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## Preface

The unusual snow storm in Buffalo in October 2006 will no doubt become part of Buffalo folklore. As records go, the Buffalo-Niagara region has seen worse in terms of levels of snow, wind-chill, or low temperatures. What it has not experienced – at least in the past twenty years – has been a storm of this magnitude so early in the season. Thousands of trees came crashing, power lines were downed, basements flooded, and lives were affected. Much of this will eventually heal but the lessons of the storm will stay and will remind us of the resilience of the Buffalo community as it came back from its most recent challenge.

It is this resilience and community spirit that the studio celebrates, studies, and carries forth into the future. Led by a group of Masters students from the University of Buffalo’s Department of Urban and Regional Planning, the studio’s main goal is to engage, what was by any account, a disaster, into entrepreneurial energy aimed at making the city even better and even more entrepreneurial. While “greening” and “park” are the *leitmotif* of the studio there is equal attention to the economy and the community. Indeed, these may be the ultimate aims of the grand vision of the students.

As part of the study the students have consulted with many community members, representatives of NGO groups, local officials, and experts in a wide variety of fields. As well, they have observed and learned from the many seemingly ordinary but really quite extraordinary citizens of Buffalo. These include the volunteer who has been making daily scavenging trips for several years to keep areas near the waterfront clean, the groups who are deeply committed to making and maintaining their community gardens, the block clubs who know that neighborhood pride and neighborhood responsibility go together, the members of food coops, and the many children and adults whose community spirit is on display in the many gardens, parkways, and walkways of Buffalo. Nor has the learning been limited to city boundaries. The studio gained from their interaction with students from the University of Stuttgart, Germany and from their international comparative project with students in Stuttgart. We are grateful to the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo and to the German Academic Exchange Service for generous support that made the domestic and international aspects of the studio possible.

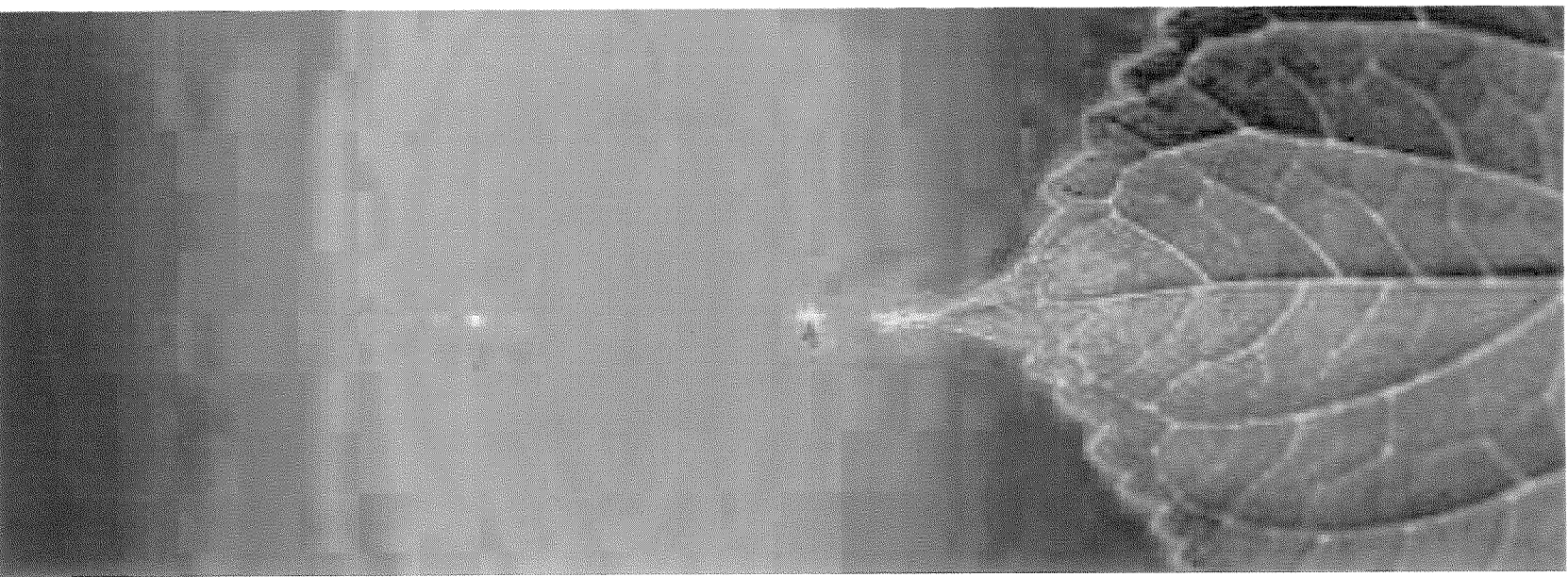
It is with confidence in the potential of our city that we invite you to review Buffalo: A City as a Park. Comments on the report can be relayed to the studio group by emailing Mrs. Donna Rogalski [dmr1@buffalo.edu](mailto:dmr1@buffalo.edu) in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

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### III. Achieving the Vision

This section translates the vision behind Buffalo: A City as a Park to specific goals and themes and suggests projects and strategies through which these goals will be realized. These projects and strategies are organized by their corresponding themes and stratified by whether the projects are short, medium, or of long term nature. A timeline that shows the correlation between themes and when projects are to be completed can be found at the end of this section.



**Figure 47**  
Source: [http://www.nlink.net/img/about\\_side.gif](http://www.nlink.net/img/about_side.gif)

### III.1. The Plan

There are three main goals: connecting people, connecting institutions, and connecting green infrastructure. Separately and jointly these goals aim to raise the quality of life in, Buffalo creating a stronger green infrastructure system that encourages residents to live, work, and play in the city.

#### Connecting People

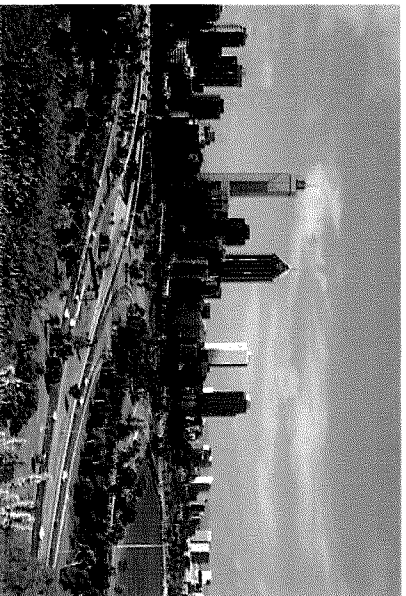
Connecting people, a staple of urban planning, is a vital goal to achieve the vision behind Buffalo: a City as a Park. The people include a diverse group of stakeholders that includes the leadership of the city, entrepreneurs, business representatives, schools, block-club members, and ordinary citizens. The diversity is also geographical and the goal is to connect not just residents within Buffalo city limits but stakeholders from various cities in the region. Over connecting people is both an issue of informing stakeholders of their respective initiatives and the creation of new systems and partnerships to bring groups together to work on common goals.

#### Connecting Institutions

The institutional players include city governments, NGOs, and private businesses. Lack of coordination between them creates inefficient and often problematic governance. Connecting these institutional players will be important for a comprehensive and synergistic implementation of any serious greening effort. Some institutional barriers are the result of long-standing and customary divisions of labor between agencies. Others come to light because newer solutions require new arrangements, such as between institutions with a public or private orientation. Similarly, institutional leadership will not only help to ensure that the vision for this Buffalo: a City as a Park plan has direction but will be crucial in retaining energy and developing pride that comes through civic participation.

#### Connecting Green Infrastructure

Disparate green infrastructure, however abundant, is unlikely to serve the vision of Buffalo: a City as a Park where greening aims for economic prosperity. New connections intertwined with existing green infrastructure will distribute the green areas evenly across the region, ensuring accessibility for people from every part of Buffalo. The new identity will make Buffalo an attractive city, while creating a new base for economic enticement. Re-imagining of the region has the goal of moving Buffalo's imagery away from a recovering rust-belt city to one where green dominates the landscape.



**Figure 48**

Source: <http://www.james.rp1.tu/perth/images/kings-park-city.jpg>

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## III.II. Implementing the Plan

This section describes the process for making all of the goals and objectives of the Buffalo: a City as a Park plan a reality within the urban context. It discusses the actions necessary to implement specific projects. An extensive list of suggested projects for improving green infrastructure can be found in Appendix B.

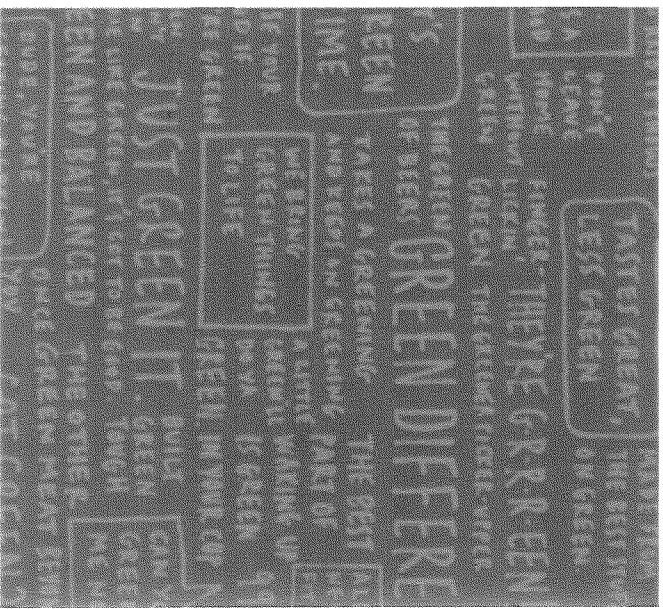
### Engaging the Public

The following short, medium, and long term projects are designed to bring the community together and inform them about the benefits of green projects in order to have a unified desire to re-image Buffalo. A multi-prong strategy is envisaged. It would include (i) an early advertising campaign that includes pamphlets, news advertisements, broadcasts, and partnerships with businesses like the *Buffalo News*; (ii) the creation of an educational greening organization that is tasked with disseminating information about existing greening projects and plans; (iii) a city-wide greening educational event that is held once a year to bring together people from all walks of life around the common theme of greening; and (iv) strengthening existing initiatives, such as the Green and Growing summit.

### Advertising Campaign

An advertising campaign will help augment the work leaders are doing within the community. Locally focused advertising can include pamphlets, news advertisements, and news broadcasts. This campaign should emphasize the benefits of greening and the need for community action and volunteers. Partnerships with businesses like the *Buffalo News* or prominent local websites can be created in order to reduce the costs of advertising. 'Word of Mouth' advertising is also very effective. Circulating published materials to green activists will result in their passing on this valuable information, providing 'word of mouth' advertising. The community will become better educated through these efforts and this will likely make them

willing to work with new and existing community leaders. Implementing these actions will put Buffalo on the path towards marketing itself to the nation. This marketing campaign might include television commercials, flyers, brochures, internet websites and billboards. The "I Love NY" campaign or advertising campaigns of a similar nature that are underway in Pennsylvania can act as models for Buffalo. This campaign should focus on attracting new businesses, residents, and the 'creative class' to Buffalo. It can also help bring back former residents to the city. A nationally-focused campaign will require teams of individuals and significant investment of resources. However, a strategically designed campaign will help to bring prosperity back to the city, and should be a priority, especially as conditions in the city begin to improve.



**Figure 49**

Source: [http://assets.goodmagazine.com/uploaded/images/masthead\\_image/5060/green1.jpg](http://assets.goodmagazine.com/uploaded/images/masthead_image/5060/green1.jpg)

### Expand or Create an Educational Greening Organization

Unbeknownst to many, several successful projects have occurred in Buffalo and there are ideas for even more projects circulating within existing greening organizations. If available to the public, this existing information will be of considerable value. An easily accessible database

of these projects and information can be used for education and coalition building. Clarity of mission will require that one organization take the lead on distributing this information. An educational greening organization can be as simple as an individual directing the questions and comments of local residents to appropriate existing greening bodies. Residents with questions or concerns will know where to go to contact the organization and have their issues dealt with in a quick, efficient manner. A possible alternative or supplement to this would be having the greening information organized into a website where queries can be performed by users.

### *City-Wide Greening Educational Awareness Event*

A city wide festival would advertise ongoing greening efforts and the positive effects generated from implementation of the plan for turning Buffalo into a City as a Park. Quite likely this festival will also foster more support for greening work around the urban fabric. One component of this event might be collaboration between the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo (CFGB) and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) in the form of a bus tour. Such a tour will allow residents and visitors to be able to see the greening work on local bus routes.



**Figure 50**

Source: [http://www.toronto.ca/greentoronto/festival/images/gt\\_festival\\_logo.jpg](http://www.toronto.ca/greentoronto/festival/images/gt_festival_logo.jpg)

### *Strengthening Existing Initiatives*

Existing initiatives, including some relatively recent ones, such as the Green and Growing summit, can serve to further the already awakened community interest following the October storm. A community data-base that includes, at a minimum, contact information of various community groups engaged in relevant activities will not only to help prevent duplication and engender cooperation but it will also act a signal of the possibilities in Buffalo. Such a database will further contact between people by focusing on common successes and challenges.

### *Improving Leadership*

Strong leadership backed by active citizen participation is the framework for connecting institutions. The following short, medium, and long term projects will help to unify leadership across the region bring public support and funding necessary for the success of this plan.

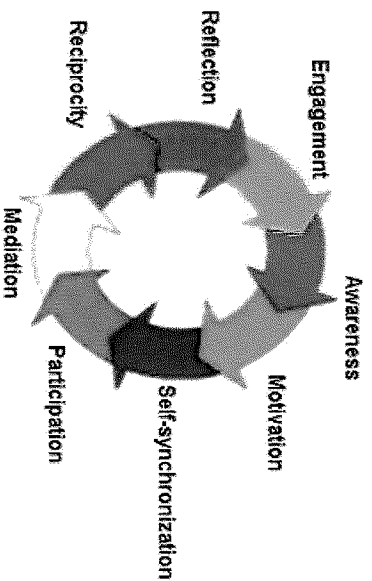
### *Educate Council Members on Greening Goals and Plan*

Council members should be made aware of the constant issues surrounding greening efforts. Some of these issues include: zoning laws, under-funded green spaces and parks, and urban agriculture. Community groups report that existing land-use laws hinder greening efforts. Vacant land, for instance, is taken over for community gardens but without title transfer. This makes community investment in them problematic. Such difficulties with city-owned land acquisition can also be brought into council members' consciousness. Simple but effective ways of doing this is by introducing this in a presentation to the City Council or by the circulation and sharing of printed or electronic media. Educating council members is a two way street. Elected representatives who are aware will also become the bearers of messages, helping to spread the message to their constituents and be better-equipped to advocate for changes to the landscape of the city. This will increase awareness of issues and spread the message that this is important to Buffalo.

## *Collaboration of Leaders*

Buffalo is blessed with several NGOs, some of whom are of long-standing. Yet, their collaboration around “green” is a recent phenomenon, jumpstarted by the Green and Growing Summit held in Summer 2007. Current community leaders like block club activists, educators, or other prominent individuals are the natural leadership to carry on the mantle of the green and growing summit. In turn, these block clubs and non-profit organizations can help to find other interested leaders. Currently, the Community Foundation is serving as the apex group for this process and has successfully led the green and growing summit and continues to exert leadership in this area. Building on these foundations, interested leaders can be connected to other leaders through educational events or other networks. Broad participation in these discussions will identify natural leaders.

## **Collaboration Life-Cycle**



**Figure 51**

Source: [http://mkeg.ty.pepad.com/photos/unategorized/collaboration\\_lifecycle.jpg](http://mkeg.ty.pepad.com/photos/unategorized/collaboration_lifecycle.jpg)

## *Change Laws That Hinder Greening Efforts*

Currently some land use laws hinder the trouble-free execution of greening projects. Some of these are related to vacant land-use laws discussed earlier. However, zoning issues can also be problematic. Similarly, new parking surfaces face institutional impediments, such as zoning changes, if they are recast as more permeable surfaces with attendant tree-cover. We envisage three steps in this process of connecting institutions to overcome barriers or to develop new arrangements. First, laws and statutes that are likely to hinder trouble-free execution of greening projects are identified. Second, stakeholders develop a priority list that shows required legal and institutional changes. Third, a timeline to effect legal changes is developed while efforts to educate city council members and others about these institutional barriers are also launched.

## **Re-Imaging the City**

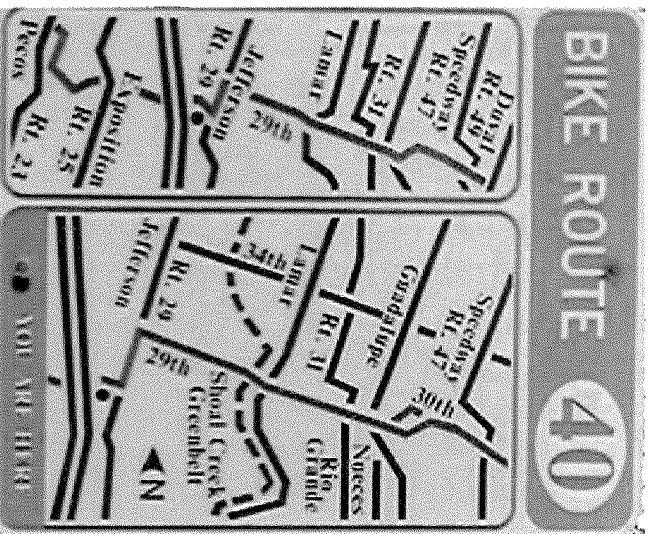
The goal of Connecting Green Infrastructure will be achieved by creating a new image for Buffalo that links existing green infrastructure elements with new ones. A re-imagining of the region can increase its prominence. New connections intertwined with existing green infrastructure will make for an equitable distribution, connecting residents to all parts of the city, and allowing for seamless movement throughout the region and within the city limits. The following short, medium, and long term goals are important stepping stones in rebuilding Buffalo, not as a recovering Rust Belt city, but as one of the greenest cities in the United States where residents live, work, and play in a park-like setting.

### *Create a Signage Network and Plan*

Signage is a tool that can foster awareness of greening projects. Signs on prominent places can inform passers-by of salient facts about individual projects and how those projects fit into the larger greening picture. Even the mere presence of signage and the time spent reviewing them can increase interest and contact between people and the natural environment. The presence of signage on new and existing projects will help residents to see the effects of greening within the community, establish mental linkages, and by carving an identity, help build community support.

### *Expand Linkages System*

Updated maps and other implemented plans can help to identify missing linkages in green infrastructure and then correct them. Gaps in greenways and linkages can be corrected by making streets into green corridors and by focusing on park-like strips along roadways. These pieces of land can have street trees of native plants added to them. Signage through neighborhoods currently devoid of greenways can also help to close some holes in linkages. By linking areas around Buffalo to one another, green infrastructure will be accessible and enjoyed by more people.



**Figure 52**

Source: [http://www.ci.austln.kx.us/bicycle/images/route40\\_signcrop.jpg](http://www.ci.austln.kx.us/bicycle/images/route40_signcrop.jpg)



**Figure 53**

Source: <http://www.echostudiochicago.com/learn/images/gartfield-douglas-parks.jpg>

### *Create Updated Maps*

Updating these maps will ensure that the best data is available for ongoing decision-making processes. It will also keep people informed of what projects are being worked on or have been completed, in order to keep people up-to-date on Buffalo's re-greening process. This will prevent duplicate projects from occurring, and help with a collaborative city-wide effort.