



For immediate release:

July 7, 2023

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The Riverline to Showcase Finalists for Community Arts Program July 11th at Undergrounds Coffee House

The Riverline will hold a public event on July 11th at Undergrounds Coffee House in Buffalo's Old First Ward to unveil the three finalists' proposed projects in their Community Arts Program, announced in May. The finalists are Cornelia Dohse-Peck, Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology (BCAT), and Saira Siddiqui (see artist bios below).

The drop-in event will be held on Tuesday, July 11th between 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at Undergrounds Coffee House (580 South Park Ave, Buffalo). The event will include refreshments and family-friendly activities, and The Riverline will be asking the public to weigh in with their preferences for the community-based project. The selected artist/arts organization will then be commissioned to develop the project with The Riverline communities throughout the summer and early fall and will receive a \$10,000 award. The final artwork will be exhibited during a public event in late October.

The Community Arts Program is funded by the General Mills Hometown Grants Fund and Buffalo Common Council Member Mitch Nowakowski. The goals of this program are to uplift the diversity of cultures and rich history in the communities along The Riverline and provide meaningful opportunities for residents to tell their stories and express themselves through art.

BCAT's core mission is to provide robust, creative and relevant opportunities for high school youth to share their artistic and socially-conscious talent with the city in which they live. BCAT's Youth Arts Program focuses on a variety of individual, collaborative, and community focused projects. One of these projects is their dedicated Mural Club, which provides professional arts experiences to club members while having them focus on relevant community impacts in the process. The Mural Club's projects include the Mural of Hope in partnership with Horizon Health Services and the Hand Up Mural in partnership with Goodwill of WNY.

Cornelia Dohse-Peck is a working and teaching artist who has long been involved in community arts, with a focus on working with and inspiring systemically underserved populations in Western New York. She has collaborated on art projects with community centers, schools, colleges and art institutions such as Artpark and the Albright-Knox (now AKG) Art Gallery. Her projects include the mosaics installation on the Peace Walk Discovery Trail along the Niagara River between Broderick Park and Unity Island Park, and the WEaVInGS project in collaboration with Houghton College and the West Buffalo Charter School.

Saira Siddiqui is an urban planner, community organizer and social practice artist. In addition to spearheading large-scale neighborhood planning efforts with a key focus on the creative and cultural economies, economic inclusion, community engagement, and placemaking, she is also a working artist with a studio at the historic Niagara Frontier Food Terminal (NFFT). Her artistic focus is on the intersection of working with communities to uplift their own narratives, identities, and culture, while mitigating cultural erasure and displacement. Her projects include a community mural project at the NFFT and the Peace Dots Project in partnership with the Arts Service Initiative of WNY.

Local residents and artists were part of the Arts Advisory Committee (see below). The Committee accepted submissions from artists and arts organizations interested in coordinating and conducting a community-based project to create a piece of art that highlights two themes expressed by The Riverline neighborhoods: refuge and coming together.

- Ashley Amplement, VP of Operations at K Art Gallery
- Emma Brittain-Hardy, artist and teacher at Locust Street Art, Old First Ward resident
- Sara Heidinger, Owner of Undergrounds Coffee House, artist, Old First Ward resident
- Danielle Saeva, artist and Program Coordinator at Locust Street Art
- Dean Seneca, CEO and Founder of Seneca Scientific Solutions+, Adjunct Instructor of Public Health at UB and University of Rochester, former Old First Ward resident
- XIII, freelance creator and multidisciplinary artist

The Western New York Land Conservancy is developing The Riverline based on a vision created by the community. The Riverline will transform the elevated former DL&W rail corridor along the Buffalo River into a string of vibrant and engaging experiences in nature that everyone can enjoy—right in the city, only minutes from downtown. It will be an inspiring gathering place that connects people to water, nature, and one another. It will prioritize native plants and animals, public art, and community; it will inspire curiosity, connections and exploration; and it will help build a healthy, inclusive, and opportunity-rich city with vibrancy in every neighborhood.

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