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The Western New York Land Conservancy and its Design Partners Seek Photos from the Community that will Influence Designs for The Riverline

The Western New York Land Conservancy and its design partners W Architecture, Hood Design Studio, and Green Shield Ecology are seeking photos from people in the Western New York community that can help provide ideas for the design of The Riverline, the proposed nature trail and greenway being developed along the former rail corridor running from Canalside to the Buffalo River.

They are looking for photos and ideas to help guide the ongoing Concept and Schematic Design process. They strongly encourage anyone in Western New York to use their own cell phones and digital cameras to document examples of what The Riverline can become. When taking photographs, they ask that community members consider how The Riverline can:

- Respect the character and history of local communities and increase quality of life for residents
- Embrace and enhance nature that thrives along the corridor
- Provide for different kinds of recreation and events year round
- Create connections beyond the old rail corridor itself
- Design with long-term use, maintenance, and safety in mind
- Help create additional investment and opportunity in the community

Since The Riverline is in the planning stages and is not yet open to the public, these photos should come from other trails, nature preserves, parks, buildings, and neighborhoods in the region or beyond (they can also be photos taken during other seasons of the year). Those wishing to participate in this input process can email their photographs to Alexa Ringer at the Land Conservancy (aringer@wnylc.org) by December 28th, 2020. They can also post their photos on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter using the hashtag #TheRiverline. Once the material is collected, the Land Conservancy will send it to the design teams to help generate ideas for The Riverline. In early 2021, the Land Conservancy and the design teams will virtually exhibit early stages of the design to solicit public feedback. This feedback will assist

the design teams in developing their final concept designs, which will be unveiled in the summer of 2021.

As part of this input process, the Land Conservancy has also distributed 25 cameras to community members in the Old First Ward, Perry, and Valley neighborhoods.

“This documentation effort is a crucial part of the design process,” says Barbara Wilks, principal and founder of W Architecture, “since it allows us to see the future corridor of The Riverline through the eyes of people who will use it.”

Walter Hood, MacArthur Genius grant recipient and principal of Hood Design Studio in Oakland, CA, agrees. “Since our design teams are located in Brooklyn and Oakland, respectively, we rely on input from participating communities to shed light on what they value and want the future of the space to become. Weaving this input into our work results in a design that is idiosyncratic and particular to the residents’ city.”

The Concept and Schematic Design phase is being guided by community input. The design of The Riverline will build on the community vision plan, which imagines an inspiring community gathering place alive with the history and voice of the surrounding Old First Ward, Perry, and Valley neighborhoods. It will become a vibrant, safe, and welcoming space for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to connect with each other, with nature, and with the waterfront.

The design will also build on the concepts from the international design ideas competition announced in June 2019, and an equitable development framework completed in mid-2020. The design will be further developed in collaboration with neighborhood groups, other partners, and ongoing community feedback. Once completed, The Riverline will help create a cohesive waterfront and downtown as it contributes to a healthy, inclusive, and opportunity-rich city with vibrancy in every neighborhood it touches.

Funding for this phase of work comes in part through an Environmental Protection Fund grant (EPF #180842) administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Additional funding is provided by BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York Blue Fund, KeyBank in partnership with the First Niagara Foundation, Moog, Inc., Nancy and Tom Smith, Peggy and Jay Elliott, Kathy Lasher and Scott Bieler, and other individual community donors. The Land Conservancy continues to seek additional funding for The Riverline.

If you are interested in learning more about this project, please visit the new website for The Riverline: theriverline.com. You can also reach out to the Land Conservancy at (716) 687-1225 or info@wnylc.org.

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, not-for-profit land trust that permanently protects land with significant conservation value in Western New York for current and future generations. The Land Conservancy envisions a future in which open

spaces, working lands, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty are cherished and protected as part of the landscape and character of Western New York. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of 1000+ land trusts nationwide, including 87 in New York State. Land trusts have protected over 56 million acres of land. To learn more about the Land Conservancy, visit wnylc.org.

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