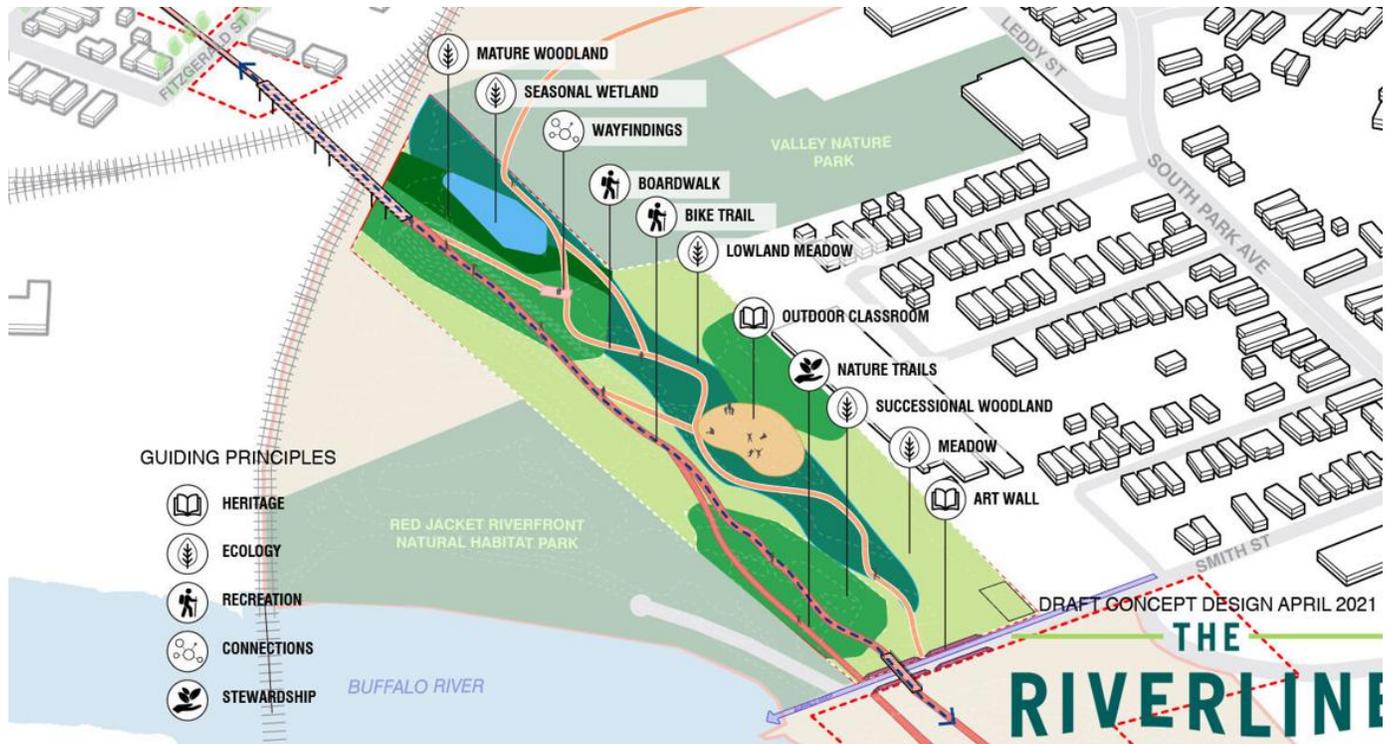


https://buffalonews.com/news/local/design-of-the-riverline-nears-completion/article_58930998-a819-11eb-aeb5-23eee74f4632.html

Design of the Riverline nears completion

Mark Sommer

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A draft conceptual rendering of the proposed Riverline. (Western New York Land Conservancy)

Mark Sommer

It is down to the details as design work for the Riverline heads toward completion.

The final concept for the proposed 1.5-mile trail will be unveiled in June. But the public now has one last chance to weigh in on ideas for the planned elevated urban nature trail for pedestrians and bicyclists, with the Western New York Land Conservancy counting on a virtual presentation Wednesday to give residents a first look at what's in the works.

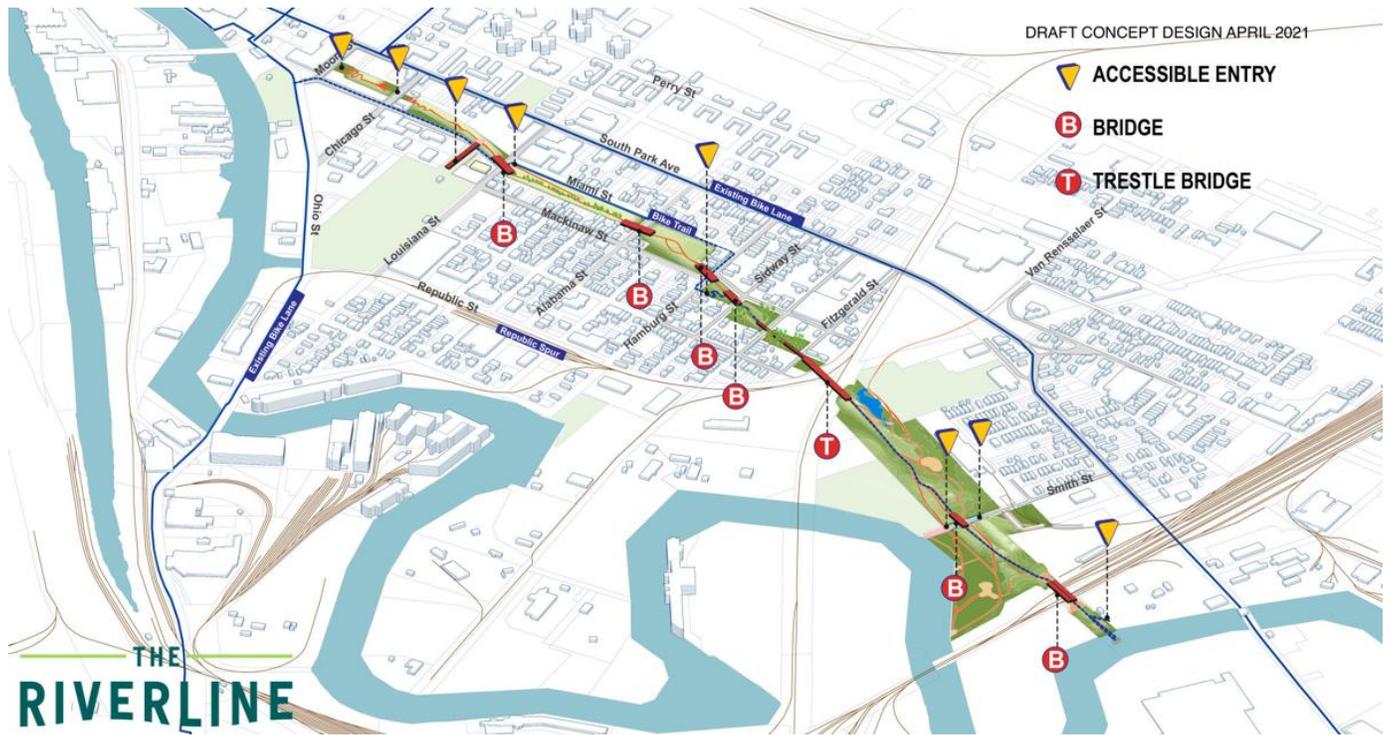


'The Riverline' brings new identity, momentum to DL&W corridor project

The trail, located south and east of downtown, would traverse through lowland meadows, woodlands and seasonal wetlands.

Planners sought public feedback on gardens, play areas and public art, among other features.

"This stage is still trying to sort through the balance of refuge, gardens and recreational components that were rated high in previous feedback," said Anthony Armstrong, the project manager. "How do the gardens show up in a way that is more naturalized – are they butterfly gardens or outdoor classrooms? Does the recreation tie back to nature? Is it nature play with big boulders and logs?"



A draft rendering of the proposed Riverline. (Western New York Land Conservancy)



As subdivisions eat up land, conservancy works to save its 96th property

Armstrong believes the Riverline will be a boon to the city.

"This is something people have been planning or putting on maps for 25 years," Armstrong said. "I think the timing's finally right for this with what we've seen happening along the waterfront, and with what we're seeing in terms of how people are thinking of what's possible in the city."

Government officials are seeking funds to transform the former DL&W rail corridor into an urban nature trail along the Buffalo River, and Rep. Brian Higgins has previously said, "This is going to get done."

The linear park would begin near the corner of Moore and Miami streets, continuing east just north of Miami Street to Louisiana Street and then on the southern side of Miami Street to Hamburg Street. The elevated berm drops to grade crossing at Louisiana, Alabama, Hamburg and other cross streets and disappears east of Katherine Street before picking up again adjacent to Red Jacket Riverfront Park.

From there, the trail would cross one of Buffalo's busiest railroad lines over an existing bridge south and east of Smith Street and end at a half-bridge over the Buffalo River with views of the South Park Avenue lift bridge, the Buffalo Color peninsula and the Tesla plant.



Buffalo's Riverline park is expected to end at this bridge, overlooking the Buffalo River and the Tesla plant.

Sharon Cantillon



Winning designs: Jury, community picks for linear park along old rail corridor

The conceptual plan treats the trail as mainly a refuge, but with a strong focus on gardens and passive recreation.

"I am so amazed by nature's resilience," said Barbara Wilks, a project consultant who is founder and principal of W Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

Wilks said the woodlands and other topography show rejuvenation despite decades spent as a rail corridor, with gravel replacing soil.

The linear park proposal calls for four new bridges over city streets, one trestle bridge over an active rail line and two renovated railroad bridges.

"The idea is that when you're on the trail you'll be enveloped by nature," Wilks said. "Bridges will be places to stop and enjoy the view and the landscape. This will provide a rhythm to the experience that will be quite unique."



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Higgins on elevated park for Buffalo: 'This is going to get done'

The trail would have eight access points, with the main ones occurring on commercial streets to minimize disturbance to residential areas.

Wilks said one of the project's themes is to tread lightly on the landscape, which has a preponderance of black cottonwoods. Native plants would be allowed to develop, but invasive species would be removed.

In their past feedback to consultants, residents have said they wanted their heritage represented, and they hoped the Riverline could lead to spin-off development that community members can capitalize on.

Some residents have also expressed preference for open space for deer and other wildlife.

Concerns about safety and security, parking and access have also been registered, as well as how the Riverline could impact property values and even lead to displacement.

"Some of the (nearby) development feels like it was done to the community instead of with the community," Armstrong said.

The planners are also trying to ensure that the trail will be welcoming and safe for everyone throughout the corridor.

Armstrong is hoping the trail project will set an example on how to connect neighborhoods that he said have been systemically disinvested.

"We have a long way to go to make sure we get it right, but if we keep listening, our chances of getting it right are much better than they would be otherwise," he said.

Mark Sommer covers preservation, development, the waterfront, culture and more. He's also a former arts editor at The News.

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