajaquada Corridor that strategically unites the “golden links” along Fredrick Law Olmsted’s master design, Delaware Park and its surrounding parkways, which are the city’s and this effort’s central features. Implementing a visible and accessible portion now will be a big win for the state and city, she added.

“In so doing, we can begin to create the Scajaquada Cultural Corridor that positively impacts the park’s historic, intrinsic and multi-use value,” she said. “A reunification of Delaware Park’s two portions is *New Buffalo* thinking. Strategically and physically linking our cultural assets is

good for the economy and will bolster the area as a destination for families, tourists and new businesses. If we take the time to design it properly, we will also benefit the environment, the water quality of Scajaquada Creek and Hoyt Lake, and can comprehensively plan better for smarter future growth and real-time impacts.”

The cultural links include the Buffalo History Museum; the Darwin Martin House; the Buffalo Museum of Science; and Shakespeare in Delaware Park, all in conjunction with the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy and further supported by Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, Delaware Soccer, Restore our Community Coalition, the Scajaquada Corridor Coalition, and Preservation Buffalo-Niagara.

The Cultural Corridor is dramatically enhanced by the vision of a rejuvenated waterway system that restores creek function, reinvigorates habitat, expands recreational opportunities, reconnects the community to its waterfront access point at Niagara Street and sparks economic development.

The State DOT is moving hastily to put through a reconstruction plan for a 2.2-mile stretch of the 198 from Parkside Avenue to Grant Street. This plan proposes to continue this thoroughfare reconstruction as a four-lane highway limited to cars and trucks. The conservancy and the Cultural Coalition proposes a focused and phased approach, first implementing only the section through Delaware Park that returns the stone arched bridge to pedestrian and bicycle use and reconstructs an important intersection at Delaware Avenue. The area is from near Agassiz Circle west to the pedestrian bridge at Lincoln Parkway.

DOT plans seem short-sighted

This approach would reunite the park, and allow time for comprehensive planning. Current DOT recommendations are rushed, outdated and short-sighted, coalition officials said. The plans prevent reunifying Delaware Park and appropriate restoration of Scajaquada Creek, officials said. The plan, most notably, misses the opportunity to create a park-appropriate corridor where cultural, environmental and residential stakeholders should benefit most fully, officials said.

A rushed reconstruction plan will continue to run a dividing and divisive stretch of limited-access pavement through the heart of a grand and historic park. That is 1950s’ thinking. The *New Buffalo* has a chance to turn this corridor into an “urban cultural connector” that sparks waterfront revitalization at the mouth of Scajaquada Creek near Niagara Street and adds mightily to residents’ quality of life, health and well-being, and to the economic strength of the city and region.

“Buffalo’s renaissance is evident and is expanding daily. Buffalo’s waterfront is open to all. The medical campus has a new Children’s Hospital and a new SUNY at Buffalo medical school,” said conservancy Board Chair Dennis Horrigan. “Investment and traffic returned to downtown and Main Street. New restaurants and hotels open every month. A Washington, D.C. developer is re-concepting One Seneca Tower. The Buffalo Outer Harbor is seeing environmentally smart investment and development. A New York City company is bringing 1,500 jobs to the region.

Buffalo is a leading destination for relocating millennials and is ripening with historic, cultural and heritage tourism.”

“Let’s collaborate to get this right, for the right reasons. The Scajaquada Cultural Corridor can be the centerpiece of the resurgent Buffalo,” Horrigan said. “Take a step back to take a step forward into the *New Buffalo*. Let’s stop thinking in the past, and prepare for future generations.”

The conservancy sees a much better approach to the roadway. These elements include:

- The 198 should become a park-appropriate road.
- Offers access for walkers, runners, cyclists, strollers, and cars.
- Calms traffic safely and unites the park, not splitting it.
- Removes medians and other dividers which take up parkland and stimulate speeding.
- Restores the Delaware stone arch bridge to Olmsted’s original intention for all park users to access and traverse.
- Promotes clean water and proper runoff, and utilizes the latest techniques that insure minimal adverse impacts and health risks.
- Incorporates a design that promotes creek restoration and expands waterfront access

Building on more than \$300 million in recent or future investment within a mile of Delaware Park, residents have an opportunity to access a cultural corridor with nationally recognized assets for their children and grandchildren.

"The Scajaquada Creek corridor is home to some of the region's most iconic cultural, historical and natural assets," said Jill Jedlicka, executive director of Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper. "The health of Scajaquada Creek has suffered for decades due to infrastructure decisions and projects that did not consider impacts on our local water sources."

“With the redesign of the Scajaquada Corridor, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to restore the health and beauty of the creek system, while also addressing transportation and economic development needs. The phased approach presented by the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, and supported by numerous other leading organizations including Riverkeeper, will allow forward progress as well as support this community vision,” she said.

Getting this right will also build momentum for reversing another mid-20th Century mistake of destroying Humboldt Parkway. The Conservancy has worked closely with the Restore our Community Coalition, in their quest to re-channel Olmsted’s vision and heal the eastside divide, and they are moving forward with another environmental impact study.

“The myriad mistakes that many cities, including Buffalo, made over the decades are well documented,” Crockatt said. “Let’s not go down that road with this road. Let’s be the example of something greater and create a transportation solution we are proud of, together. We’ve studied this for years, now let’s collaborate on the right solutions for the right road, linking north and south as well as from east to west,” she added.

“At one point, Canalside was to host a big box retailer, but look at it now. A mistake was avoided and a better solution found. We’re in a similar place now. We can’t miss this opportunity.”

“This isn’t about another state agency or a highway. It isn’t about 30 miles per hour or 50 miles per hour. It’s about making Buffalo better 30 or 50 years from now,” Horrigan said. “It’s about realizing the dreams and ambitions of this generation and the next. We must do something meaningful. Let’s do it together and not miss this opportunity.”

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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 that consists of 850 acres of beautifully designed historic parks, parkways and circles. The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy is a not-for-profit, membership-based, 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 people use Buffalo’s historic, award-winning Olmsted Park system annually for recreation, relaxation and rejuvenation. The parks were designed by America’s first landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted more than 148 years ago. Basic maintenance of the parks has been greatly improved since the 2004 groundbreaking public-private agreement with the City of Buffalo and Erie County. Since that time, the Olmsted Parks Conservancy, now partnering with the City of Buffalo, has retained full responsibility for the management and care of these green spaces which are listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. Most recently, the American Planning Association recognized Delaware Park as one of the 2014 Great Places in America and The Guardian named the Olmsted park system as one of the best park systems in the world. www.bfloparks.org

The Buffalo Olmsted Park System includes:

Six parks: Cazenovia Park in South Buffalo, Delaware Park in Delaware/Parkside District, Front Park at the Peace Bridge, Martin Luther King, Jr. Park at Fillmore Avenue, Riverside Park at Niagara and Tonawanda Street, and South Park at McKinley Parkway

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

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