



*"Creating a sense of place through regional native plants, ecological restoration, conservation biodiversity, and open space preservation"*

October 27, 2010

Re: the Robert Moses Parkway scoping process:

In the last twelve years, no one has provided the public with any socioeconomic facts or revealed what educational and professional opportunities could occur if an ecological restoration along the Niagara River Gorge Rim included only a non-motorized, active transportation trail.

The Wild Ones Niagara (WON) study, **Regional Economic Growth Through Ecological Restoration of the Niagara Gorge Rim**, is not "duplication." In progress since March 2010 it is examining the potential educational, social, economic, and environmental benefits of conservation biodiversity, open space preservation, restoring the Niagara Gorge Rim.

Wild Ones Niagara hired an environmental design firm from Syracuse, NY, EDR, to research the economic benefits of replacing the current conditions along the gorge rim with restored native landscapes replete with active modes of recreation—walking, hiking, and bicycling. Some call it eco-tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, active tourism, or creative tourism. We call it raising our quality of life and creating professional career opportunities for current and future residents. Niagara rising after Love Canal.

Before presenting our project to The Niagara River Greenway Commission, we obtained **The Seattle Mobility Plan** and research from the **Trust for Public Land**, a national organization endorsed by the Buffalo Niagara Partnership as an Authority. The Buffalo Niagara Partnership is a business leadership organization. The information, provided by national and world experts, is on our website:

<http://www.wildonesniagara.org/advocacy.html> see **Case Studies in Urban Freeway Removal**, Document Library 2. Attached is a summary of facts provided by cities from across the United States, cities that know nothing about our initiative and screen shots of suggested pages for reference, including a 2007 RMP traffic count report.

According to a document researched and prepared for **Parks and Trails**, by the **Political Economy Research Institute (PERI, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)**, the economic benefits of “maintaining the natural environment” are measurable. It’s called environmental economics. **PERI’s report, The NYS Park System: An Economic Asset to the Empire State**, “challenges the presumption that there are stark trade-offs between generating jobs and protecting the environment.” In addition, it says, “quality of life in New York improve[s], and thereby influences business location decisions and the ability to attract a high-quality workforce.”

Other research has found many positive socioeconomic benefits could occur and significantly improve the quality of life for our residents and our region if the **Niagara Heritage Partnership proposal** and our study were embraced, implemented, and marketed.

Wild Ones Niagara has systematically provided the public with well-documented facts, not Chicken Little antics. A study to restore the native landscapes between Niagara Falls, NY and Lewiston carries substantial socioeconomic merit. High paying professional careers, education opportunities for our young people, quality of life through natural ecological services, and the revitalization of urban centers are a few of the opportunities noted by land planners around the world. Our Wild Ones study could literally change how we live.

We believe an informed public is empowered and advocate “vigilance,” especially when it concerns the local officials. All bureaucrats have an obligation to be fully informed about an issue. If they don’t like what they hear, they still have an obligation to tell us everything so we, the public, can decide. In our opinion, it is a sad commentary on anyone’s integrity, elected or otherwise, when they refuse to respect information and attempt to denigrate and / or suppress it.

Merely keeping what we have now without exploring all of the progressive opportunities for ecological and economic excellence is discrimination. It suppresses. We feel an informed public coupled with documented, authoritative information is a civic right. We have a right to know all the facts and socioeconomic possibilities that could occur with a fully restored Niagara Gorge Rim.

University of Buffalo President John Simpson summarized it best when he said, “It is hard to understand a logic based on an unwillingness to change an obvious failed status quo.” So, why would some elected officials and other so-called leaders and stakeholders deliberately place our greatest asset—the City of Niagara Falls, the waterfalls, the gorge, and rim—“in a remarkably disadvantaged position?” Why would anyone attempt to “hamstring one of our best opportunities” for progressive economic development, something that has the potential to benefit everyone? We trust NYS Parks as lead agency will complete a transparent, comprehensive scoping process of the Robert Moses Parkway and include a non-motorized alternative, a full removal for ecological restoration and economic excellence.

**Michelle Vanstrom, President, National Board Member**

**Niagara Falls and River Region Chapter of Wild Ones Native Plants, Natural Landscapes**

**Case Studies in Urban Road Removal - The Benefits and Impacts  
Seattle Mobility Plan**

***LESSONS LEARNED***

**SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS**

1. Reduction in greenhouse gas
2. Spillover traffic's absorbed
3. Traffic finds alternate routes and travelers choose the most convenient mode or travel at different times or different locations
4. Removal is most effective when it is one element of a comprehensive, clearly articulated civic vision for enhanced quality of life, sustainability, and economic development that leverages the opportunity made available by removal
5. Removal for all its benefits is a means to advance greater goals and objectives:
  - a. In Niagara Falls – for example—Road Removal would support
    - i. North Star Project and
    - ii. Olmsted's Vision for Niagara
    - iii. Economic revitalization and growth
    - iv. Quality of life
    - v. New jobs and business
    - vi. Tourism destination initiatives
6. If public is forewarned, traffic is adequately redistributed.

**Portland, Oregon**

- ⑦ Removal in Portland, Oregon was a catalyst in the redevelopment of the downtown waterfront as it opened up access to the River and 309 acres
8. Development around the waterfront amenities had positive impacts within the city as a whole:
  - a. Provided public good and improved quality of life
  - b. Financial benefits:
    - i. Property values tripled
    - ii. Growth in this area outpaced growth in the city as a whole by 7%
  - c. Crime reduction in Portland declined by 65% in the waterfront area and declined 16% in the city as a whole.
    - i. Attributing factors:
      1. New visibility
      2. Increase in pedestrian eyes on the street

**San Francisco, CA**

9. Crime reduction in San Francisco occurred when the street transformed to one of stylish shops, restaurants, and galleries.
10. Removal provided a range of benefits without substantial negative impacts for commuters.
11. In the years following removal:
  - a. New neighborhoods were established
  - b. Major new civic amenities and tourist attractions were opened and
  - c. The existing tourist destinations remained major destinations
  - d. Merchants said they didn't lose their core customers despite the new competition and the removal of the road 9 years ago.
  - e. Tourism grew impressively in the years following removal and reclamation
    - i. In 2006, visitors to San Francisco spent **\$7.6 billion** – the highest in the city's history
  - f. Removal did not negatively impact the economics of nearby neighborhoods

- g. The removal for the area and the city as a whole was positive.

### **Boston, MA**

- 12. Benefits are aesthetic and commercial
  - a. If downtown is a more pleasant destination people linger longer and spend more money
- X 13. The value of their commercial properties near their greenway increased by **\$2.3 billion, up 79%**
- 14. In 2006, the Boston removal project attracted an unprecedented level of private investment in new development downtown
  - a. **\$5.3 billion** worth in projects completed or underway within a 5 minute walk
  - b. An estimated generation of nearly **36,000 new jobs**

### **Seoul, Korea**

- 15. Road removal and stream restoration restored to a 3.6 mile linear park
- 16. 15 months after opening, they had **90,000 visitors** of which 30% came from outside the area
- 17. The restored water and open space access enhanced recreational amenities widely viewed as having improved the quality of life of center city residents, workers and visitors
- 18. Restoration was part of a much larger development strategy with local and global components
  - a. Local level – project rationalization had to do with revitalization of historic downtown which lost much of its market share as the city's economic center shifted
  - b. Global level – removal and restoration of the landscape has been described by officials as rebranding or repositioning of Seoul's image internationally
    - i. A meaningful, symbolic gesture for a 21<sup>st</sup> century city
- 19. It projected **long-term economic benefits** of
  - a. Between **\$8.5 - \$ 25 billion** (US) and
  - b. **113,000 new jobs**
- 20. The Seoul project illustrates the tangible economic and environmental benefits that can flow from urban design that is richly symbolic and driven in large part by quality of life perceptions.

### **Trenton, NJ**

- 21. Removal was undertaken to
  - a. Promote redevelopment downtown
  - b. Improve safety
  - c. Remove a barrier to the city's waterfront

### **Vancouver, Canada**

- 22. Removal achieved results with a progressive "Living-First" strategy and subsequent plans and policies that emphasized a shift away from automobiles as a dominant form of transportation

### **Toronto, Canada**

- 23. Removal Benefit Strategies
  - a. To beautify the city
  - b. To improve a sense of place in neighborhoods
  - c. To maximize the benefits of waterfront revitalization efforts

### X **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

- 24. The estimated cost to rebuild an aging freeway was \$100 million
- 25. The road elimination came at a much lower financial cost of \$25 million (\$20 million was paid for with federal funds)

## **Chattanooga, TN**

### **\*Reasons why they removed the Riverfront Parkway:**

26. In late 1960's its economy's manufacturing base contracted, eliminating thousands of jobs
27. Its air was declared the most polluted in the nation
28. The construction and configuration of roads intended to move traffic hurt the downtown business environment and hastened the decline of a once vibrant city center.
29. Their parkway no longer had a purpose; its physical location blocked the city from its waterfront
30. Their parkway was a far larger piece of infrastructure than the city needed
31. Removal benefits:
  - a. Pedestrian connection to the River waterfront

### **The Benefits of Parks and Open Space – National Park Service**

32. Increased value in neighboring residential properties
33. Similar increase benefit on commercial property
34. Important quality of life factor for corporations choosing where to locate facilities
35. Important for the well-educated in choosing where to live
36. Provides substantial environmental benefits
  - a. Trees reduce air and water pollution
  - b. Trees keep cities cooler and
  - c. Trees are an effective and less expensive way to manage storm water runoff

### **Open space - Social and Community Development Benefits**

37. Make inner city more livable
38. Provides places where low-income neighborhoods feel a sense of community
39. Access to public parks and facilities strongly linked to reductions in crime
40. Contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health
  - a. Such settings are associated with enhanced mental alertness, attention and cognitive performance
  - b. A 10% increase in greenspace was found to decrease a person's health complaints in an amount equal to a 5-year reduction in a person's age

### **Open Space – Economic Benefits**

41. People are willing to pay more for property located close to open space
  - a. This translates into city revenue – in some cases the additional taxes are enough to pay the annual debt charges on bonds used to finance acquisition and development of the open space
  - b. In one study, a greenbelt added 5.4 million to the total property values of 1 neighborhood. That generated \$ 500,00/year in additional property taxes—enough to pay for a \$1.5 million purchase price in 3 years

### **Commercial Effects of Open Space**

42. Atlanta – Property values rose from \$2 per square foot to \$150 per square foot

### **Economic Revitalization Effects of Open Space**

43. Boeing, chose Chicago over Dallas and Denver because of the city's quality of life, its downtown, and urban life
44. In using greenspace to revitalize, Dallas emulated Portland, Oregon—a city with a reputation as one of the most livable

45. Companies like Hewlett-Packard, Intel, and Hyundai were drawn to the forests, orchards, and creeks on Portland's outskirts urban area
46. The real estate industry calls quality of life a litmus test for determining the strength of the real estate investment market
47. If people want to live in a place, companies, stores, hotels and apartments follow.

#### **St. Louis, Missouri**

48. In Missouri, the 2004 bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition launched an ambitious effort to revitalize St. Louis and the nearby region
49. Improving quality of life was a major goal with a central emphasis on keeping well-educated young people in the region
50. A cornerstone to their plan was their greenway, a 200 square mile area, stretching 40 miles
51. Their greenway traces the first stretch of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.
52. Other city and region benefits
  - a. Tourism
  - b. Pollution abatement
  - c. Storm water run off control
  - d. Crime reduction
  - e. It created stable neighborhoods with a strong sense of community

Michelle Vanstrom  
February 26, 2009



**NIAGARA**

# Wild Ones Niagara Falls and River Region Chapter

## Native Plants, Natural Landscaping

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Protecting Viewsheds

Document Library 1

- Case Study Summary: Benefits and Impacts of Road Removal
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- Conservation: An Investment That Pays
- Case Studies in Urban Freeway Removal
- Niagara Power Project Relicensing Settlement Agreement

Document Library 2

- Olmsted's Vision for Niagara
- Niagara Heritage Partnership Proposal
- Governor G. Lucius Robinson: Niagara Falls
- Green Infrastructure Planning
- Smart Growth Initiatives
- NYS Historic Preservation Plan - March, 2009
- 2007 NYS DOT Traffic Counts (957A=RMP)

Document Library 3

- Conservation Campaign
- Omaha Recreation Trails
- Community Trail Handbook
- Summary Report Indiana Trails
- The Otago Central Rail Trail Means Business

Book

- America's First State Park - Gardner, James T (Director)

Article

- Niagara Falling - Traffic East

Viewshed and Historic Sites Protection: Viewsheds refer to the area that can be seen and appreciated by the human eye. What constitutes the viewshed is based upon the point of reference. If a view from a historic site atop a mountain, such as Monticello the home of President Thomas Jefferson, is deemed important, then the 360o view may need to be protected.

Viewsheds are very important for historic resources. When land adjacent to a historic site is developed, it can mar or even destroy the integrity of the historic site. Similarly, when scenic vistas are lost, visitors may stop coming and residents will lose aspects of the landscape that they most value. *There are economic reasons to protect "viewsheds" since they are important to attracting what are known as Heritage Tourists who come to see historic or culturally important sites. Heritage tourists spend, on average, two-and-a half times as much money than do other tourists.* Therefore, protecting the "views" may be important to making the economic argument for green infrastructure protection.

### Document Library

Name	Description
<a href="#"><u>Case Studies - The Benefits and Impacts of Urban Road Removal</u></a>	Summary of Case Studies by TA Switalski et al
<a href="#"><u>City Parks Closing Roads to Cars</u></a>	Center For City Park Excellence
<a href="#"><u>Parking In Parks</u></a>	Center for City Park Excellence
<a href="#"><u>Economic Impacts of</u></a>	

<a href="#">Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Trails</a>	Trust for Public Land
<a href="#">Conservation: An Investment That Pays</a>	The Trust for Public Land
<a href="#">Case Studies in Urban Freeway Removal</a>	Seattle Urban Mobility Plan, January, 2008
<a href="#">Niagara Power Project Relicensing Settlement Agreements - Summary</a>	Standing Committee Funding
<a href="#">Lessons Learned</a>	Local Approach

## Document Library

Name	Description
<a href="#">Olmsted Preservation Strategy for Niagara</a>	Reprints, National Association for Olmsted Parks
<a href="#">Niagara Heritage Partnership Proposal</a>	A Proposal for a Genuine Niagara River Greenway <a href="http://www.niagaraheritage.org">www.niagaraheritage.org</a>
<a href="#">Governor Lucius Robinson: Niagara Falls</a>	<a href="http://lcweb2.loc.gov/gc/amrv/vg54/vg54.sgm">http://lcweb2.loc.gov/gc/amrv/vg54/vg54.sgm</a>
<a href="#">Road Ecology</a>	<a href="http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol12/iss1/art11/">http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol12/iss1/art11/</a>
<a href="#">Green Infrastructure Planning</a>	Karen E. Firehock
<a href="#">Smart Growth Practices</a>	Smart Growth Network
<a href="#">New York State Historic Preservation Plan</a>	March, 2009
<a href="#">2007 NYSDOT Traffic Report</a>	Traffic counts for RMP

## Document Library

Name	Description
<a href="#">Conservation Campaign</a>	The Trust for Public Land
<a href="#">Omaha Recreational Trails</a>	Their Effect on Property Values and Public Safety - Donald L. Greer, Univ. of Nebraska at Omaha
<a href="#">Community Trail Handbook</a>	A Parks and Trails New York/Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley Publication
<a href="#">Summary Report Indiana Trails Report</a>	Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands
<a href="#">The Otago Central Rail Trail Means Business</a>	Otago Central Rail Trail Trust - Nov. 2005



Book: AMERICA' FIRST STATE PARK: GARDNER James T (Director)

**Special Report of New York State Survey on the Preservation of the Scenery of Niagara Falls and the Fourth Annual Report on the Triangulation of the State for the Year 1879**

Albany Charles Ban Benthusen & Son 1880 96pp, 9 original photographs and two sketches. Brown Cloth. Gilt lettered. Presentation copy form Frederick Law Olmsted with his printed complements slip and dedicated in his hand to Harry Norman and signed Fred'k Law Olmsted on title page.

By the mid 1860s Niagara had become a major tourist attraction and was suffering from erosion and damage. Olmsted led a campaign to establish the Niagara Falls Preservation. "In a spirit of patriotism and what remains of Niagara's beauty should be preserved: what is lost should be restored. Only the power of the state can accomplish this". (p24)

Report of New York State Survey: The Niagara Falls Reservation



Bob Borgatti, Traffic East Article: Niagara Falling Article

<http://www.trafficcast.com/archives/issue-six/niagara-falling/>



Acer spicatum

[info@wildonesniagara.org](mailto:info@wildonesniagara.org)

Niagara Falls and River Region Chapter / P.O. Box 2827 Niagara Falls, N.Y 14302 / 716-913-5324  
Wild Ones is a not-for-profit environmental education and advocacy organization.

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Date: Wednesday, October 27, 2010, 9:39 AM

Here are the facts:

We trust that when discussing Olmsted that everyone is discussing Olmsted Senior since he is the noted authority. We also trust and expect transparency, accountability, and honesty are the protocols for any "creative discussion."

I've skimmed all 614 pages of my book, "**The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted Supplementary Series Vol. 1 Writings on Public Parks, Parkways and Park Systems.**" Below are excerpts, his own words. Please let me know if you would like to see this book. As an aside, Olmsted would clearly never advocate for dog parks, either. Olmsted was used as a rationale for placing one near the Wildlife Refuge on the Lewiston Plateau in a recent Greenway application. Even after pointing this out, it was funded.

Michelle Vanstrom, Wild Ones Niagara Falls and River Region Chapter  
[www.wildonesniagara.org](http://www.wildonesniagara.org);

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. In His Own Words

The Frederick Law Olmsted Papers

"this is an age in which we grow more and more artificial day by day, and see less and less worthiness in those pleasures which bring with them no marked excitement...a parallel movement was an increased appreciation of nature in the broad combining way of scenery as evidenced by the amount of time and money expended on tourism to areas of strikingly beautiful natural scenery.

Olmsted Papers page 155: "I want you to see that when people ask for a park, it may be perfectly possible to please them very much with something which is not a park, or which is a very poor and much adulterated kind of park and that it would nevertheless be dishonest, quackish, to do so. A park is a work of art, designed to produce certain effects upon the mind of men.

Olmsted Papers page 190: " Nor can I think that in the park proper (*italic*), what is called gardenesque beauty is to be courted. These may have places, but they do not belong within a park."

Olmsted Papers page 190-191: "The question now comes up: How can a community best take this work in hand? It is a work in which private and local and special interests will be found so antagonistic one to another, heated prejudices are established, and those who would be disappointed in their personal greeds by whatever good scheme may be studied out, are so likely to combine and concentrate force to kill it..."

Olmsted Papers page 538: Take for instance the operations of roads and walk making, the dressing of ground surfaces with herbage, the building of objects. To those who do not see the very different way in which they are intended on the [Niagara] reservation will always be thought that the introduction of decorative detail would be an improvement..."

Olmsted Papers pg. 538 continued: " Once the reason for excluding decorative detail is lost sight of, there is nothing to hinder the introduction of any amount to it, thus bringing the about the gradual transformation of the [Niagara] Reservation into a flower-garden order, than which nothing would be more deplorable."

Olmsted Papers on Niagara Reservation page 539: [what] for many years have passed under the name of improvement, and especially of "landscape" or of "park" improvements has been presenting objects for admiration calculated to draw off and dissipate regard for natural scenery."

Olmsted on Niagara Reservation page 540: What was the organic purpose of these improvements? To draw visitors by any means to a particular piece of ground where money could be made out of them, and to so occupy them when there that they should not wish to go elsewhere. Some of them left without having looked for a single moment at anything beyond the field of its artificial improvements."

*"A sense of place is the sixth sense, an internal compass and map made by memory and spatial perception together." —  
Rebecca Solnit*