

JUNE 2020

**EQUITABLE
DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK**

— THE —
RIVERLINE

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Riverline is a one and a half mile long nature trail and greenway being developed on a former elevated rail corridor adjacent to downtown Buffalo and the Buffalo River.

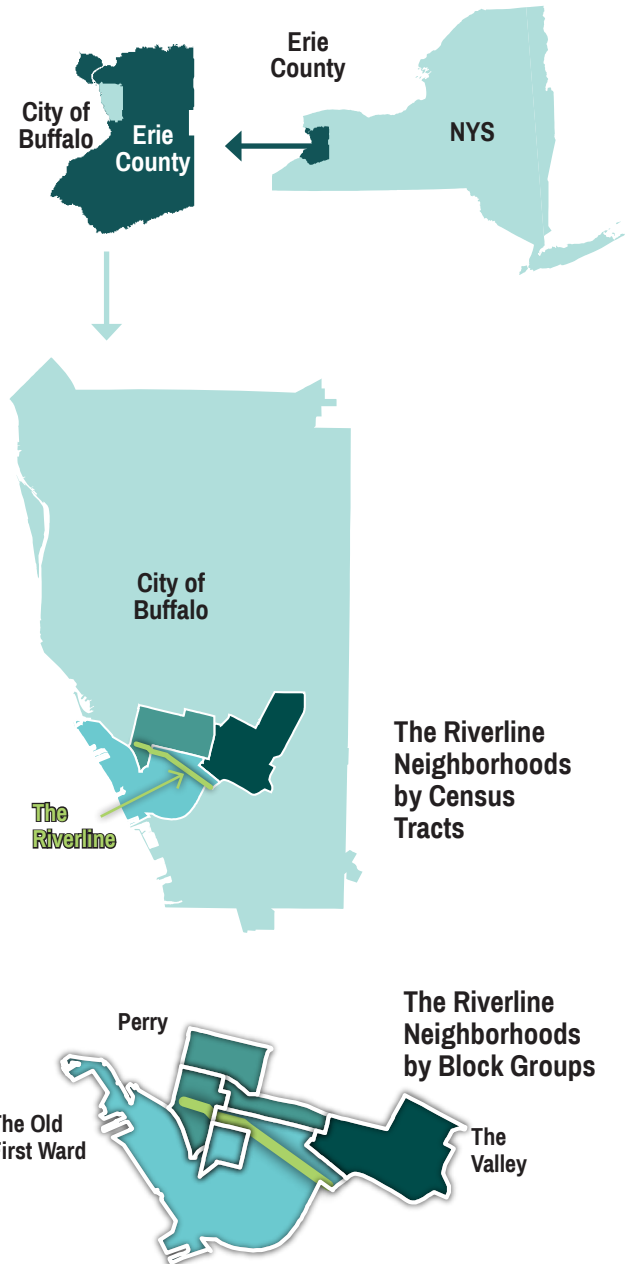
The Western New York Land Conservancy is developing The Riverline based on a vision created by the community. Once completed, The Riverline will transform the former Delaware, Lackawanna and Western (DL&W) rail corridor along the Buffalo River into a vibrant and engaging nature trail everyone can enjoy—right in the city, only minutes from downtown.

This report is meant to serve as a resource for the community, The Land Conservancy, and their partners as they work to transform the corridor into an iconic, innovative, inspiring, and inviting nature trail and gathering space for all. This document is a framework to promote equity—working to ensure that all residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, age, or ability, can benefit from the revitalization of The Riverline and places nearby.

This equitable development framework is a product of a multi-year community engagement effort led by The Land Conservancy and Make Communities, and research on neighborhood conditions and best practices for equitable development of city based trails and greenways by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute. The framework offers a comprehensive list of possible actions to help address community concerns around six focus areas: Community Building, Housing, Arts & Culture, Nature Access & Wellness, Governance, and Economic Access & Opportunity.

The Land Conservancy’s mission is to permanently protect land with significant conservation value in Western New York, for the benefit of future generations; and it has expertise protecting and restoring cherished natural places throughout the region. Though the Land Conservancy does not have the capacity or core competencies to implement each of these strategies, it can serve as a convener, facilitator and advocate to help advance many of these priority areas in collaboration with multiple cross sector partners.

The framework focuses on the three historic neighborhoods crossed by The Riverline—the Old First Ward, Perry, and the Valley. For the purposes of this study, neighborhood boundaries are defined by U.S. Census block groups. In some cases where data is limited, census tract data is used, which includes a larger area. These cases are noted in the provided data sources.



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THE RIVERLINE AND THE EQUITY OPPORTUNITY

On the edge of downtown Buffalo and the Buffalo River waterfront, a former rail corridor is being transformed into a one-of-a-kind community gathering place for all—The Riverline.

This multi-use nature trail and greenway has the potential to build on the heritage and vibrancy of three historic neighborhoods — the Old First Ward, Perry, and the Valley. But turning a former railway into a world-class open space is just one part of that opportunity. The Riverline’s potential to enhance the quality of life for area residents provides even greater opportunity.

To make the most of this opportunity, The Riverline must be developed equitably to ensure that every person can meaningfully engage in the design, development, and use of the nature trail. Equitable development aims to reduce disparities and promote vibrant, healthy communities by prioritizing the concerns of groups historically left out of planning and development decisions. This approach can help prevent economic, cultural, social, political, and physical displacement in the face of a changing neighborhood.

Building on the efforts of previous plans by the City and community, the Western New York Land Conservancy launched the project in 2017. This began with robust public outreach, which shaped a community vision for the reimagined trail. The community vision clarified that The Riverline should be a welcoming year-round gathering space for people of all ages, backgrounds, and incomes.

To achieve this vision, equitable development of The Riverline is critical. We know similar projects in other cities led to unintended displacement. We also know that, compared to other parts of the city, the economic benefits of Buffalo’s recent renaissance were not as strongly felt by neighborhoods along The Riverline. The Old First Ward, Perry, and the Valley all have a less active housing market, higher levels of poverty, and fewer adults with college education than many other parts of the city—indicators that could signal potential vulnerabilities to displacement. Sitting on the edge of downtown, with many vacant lots and other properties that could be redeveloped, these areas are still seen as ripe for investment.

This document provides guidance on how proactive steps can be taken before, during, and after implementation of The Riverline to prevent displacement and promote the community’s vision for its future, which is rooted in equity. But this document is just a start. It represents a framework to follow. Realizing this vision will require many partners—community groups, local governments, businesses, and residents—to work together to solve problems, with the community leading the way.

By taking an approach grounded in equity, The Riverline aspires to become a model for other cities looking to ecologically restore and reactivate underused infrastructure to revitalize surrounding neighborhoods in a way that puts community needs, concerns, and benefits first, front, and center.



WHY EQUITY?

Equity is an integral part of the community's vision. The Community Vision Plan for the trail promotes guiding principles that directly relate to equity.

Respect the character and history of local communities and increase quality of life for residents.

Serve as a catalyst for additional investment and opportunity.

The Riverline unites historic neighborhoods.

Many residents are vulnerable to displacement in all nearby neighborhoods. More than a third live in poverty. Almost half of renters spend more than a third of their income on housing. Homes are older with lower market values, and many lots sit vacant.

Recent research shows that downtown greenway projects may be more likely to increase displacement risks.

Neighborhoods within a half mile of city "greenways" were twice as likely to experience displacement. Displacement risks were about 90% higher if new projects were built near downtowns.

Other recent city based greenways caused displacement and are now working to reverse detrimental socioeconomic, cultural, and political impacts.

Meaningful planning for equity before and during the design and development of the corridor can mitigate the potential impacts of displacement, and achieve the community vision for the reimagined rail corridor.



THE PROCESS

Since the Land Conservancy began this work in 2017, the aspirations of neighborhood residents have been a central focus. Robust public outreach—from countless discussions with nearby residents to neighborhood surveys and meetings—shaped a community vision plan for the reimagined nature trail. This vision inspired an international design ideas competition that brought in nearly 100 design proposals for the nature trail, with a professional jury and the community selecting their favorites.

Equity is embedded in this process. Extensive research on neighborhood conditions, best practices, and meetings with dozens of constituent groups and local subject matter experts generated a framework for equitable development. This document, along with the community vision plan, will guide the design of the nature trail, and the continued community engagement process that forms the bedrock of The Riverline.

2nd Place. The Dell, The Link & The Wander
(Marvel Architects/ Buro Happold)



1st Place. All Aboard! Reclaiming Hill & Del
(MNLA)



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

1,000+
people helped create the community vision over nearly a year of engagement

COMMUNITY VISION PLAN

Provides a vision statement, guiding principles, and strategies rooted in community feedback.



DESIGN IDEAS COMPETITION

98
design concepts

from individuals and teams across the region and around the world.

VISIONING

REIMAGINING

2017

2018

2019

The design competition involved two contests—a jury of professional designers selected contest winners from a formal design standpoint, and local residents voted on their favorite concepts to select **Community Choice Awards**.

All the winning concepts can help inform the final design going forward. The Community Choice Awards gave residents a way to provide direct input on the concepts guiding the design of the greenway.



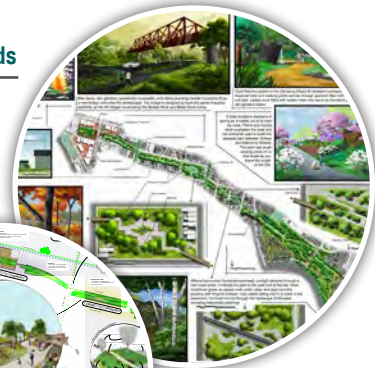
3rd Place. (tie)
Rail
(Beijing Forestry University Team)



3rd Place. (tie)
The Loop Line
(OSA)

Community Choice Awards

1st Place.
The Del: A Steel and Rail Heritage Trail
(Matt Renkas)



2nd Place.
Del Buffalo: Connecting and Reconnecting
(Del Buffalo Team)



3rd Place.
The Del-Line
(CannonDesign/ Supermass Studio)



EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Presents community-driven principles, strategies, and research to support equitable development in nearby neighborhoods.



EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

200+
local subject area experts, agency representatives, and neighborhood residents

offered insight on guiding principles and ways to promote equity in five focus group meetings, community meetings, surveys, and door-to-door conversations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Land Conservancy, design team and project partners will continue to engage the community and integrate public feedback into the design, construction, and use of The Riverline.

DESIGN TEAM SELECTION

A design team will be selected in June, 2020 through a Request for Proposals (RFP).

FINAL DESIGN SELECTION & START BUILDING

GROUNDING IN EQUITY

2020

DESIGNING

2021

BUILDING & OPENING

WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE COMMUNITY

What do residents want to see in The Riverline?

"Better [community] physical and mental health..."

"...place more trees in the neighborhood around the trail..."

"A better playground, and better stoplights..."

"Senior housing, more grocery stores... educational opportunities... job opportunities.. and healthcare options"

"Murals done by the neighborhood kids and adults"

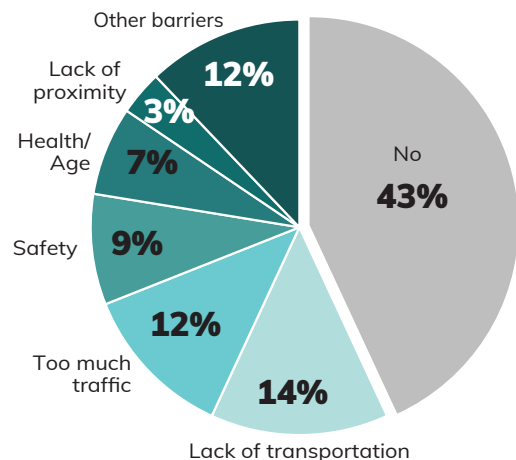
"Vacant housing needs to be fixed..."

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of residents are generally positive about The Riverline

Through surveys at community centers and one-on-one conversations, nearby residents shared their initial perspectives on the project. Most residents surveyed were excited about the idea of converting the former railbed, which many share fond memories of sneaking onto as children, into a truly public space. Residents were hopeful of the benefits a reimagined natural greenway could bring to their neighborhood, from traffic safety and basic amenities, to jobs and improved public health.

Residents often face barriers getting to open spaces. These most often involve transportation, but other barriers relate to age, mobility, and safety. Security and privacy were also concerns for residents along the corridor. The Riverline will need to address these issues to fulfill its potential to achieve broader community goals that benefit all residents.

57% of residents surveyed face some barrier to accessing outdoor spaces



WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY VALUE?

The Community Vision Plan revealed a vision for The Riverline as a vibrant, safe, and welcoming space for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to connect with each other, with nature, and the waterfront, throughout the year. The Riverline will be an inspiring focal point of a revitalized community and restored ecosystem. Below are the guiding principles set out by the plan to help fulfill this community vision for The Riverline.

LINK

Guiding Principles	Description
Respect the character and history of local communities and increase quality of life for residents	By responding to the context of each of these neighborhoods, and by providing a source of revitalization and an anchor for reinvestment, a new nature trail and greenway can celebrate the past and present of these remarkable places, and help lay the groundwork for a more vibrant future.
Embrace and enhance nature that thrives along the corridor	This project will enhance biodiversity and address invasive species, while providing the conditions for native plants and wildlife — from butterflies to birds and more — to thrive.
Provide for different kinds of recreational uses and programming year round	The design of the corridor will accommodate unique outlets for passive and active recreation across ages, abilities, and interests throughout all seasons of the year.
Create connections to existing assets while planning for future projects, needs and growth	To increase connectivity to The Riverline and between nearby sites, it will be important to have a clear and coordinated wayfinding system to better promote and connect local and regional assets.
Design with long-term use, maintenance and safety in mind	The Riverline requires a plan and a budget for upkeep, and should be designed in a way that is inviting yet durable. Designing programs and access points that accommodate visitors without being overly disruptive to neighbors will be important.
Serve as a catalyst for additional investment and opportunity	The development of the nature trail should connect users to the existing neighborhoods to increase local economic activity while also providing a safer, more inviting environment for current residents. As investment accelerates, make sure that residents maintain a voice and a presence in the decision making process as plans are created and implemented.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS



- COMMUNITY CENTERS
- CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS
- RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS
- OTHER ASSETS
- 🏠 SCHOOLS
- PARKS

THE NEIGHBORHOODS

The neighborhoods surrounding The Riverline—the Old First Ward, Perry, and the Valley—share a proud working class history that in many ways is defined by the Buffalo River, and the industry that once thrived on its shores. Shifting economic conditions and public policies in the 20th century spurred disinvestment in these neighborhoods, which stressed their community fabric and vitality. Today, recent investments along Buffalo’s waterfront raise additional questions for the next chapter of these neighborhoods. With abundant assets and robust community partners nearby, The Riverline can help these neighborhoods build a shared future of equity, opportunity, and prosperity.



THE OLD FIRST WARD

The Old First Ward is one of the five original wards created when Buffalo was incorporated as a city in 1832. Spanning the lower waterfront, the Old First Ward was once a center of industrial growth. This can still be seen in the grain elevators, rail lines, and lift bridges that continue to define the character of the neighborhood.

Today, the Old First Ward has the highest median income of the neighborhoods near The Riverline, but it also has the highest poverty rate (41%). Most residents in the Old First Ward are white (78%).



PERRY

This neighborhood includes Commodore Perry, a public housing complex owned by the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA) and built largely in the 1950s. The complex has a total of about 740 high-rise and row-house apartments. Perry also includes Seneca Buffalo Creek Casino, and a growing number of lofts and condominiums.

Perry is more diverse than the Old First Ward or the Valley. Nearly half of its residents identify as Black, and 17% identify as Hispanic. Most households are renters (70%), and the median household income is the lowest of the three neighborhoods (\$25,000).



THE VALLEY

The Valley was dominated by industry and home to immigrant families, mostly of Irish and Polish descent. It’s named “The Valley” because, until recently, it could only be accessed via one of five rail bridges, but can now be reached at grade level.

The Valley has the lowest median home value of the three neighborhoods surrounding The Riverline (\$29,283). Most residents in the Valley neighborhood identify as White (72%) and just under half of households (46%) rent their home.

NEIGHBORHOODS BY THE NUMBERS

Each of the neighborhoods along The Riverline are distinct, but they also have similarities. The median household income across all three neighborhoods is lower than the city overall and as a result, more than a third of residents fall below the poverty line. Few residents have an education beyond high school, which may limit their earning potential. While owning a home in these neighborhoods is relatively low cost, many are overly burdened by housing costs, especially renters with low incomes. Although nearly half of households do not have access to a vehicle, over a third of adults have limited physical activity, which contributes to poor health outcomes, such as high blood pressure and obesity.

The Riverline Neighborhoods Key Takeaways

46% of Renters spend more than 30% of their income on rent

Over **1/3** of residents live in poverty
even higher rate than the City overall (31%)

Compared to the City overall, neighborhood residents are...

...**less** likely to be physically active

...**more** likely to have high blood pressure

...**more** likely to be obese

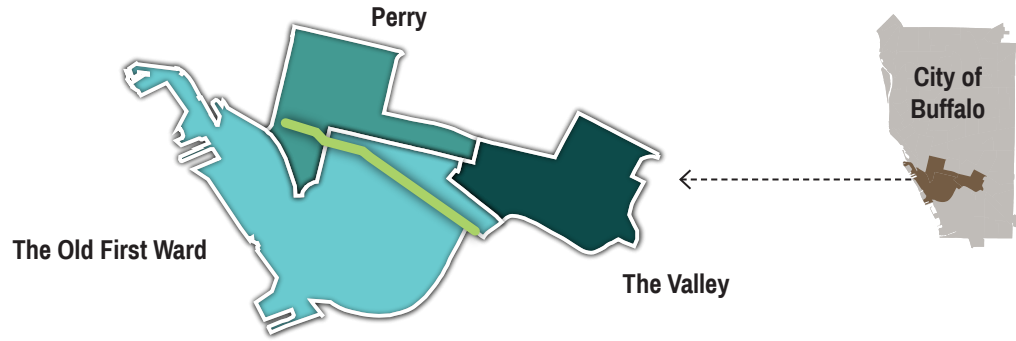
...**more** likely to experience poor physical and mental health



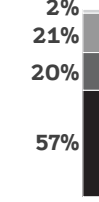
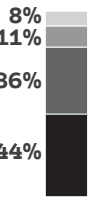



Less than **1 out of 10** adults have a bachelor's degree

Median Home Sales Price is **65% less** than the city median

Over **760** households along the corridor don't have a vehicle

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2013-2017; RedFin, Home Sales, 2016-2019; Centers for Disease Control, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 500 Cities Data, 2016. Note: Cost-burdened households are those that spend 30% or more of household income on housing costs.



					
	The Old First Ward	Perry	The Valley	The Riverline Neighborhoods	City of Buffalo
Population	2,053	2,882	2,282	7,217	259,574
Race and Ethnicity	 <p>1% 21% 1%</p> <p>78%</p>	 <p>4% 17% 48%</p> <p>30%</p>	 <p>1% 25% 2%</p> <p>72%</p>	 <p>2% 21% 20%</p> <p>57%</p>	 <p>8% 11% 36%</p> <p>44%</p>
Median Household Income	\$27,012 	\$25,000 	\$26,849 	\$27,584 	\$34,268 
Poverty Rate	41%	32%	35%	35%	31%
% with Bachelor's Degree or more	7%	13%	7%	10%	26%
% of Households without a vehicle	25%	41%	21%	32%	28%
Median Home Value	\$38,769	\$42,951	\$29,283	\$36,438	\$77,800
% Renters	38%	70%	46%	54%	50%
% Adults with Limited Physical Activity	39%	41%	36%	39%	33%

Source: US Census, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2013-2017; Centers for Disease Control, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 500 Cities Data, 2016.

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND CONCERNS

This planning process considered all forms of displacement: physical displacement (whether current residents will be able to afford to live in the community); social displacement (whether residents continue to feel welcome and have a voice in their community); economic displacement (whether residents continue to have access to goods, services, and jobs that meet their needs); and cultural displacement (whether residents continue to have access to artistic expression, cultural norms, and events that reflect their heritage).

In the neighborhoods around The Riverline, there are **residents vulnerable to displacement**, recent trends that may be **potential displacement concerns**, and many acres of **vacant or underused land** with the potential to accelerate concerning trends, or become a catalyst for positive community change. This visual shows where vulnerable residents live, which neighborhoods are showing potential displacement risks, where development opportunities are located, and how each of these factors are connected.

The Riverline could create numerous opportunities for both direct investments and indirect benefits in nearby neighborhoods. As The Riverline continues to shape the adjacent neighborhoods, understanding how the people and places surrounding The Riverline are linked can help strengthen these connections and achieve the vision set by the community.

POTENTIAL DISPLACEMENT CONCERNS

Recent trends could be signs that neighborhoods are at risk of becoming unaffordable or unwelcoming to current residents.

VACANT OR UNDERUSED LAND

Vacant and underutilized properties provide future opportunities to benefit current residents and prevent displacement.

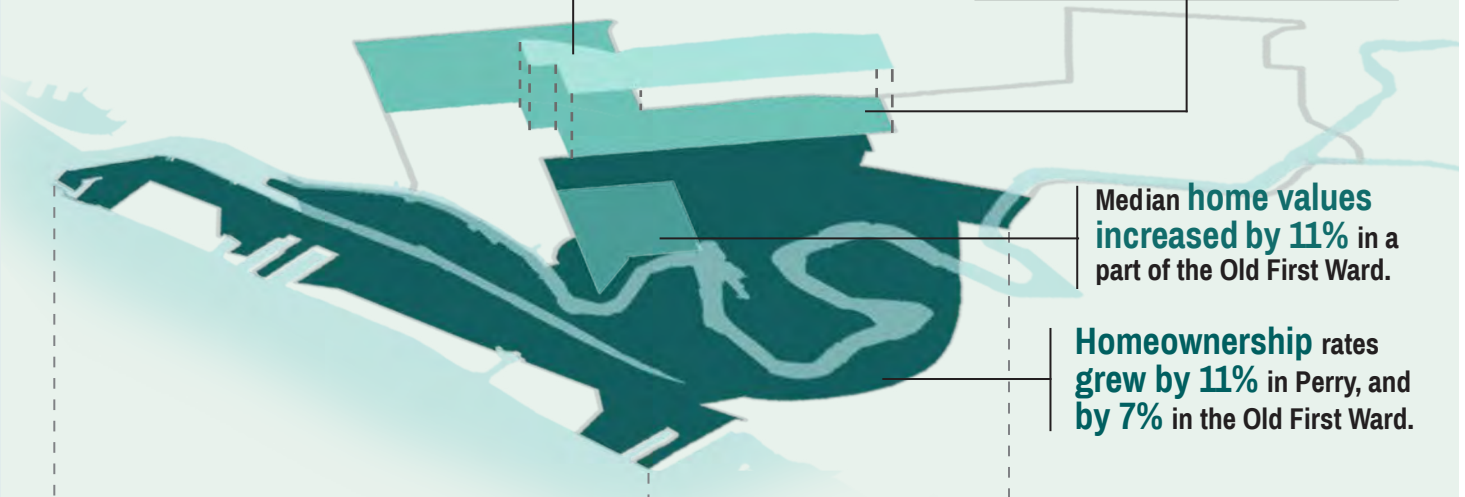
RESIDENTS VULNERABLE TO DISPLACEMENT

Those most vulnerable to displacement are the over 4,500 residents living on low incomes across The Riverline neighborhoods.

FROM 2010 TO 2017

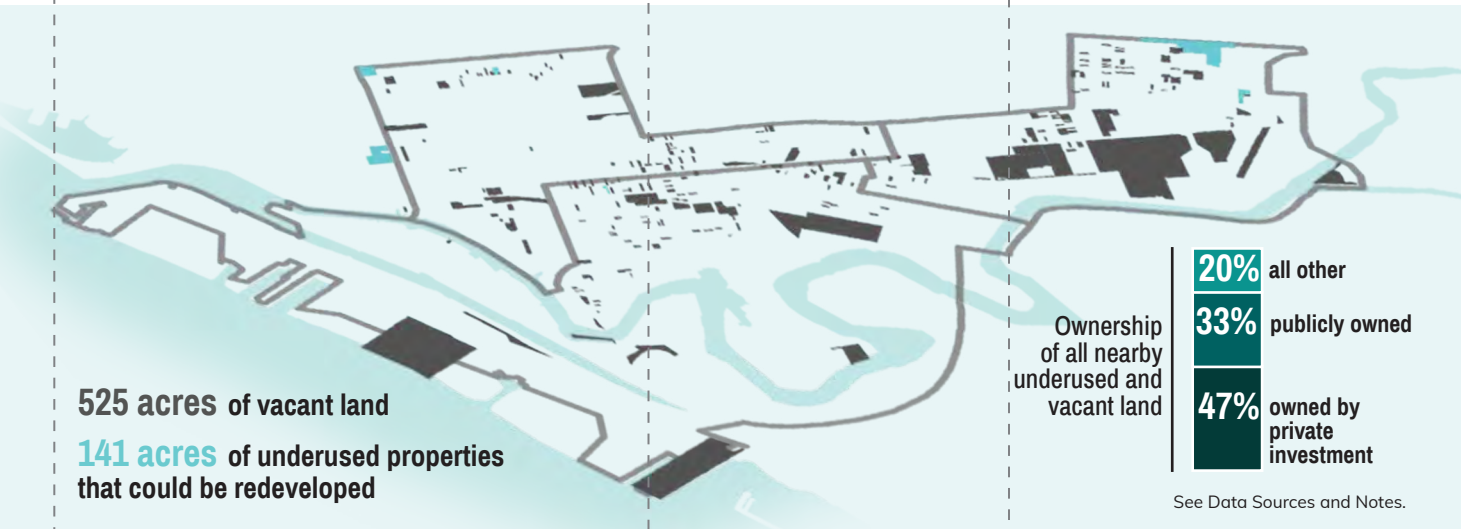
The number of **college-educated adults grew by 250%** in a part of the Perry neighborhood.

Median **household incomes more than doubled** in a section of the Perry neighborhood.



Median **home values increased by 11%** in a part of the Old First Ward.

Homeownership rates grew by 11% in Perry, and **by 7%** in the Old First Ward.

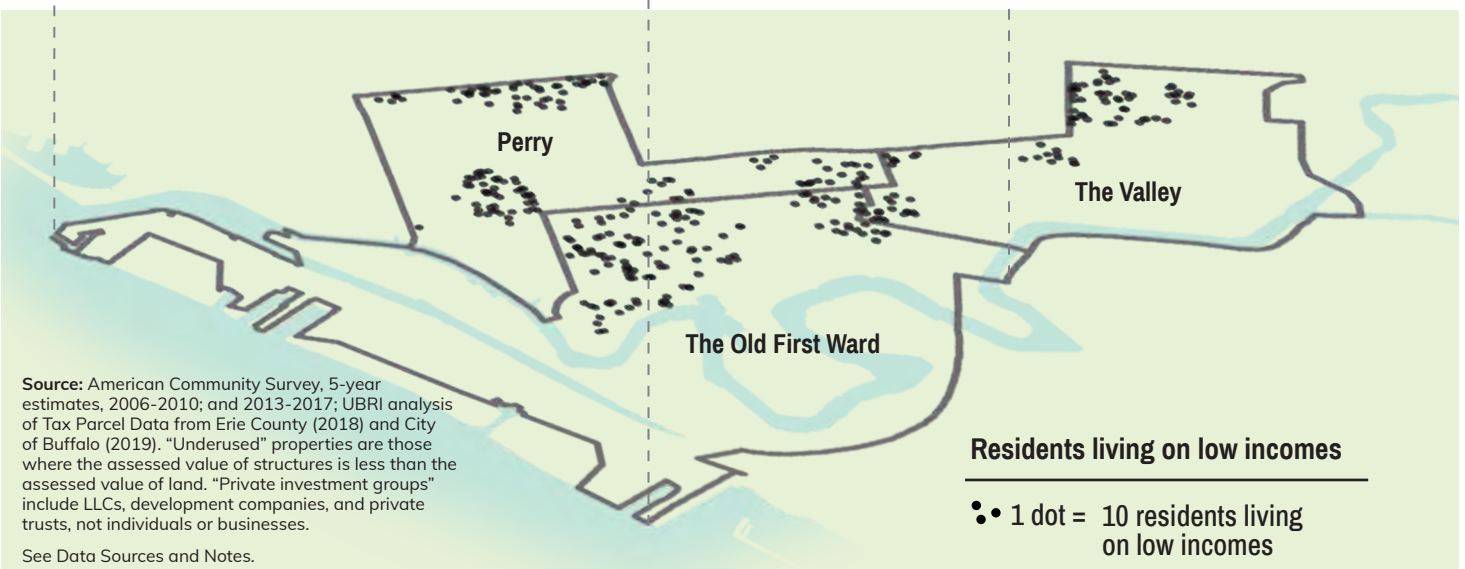


525 acres of vacant land
141 acres of underused properties that could be redeveloped

Ownership of all nearby underused and vacant land

- 20%** all other
- 33%** publicly owned
- 47%** owned by private investment

See Data Sources and Notes.



Residents living on low incomes

•• 1 dot = 10 residents living on low incomes

Source: American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2006-2010; and 2013-2017; UBRI analysis of Tax Parcel Data from Erie County (2018) and City of Buffalo (2019). "Underused" properties are those where the assessed value of structures is less than the assessed value of land. "Private investment groups" include LLCs, development companies, and private trusts, not individuals or businesses.

See Data Sources and Notes.

CASE STUDIES

Recent research has shown that downtown greenways are more likely than other city parks to increase the risk of displacement. Rather than attempting to reverse detrimental impacts *after* construction, The Riverline is planning for equity both *before* and *during* its design and development to mitigate potential negative impacts and achieve the community vision for the corridor.

Some greenway projects took this approach. In particular, the 11th Street Bridge Park in Washington, D.C., the BeltLine in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Joe Louis Greenway in Detroit, Michigan are notable for anticipating equity concerns early on in the planning process, as well as how they responded to equity challenges after opening.

Lessons learned from these greenway projects and others inspired and informed this Equitable Development Framework. However, like these other projects, The Riverline is unique to its surroundings and approach. All lessons learned will need to be applied contextually to a nature trail and greenway connecting people with nature right in downtown Buffalo.



11th St. Bridge Park



11th St. Bridge Park



11th St. Bridge Park

11TH STREET BRIDGE PARK

Location	Washington, D.C.
About	1.45 mile elevated park, reimagining a defunct bridge over the Anacostia River
Organization(s)	Building Bridges Across the River (BBAR) (nonprofit)
Major Funding Source(s)	Funded by donations from individuals/corporations, New Market Tax Credits, and District government funds. 40% of funding will be used for equitable investments in nearby communities.
Status	Currently in planning and design. Construction expected to begin in 2021; park opening anticipated for 2023.
Lessons Learned	<p>In 2014, BBAR commissioned a study of the economic impacts the park would have on local residents and businesses. This showed that adjacent property values and real estate development would significantly increase, which led to concerns about displacement.</p> <p>BBAR partnered with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation in D.C. to form the Equitable Development Task Force (EDTF), which studied the existing conditions in neighborhoods within a mile of the Park and gathered community feedback on equitable development goals. This led to four priorities around which the EDTF developed recommendations: housing, workforce development, small business development, and arts and culture. The 11th Street Bridge Park Equitable Development Plan, first published in 2015, outlines these recommendations and establishes performance metrics to track progress on their implementation.</p>



BELTLINE

Atlanta, GA

33 mile network of multi-use trails, reuse of abandoned railroad corridors

Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (nonprofit) and Atlanta BeltLine Partnership (nonprofit)

Funded primarily by revenue from the Atlanta BeltLine Tax Allocation District (TAD), funds from the City of Atlanta, philanthropic contributions, and federal grants.

Some sections are open now. Other sections are undergoing planning, design, and construction. Completion expected in 2030.

The BeltLine was originally envisioned as a way to address the high level of income inequality and racial segregation in Atlanta by connecting the predominantly white, more affluent areas north of the city, with the less affluent, more racially diverse areas to the south. This vision is reflected in the Equitable Development Plan, which was adopted by ABI's board in 2009 and sets forth community principles, objectives, and strategies.

Besides tracking certain performance measures, the Equitable Development Plan had few provisions for ensuring that those strategies were carried out. In 2018, ABI hired its first Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer—a dedicated staff person to keep equitable development front and center as the BeltLine continues to be implemented.

JOE LOUIS GREENWAY

Detroit, MI

32 mile multi-use loop trail

Detroit Greenways Coalition (nonprofit)

First phase funded primarily by the City of Detroit. Other funding sources are yet to be identified, but will likely include philanthropic, state, and federal grants.

Planning and design expected to be complete in 2020. Construction on certain sections expected to be complete in 2022.

With the help of a 2017 grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation, the City of Detroit developed the Framework Plan, informed by a robust community engagement process. Over the course of one year, nearly 50 community input sessions were held. An advisory council was also created, comprised of residents from each Detroit City Council district impacted by the proposed route of the Greenway. The advisory council will not only ensure that residents' needs and concerns are addressed in the Framework Plan, but also throughout the construction of the Greenway.

In addition, informational materials were made available in multiple languages, including Spanish, Arabic, and Bengali, in recognition of the diverse population in the area of impact. Translation services were offered at each of the public meetings.

A FRAMEWORK FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

FOCUS GROUPS OF LOCAL EXPERTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

In a series of focus group meetings, local experts and community representatives reflected on these strategies and refined the framework.

The following pages summarize their insight and guidance.



Community input, neighborhood trends, and case studies from other cities informed the equitable development framework for The Riverline. This framework presents aspirational mission statements expressing the community's vision for six guiding focus areas, with a set of strategies to strive for that vision.

This framework is not prescriptive or set in stone. It is a starting point meant to evolve. It suggests possible ways to help maximize The Riverline's benefits to residents in nearby neighborhoods and beyond.

FOCUS AREAS FOR CHANGE



COMMUNITY BUILDING

Enhance the decision-making power of local residents and stakeholders through community education, engagement, and empowerment.



HOUSING

Prevent displacement of nearby residents and help increase affordable housing options in surrounding neighborhoods.



ARTS & CULTURE

Uplift the diversity of cultures in nearby neighborhoods and provide meaningful opportunities for residents to express themselves in culturally-relevant ways.



NATURE & COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Restore and enhance the area's natural ecology to offer residents ample opportunities to engage with nature and lead healthy lifestyles.



GOVERNANCE

Maintain The Riverline sustainably in a way that preserves and strengthens the community vision for the nature trail and surrounding neighborhoods.



ECONOMIC ACCESS & DEVELOPMENT

Increase the economic opportunities for local businesses, workers, and nearby residents.



COMMUNITY BUILDING

Through community education, engagement, and empowerment, The Riverline will enhance the decision-making power of local residents and stakeholders. The Riverline has the potential to build a cohesive sense of community across nearby neighborhoods that have racial divides but shared economic experiences. Enhancing the capacity of local residents to drive community building efforts is at the core of The Riverline's equitable development framework.

Stakeholders at the focus group saw an immediate need for community building strategies along The Riverline. Participants stressed that bringing community members into leadership roles is essential, and that forming a resident advisory group is a vital starting point to ensure the community is strengthened equitably. An advisory group of neighborhood ambassadors can engage more community members and raise their voices throughout all phases of the project.

Participants felt The Riverline should evolve organically with a flexible design to give community members opportunities to design spaces and programs according to their vision. Engaging youth and community members who have historically been left out of such processes will require direct engagement and additional support. Engagement methods will need to overcome barriers such as those related to childcare, transportation, and employment. The focus group thought that providing incentives to engagement for nearby residents, such as employment, training, and business opportunities, could boost engagement.

Feedback from the Focus Group

"We know this project will make the neighborhood more desirable. We can be proactive in creating the conditions for a diverse, stable, high-quality neighborhood."

"Talk about unity as a defining principle... [The Riverline] is really about connections, connecting communities, and bringing people together."

"... build the capacity of the community to solve potential diversity issues or communication issues."

Local Models and Potential Community Partners

Imagine LaSalle is a \$50+ million transformation of Buffalo's largest waterfront park into Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Centennial Park—a premier waterfront destination. From the start, an advisory group of residents and park users guided this process, playing a leading role in the park's redesign and programming. The focus group saw forming a similar advisory group of community members as an essential first step to learn from residents and build trust before formal design of The Riverline begins. Other suggested local models or partners for community building strategies included PUSH Buffalo and Open Buffalo.



"High Priority" strategies identified by focus group participants.

PRINCIPLES

STRATEGIES

Ensure community residents are involved in governance and decision-making processes.

Follow an engagement framework that is developed by the community.

Form a resident advisory council to advocate for the needs and concerns of nearby residents.

Partner with existing community groups to guide investments and organize activities.

Enable social interactions by using The Riverline as a community gathering space.

Incorporate informal communal spaces, seating areas, and other amenities to facilitate social interaction and communal activities.

Design areas to accommodate public events and social activities.

Give the community decision-making power over the programs, facilities, and locations of amenities and activities.

Actively inform nearby residents about greenway development, programming, and other opportunities.

Engage in direct outreach methods to reach residents that have been traditionally excluded from conventional public input processes.

Formalize public reporting of progress toward community goals.

Host events that bring together the community with planners, designers, and decision-makers.

Retain a community engagement specialist on the project team.

Leverage social media and other technology to involve residents in decision-making.

Leverage organizational partnerships to build capacity of neighborhood-based organizations and individuals.

Identify leadership development opportunities.

Build relationships with city and regional agencies, organizations, and public officials.

Seek funding for shared programming that advances mutual goals.

Cross-promote events and projects to address common concerns of neighborhood-based organizations and individuals.

Note: Principles are ordered by priority based on this focus group's feedback. "High priority" strategies were most likely to be identified as "High priority" or "Essential." Please see Resources for more details and examples.



HOUSING

Ensuring housing stability is a top priority of equitable development. Community members and local experts stressed the importance of preventing physical displacement of current residents, especially those with low incomes. They described current issues, including poor housing quality, absentee landlords, and burdensome costs of home upkeep for homeowners. Some discussed how the area is gaining interest among developers looking to acquire properties nearby. They also reflected on the potential to use vacant and underused lots and set aside land for quality, affordable housing that reinforces the existing community character.

Existing organizations and programs can help promote housing stability near The Riverline. A number of local organizations are already working on proposed strategies. The focus group said how important it was to support these local groups and promote access to their services. They suggested concentrating on groups, like renters on low incomes, aging homeowners, and small neighborhood landlords that have a stake in the community and limited capacity to enhance properties.

The focus group mentioned resources available to residents to support housing stability, including the NYS Emergency Tenant Protections Act. Participants also mentioned programs to promote the development of affordable housing through NYS Homes and Community Renewal, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. They felt raising awareness and access to the toolkit of resources available to renters, homeowners, and developers is a necessary first step to ensuring neighborhood housing stability.

Feed back from the Focus Group

“Partnerships are key. There are already many [housing service] groups—build off of what exists.”

“Housing stability means more than just affordability—it’s also healthy, safe, quality housing.”

“We need to promote awareness of the financial supports and housing resources available.”

Local Models and Potential Community Partners

The focus group pointed out the Old First Ward Community Center as one key partner to help promote housing stability for nearby residents. The OFWCC provides community outreach programs to connect renters and homeowners with state and federal programs, and other services to promote housing stability. The focus group stressed the need to support and partner with OFWCC and similar organizations, like the Valley Community Center, Matt Urban Hope Center, and Neighborhood Housing Services of Buffalo.



"High Priority" strategies identified by focus group participants.

PRINCIPLES

STRATEGIES

Leverage The Riverline to provide diverse, quality affordable housing options for the community.

Use Community Benefits Agreements to guarantee nearby developments are community-approved and benefit nearby residents.

Create a community-driven joint-development framework for the development/redevelopment of city/nonprofit-owned land.

Offer financial incentives to promote the development of affordable housing.

Facilitate affordable housing development through zoning, policies, or processes.

Form partnerships, community organizations, or community land trusts to develop quality, affordable housing and serve the community.

Collaborate with nonprofits, community groups, and government agencies to provide funding and services to improve housing stability for residents.

Increase housing security of current homeowners by providing financial and legal supports.

Create pathways to homeownership for current renters with financial and other supports.

Work with government agencies and community groups to promote policies that improve neighborhood housing stability.

Promote legislation or policies that stabilize and lower housing costs to increase housing security among existing neighborhood homeowners.

Facilitate the use of rent stabilization, or other policies to prevent displacement of current residents and ensure access to quality affordable housing for residents with lower incomes.

Engage renters and homeowners to improve neighborhood housing stability.

Provide community outreach, education, and financial and legal counseling services to current renters and homeowners.

Create a neighborhood association, renters' commission, or advocacy group to advance the needs and address the concerns of residents.

Note: Principles are ordered by priority based on this focus group's feedback. "High priority" strategies were most likely to be identified as "High priority" or "Essential." Please see Resources for more details and examples.



ARTS & CULTURE

The Riverline will leverage the cultural diversity and rich history of neighborhoods to provide opportunities for artistic expression that empower resident voices and instill community pride. Artistic and cultural programs have the potential to bring together communities.

The focus group emphasized the importance of lifting the voices of local artists that reflect the culture and community character of nearby neighborhoods. In order to achieve this, it is essential for residents to set guidelines for cultural events and community character.

There are already a variety of dedicated organizations and individuals working to promote arts, history, and culture nearby. But funding for arts programs, and space for artists, can be limited—so local artists and cultural groups need to be nurtured. Partnerships should be made with smaller, community-based organizations that inspire traditionally marginalized groups. By partnering with existing historical, artistic, and cultural institutions, The Riverline could provide a platform to give residents sustainable opportunities for artistic expression to help strengthen and stabilize communities.

The focus group said The Riverline needs an overarching plan for arts and culture management, and how it is vital that revenue from art and cultural programs on The Riverline is reinvested in the community. Encouraging artistic expression among neighborhood youth is also important. Schools and youth programs are key partners in many of these strategies. Enhanced access to the greenway is also essential to ensure that all youth, and all residents, have meaningful opportunities to benefit from The Riverline’s artistic and cultural programs.

Feed back from the Focus Group

“Art programs along The Riverline should be chosen by the community and money raised should be put back into the neighborhood.”

“It’s essential to include the Buffalo River in public educational opportunities. The history of the River... how far we’ve come in cleaning it up, and where it will be in the future.”

“Music/Art/
Mindfulness...
a safe place.”

Local Models and Potential Community Partners

The African American Cultural Center (AACC) offers cultural programs, including afterschool and summer programs for youth, and hosts concerts and events at the Paul Robeson Theatre, which it operates. The AACC was pointed out by the focus group as one local model and potential partner to help raise opportunities for artistic and cultural programs in nearby neighborhoods. Other potential partners suggested by focus group participants include: the Arts Services Initiative of Western New York, Buffalo Public Schools, Frontline Arts Buffalo, Open Buffalo, Rigidized Metals, and Silo City.



"High Priority" strategies identified by focus group participants.

PRINCIPLES

STRATEGIES

Prevent cultural displacement while revitalizing the neighborhood.

Enact policies to guarantee nearby residents are provided with culturally appropriate opportunities for employment, shopping, and recreation.

Add a requirement in the zoning ordinance or historic district designation to ensure new development reflects existing community character.

Ensure programming reflects and empowers the history and culture of surrounding neighborhoods.

Create a community advisory group to make decisions on cultural programming and art installations along The Riverline.

Use culturally appropriate signage, branding, and outreach materials, including using multiple languages.

Promote arts and cultural opportunities for current residents.

Partner with local cultural institutions or artists' groups to host activities and art installations for the community.

Dedicate space for culturally significant public art installations.

Identify nearby cultural sites and buildings and explore opportunities to promote and celebrate these resources.

Create a community platform for artistic expression to strengthen and stabilize communities and provide sustainable opportunities for residents.

Note: Principles are ordered by priority based on this focus group's feedback. "High priority" strategies were most likely to be identified as "High priority" or "Essential." Please see Resources for more details and examples.



NATURE & COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Enhancing natural ecosystems to allow all residents to connect with nature and live healthy lifestyles is a primary goal of The Riverline. This starts with restoration, conservation, green design, native plants, wildlife habitat initiatives, and ensuring equitable access to the greenway—a top priority for focus group participants—and extends to broader goals, like improving public health. Realizing these goals will require a wide variety of strategies and partners.

Well-marked routes, thoughtfully distributed access points, and connections to the regional network of parks and trails are clear essentials. But to ensure equitable access, the focus group stressed that pedestrian and bike safety on nearby streets, and overall neighborhood walkability, need to be improved. They described how poor sidewalk conditions, parking issues, and lack of safety and traffic calming features can obstruct access to outdoor spaces. It is vital to hear directly from residents to understand these barriers so all individuals, regardless of mobility or car ownership, can enjoy The Riverline.

Fitness activities, other events, and design elements can promote active lifestyles and have physical and mental health benefits for nearby neighborhoods. Focus group participants noted that there are no supermarkets with healthy foods nearby, but there are a number of bars, breweries, and distilleries. Participants felt it was important to leverage The Riverline to enhance access to healthy foods, through farmer's markets and other strategies. Engaging youth and communities in educational and service learning programs can bring residents together with nature and improve ecological conditions.

Feedback from the Focus Group

“I see The Riverline as the community connector to our regional trail network, with Niagara Greenway, Olmsted....”

“We need to go back to square one to improve neighborhood walkability and bikeability.”

“Focus on volunteer engagement.”

“Emphasize passive recreation.”

Local Models and Potential Community Partners

GObike Buffalo promotes biking to create a safe, healthy, connected transportation network. The organization has worked with the community near The Riverline to design and install traffic calming measures on area streets. The focus group said continuing such efforts could enhance access to the greenway. Other suggested partners for Nature and Community Wellness strategies include ReddyBike, the City of Buffalo, the University at Buffalo Center for Health Equity, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, the African American Heritage Corridor and Freedom Walk initiative, and nearby schools and community centers.



"High Priority" strategies identified by focus group participants.

PRINCIPLES

STRATEGIES

Ensure equitable access to The Riverline from nearby neighborhoods by all transportation modes (walking, bicycling, transit, and driving).

Enhance the overall walkability and bikeability of nearby neighborhoods, focusing on streets that connect to The Riverline.

Identify and remove access barriers to strengthen connections between The Riverline and nearby neighborhoods.

Create designated routes and signage to connect neighborhood residents to The Riverline.

Improve access to The Riverline via low-cost, non-active transportation modes (like public transit).

Explore ways for the community to engage in, connect with, and benefit from the restored natural ecology and wildlife along The Riverline.

Incorporate informational signage and other elements to explain natural elements along The Riverline and their significance to health or culture.

Engage residents, community groups, and citizen scientists to address invasive species and improve conditions for native plants and wildlife.

Invite colleges, schools, museums, and other institutions to teach users about the flora and fauna along the nature trail.

Promote active recreation and healthy lifestyles along The Riverline.

Actively engage local residents in events, activities, and programs that promote physical recreation.

Incorporate universal design elements and other amenities to encourage physical activity for visitors of all ages and mobility levels, year-round.

Monitor progress toward community health goals through surveys, tracking use, or public data on mental and physical health outcomes.

Conduct a Health Impact Assessment to evaluate potential health impacts and prioritize strategies to promote public health.

Promote mental health with amenities, programs, and partnerships.

Foster the creation and enhancement of parks and greenways across the region and facilitate access to a range of natural spaces for residents.

Partner with existing community organizations, nonprofits, foundations, and others to promote and enhance Buffalo's park system.

Work with community groups, government agencies, and others to improve residents' access to natural areas beyond their immediate neighborhood.

Build and enhance parks and playgrounds nearby and connect them with The Riverline.

Enhance residents' access to healthy, affordable food in nearby neighborhoods.

Host farmer's markets and other events to offer local residents healthy, low-cost, and culturally-relevant foods.

Use The Riverline to host events and workshops to promote a local food network and food security.

Prioritize the development of a full-service supermarket near The Riverline to enable access to healthy foods in nearby neighborhoods.

Create community gardens, or other opportunities for growing safe and healthy food, along The Riverline to engage and educate local residents while they grow their own produce.

Partner with local corner and grocery stores to offer locally-produced healthy foods in nearby neighborhoods.

Note: Principles are ordered by priority based on this focus group's feedback. "High priority" strategies were most likely to be identified as "High priority" or "Essential." Please see Resources for more details and examples.



GOVERNANCE

The success of The Riverline and equitable development of nearby neighborhoods hinges on the ability to acquire sustainable revenue streams and stewardship funding while ensuring security along the nature trail.

Safety and security along the greenway is a key concern of nearby residents. The focus group said it is critical that trusted community members provide security so youth and marginalized groups feel welcomed. They suggested that community-based security groups can make visitors and residents along the greenway feel safe and secure while bringing the community together. Working with local residents to plan security features on The Riverline is also a high priority.

Partnering with a wide variety of groups, including philanthropic organizations, governments, landowners, major employers, and corporate sponsors, will be critical to sustain the greenway. To prevent displacement, The Riverline can and should be sustainably financed and maintained without burdening current homeowners, community groups, and small businesses.

The Riverline can help promote broader equity goals. This framework can inform strategies and help build partnerships to facilitate the equitable development of parks, housing, and local communities, which could bring transformative benefits to the city and region.

Feed back from the Focus Groups

“[Engaging] equal parts residents and outside stakeholders will ensure that the neighborhood vision is not lost and offers accountability to the communities impacted by The Riverline.”

“Listening to residents and community members about areas that they feel need investment and improvements is the best way to ensure that an outside group of individuals isn’t coming in and labeling a neighborhood as an investment area.”

“It’s really about ... meaningful engagement with the community in the design [phase], because that will set the stage for having equitable involvement in the operating of The Riverline.”

Local Models and Potential Community Partners

Buffalo Peacemakers is a community-based violence prevention group working to build safe neighborhoods and promote healthy lifestyles for youth. Peacemakers are community members that mentor youth and collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to reduce violence. The focus group suggested Peacemakers as a model and potential partner for ensuring security along The Riverline while strengthening community ties and bringing residents together.



"High Priority" strategies identified by focus group participants.

PRINCIPLES

STRATEGIES

Keep The Riverline safe and ensure the privacy and security of neighbors.

Work with local residents to determine the locations of fencing, security systems, event spaces, and other features that impact privacy or security.

Create a neighborhood watch group, or similar community-based organization, to monitor crime and safety on the nature trail while ensuring all groups feel welcome on the greenway.

Use multiple, innovative revenue streams to sustainably fund operations.

Form partnerships with foundations, governments, community groups, residents, landowners, and others to sustainably finance operations.

Host volunteer events, form volunteer groups, or provide jobs, focusing on nearby residents, to assist in maintenance of The Riverline, its facilities and amenities.

Quantify the fiscal benefit of The Riverline's ecosystem services, and enact an ecosystem service delivery fee to be paid by potential beneficiaries.

Explore policies and strategies to dedicate revenues and taxes generated by The Riverline to fund improvements and reinvest in nearby neighborhoods.

Promote equitable development goals throughout Buffalo and the Western New York region.

Work with the Racial Equity Roundtable to extend equitable development goals and strategies beyond The Riverline to other parts of the city.

Establish a citywide equitable development framework to promote The Riverline equity goals throughout the entire city and region.

Note: Principles are ordered by priority based on this focus group's feedback. "High priority" strategies were most likely to be identified as "High priority" or "Essential." Please see Resources for more details and examples.



ECONOMIC ACCESS & DEVELOPMENT

The Riverline has the potential to grow economic opportunities for nearby residents, businesses, and workers. Jobs will be added to build and maintain The Riverline, and many more may be created if it spurs private development nearby. This economic ripple effect will open pathways for residents to start businesses and build wealth. In a focus group, local agency representatives discussed how to ensure all community members have equitable economic opportunities.

The focus group stressed the importance of leveraging local investments to benefit the community. For example, procurement policies could require contractors to explicitly promote community goals. The group also said that any training and jobs created should be tailored to the skills and needs of local workers. Sustained efforts to directly engage with and support small businesses and economically disadvantaged groups are critical.

Thoughtful timing of investments is also important. Economic objectives may need to be revisited at each phase of the project. It will be key to find early catalytic investments to ignite broader community benefits. This may help revitalize neighborhoods by finding ways to spread recent investment activity, and broader economic benefits, from the waterfront to other parts of the city.

Residents across the city can benefit from The Riverline enhancing access to existing employers, commercial corridors, and the region's multi-modal transportation network. Transportation providers were one of many types of community partners the focus group suggested to help carry out strategies to promote economic access.

Feed back from the Focus Group

“What’s really important is the follow-through, the accountability and communication... long-term.”

“Each phase of the project will require a whole different set of objectives when it comes to economic opportunities.”

“I think [The Riverline] will be an awesome opportunity for folks in the community... but we really need to know exactly what kind of jobs [it will create].”

Local Models and Potential Community Partners

Westminster Economic Development Initiative (WEDI) promotes economic opportunities for economically disadvantaged communities on Buffalo’s West Side. WEDI offers programs for small business development, including micro-financing, training, and technical support. WEDI was one organization that the focus group suggested as a potential community partner to help implement these strategies. Other groups include: Buffalo State College’s Small Business Development Center, Valley Community Association, Rodriguez Construction, Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation, and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority.



"High Priority" strategies identified by focus group participants.

PRINCIPLES

STRATEGIES

Strengthen connections between The Riverline and nearby neighborhoods and commercial district.

Add branded signage and designated pathways to connect The Riverline to nearby commercial districts (e.g., Michigan Ave, South Park Ave).

Consider location of entrances and access to coincide with business nodes.

Enhance economic and ownership opportunities for nearby residents.

Incorporate community benefit principles into development agreements or city ordinances so nearby residents have training and employment opportunities associated with maintenance and construction.

Work with lending institutions and philanthropists to offer individual development accounts (IDAs), also known as matched savings accounts, to nearby businesses and entrepreneurs, especially those with lower incomes.

Improve access to existing and potential job centers for neighborhood residents.

Leverage The Riverline to promote the growth of small local businesses nearby.

Perform an economic impact study to gauge the effects the project could have on nearby development and the real estate market.

Promote policies or ordinances to ensure new businesses provide relevant and affordable options for nearby residents.

Identify and promote opportunities to close localized market leakage in key retail segments to keep money within the community and promote local business development.

Note: Principles are ordered by priority based on this focus group's feedback. "High priority" strategies were most likely to be identified as "High priority" or "Essential." Please see Resources for more details and examples.

BUILDING A PATHWAY TO EQUITY

This document is just the beginning. Much more work lies ahead to ensure equitable development goals are accomplished, and that the community benefits from The Riverline and any additional investments it spurs. Moving toward these goals will require diligent, ongoing planning, monitoring progress and adapting strategies for optimal success throughout the design, construction, and use of the greenway. This will require long-lasting and meaningful partnerships between a wide variety of involved stakeholders, starting with community members. As The Riverline takes its first steps into design and construction, it will be absolutely vital to take a thoughtful, adaptive, and community-based approach, keeping in mind some important considerations.

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

Many strategies are not only high priority but increasingly urgent. Community members, local experts, and agency representatives stressed the urgency of engaging and empowering community members to inform and guide the design, construction, and enjoyment of the nature trail. This could include forming a Community Advisory Council. Other urgently needed actions involve improving neighborhood walkability, pursuing partnerships to build sustainable funding streams, engaging youth, exploring cultural opportunities, and promoting services to increase housing stability.



THE COMMUNITY HAS THE CAPACITY FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

Community members and local experts emphasized that The Riverline should be built “for and by” the community itself. Many local organizations, community members, and neighborhood leaders are already hard at work carrying out many of the strategies contained in this framework. Building the community’s capacity can ensure equitable development of The Riverline while preventing displacement of current residents. This starts by continuing to learn from the community, supporting key organizations, and ensuring residents are in leadership roles to empower and strengthen the community.

COVID-19 CREATES EXTRAORDINARY CHALLENGES, BUT MAY ALSO OPEN NEW APPROACHES

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis creates profound challenges. Small businesses may close, people may lose their jobs, and disparities may widen. Meanwhile, engagement strategies, and the greenway design itself, will change to fit our new reality. Local community centers are struggling to help residents who are in greater need than ever. Challenges like these make equitable development a steeper climb, but the pandemic proves how invaluable natural spaces are to community well-being. A thoughtful, adaptive approach will be key to provide community benefits at times of stability or crisis.

THE FRAMEWORK IS A LIVING DOCUMENT

As design and construction of The Riverline unfolds, this equitable development framework should evolve as the nature of challenges and opportunities shift. This requires data-driven decision making through an iterative process of acting, assessing, and adapting. As many strategies are beyond their capacity, the Land Conservancy will serve as convener, facilitator, or advocate, but implementation will require many leading partners. Actions must be continually assessed by tracking progress, evaluating long-term effectiveness of strategies, and adapting accordingly. The framework will need to enable community members to adjust strategies while seeking new partnerships to achieve the community vision.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

35 Focus Group Participants

36 Resources

45 Data Sources and Notes



FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Local agency representatives and experts met in a series of focus group meetings between February and April 2020. Focus groups were hosted by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute, Make Communities, and the Land Conservancy. Participants provided feedback through a facilitated discussion and feedback forms. Each focus group concentrated on a specific focus area of the framework. Strategies for Governance were reviewed by the Economic Access and Community Building focus groups, which were held online.

The project team would like to thank all focus group participants for graciously donating their time, perspective, and expertise, which was essential to the equitable development framework.

Community Building

- Patrick Gormley**, Old First Ward Community Association
- Mitch Nowakowski**, Buffalo Common Council, Fillmore District
- Franchelle Parker**, Open Buffalo
- Samantha Peterson-Borins**, People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH) Buffalo
- Bart Roberts**, UBRI and Land Conservancy
- Alissa Schmidle**, Old First Ward Community Association

Housing

- Christine Bukowski**, Savarino Companies
- David Granville**, Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority
- Sara Heidinger**, Assemblyman Pat Burke
- Amy Holt**, Fruit Belt Land Trust
- Kirsten Klettke**, Old First Ward Community Association
- Keith Lucas**, City of Buffalo, Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency
- Cara Matteliano**, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- Chris Ollinick**, Cannon Heyman & Weiss, LLP
- Alissa Schmidle**, Old First Ward Community Association
- Gail Wells**, Coppertown Block Club and Land Conservancy

Economic Access & Development

- Tess Williams**, Ontario Specialty Contracting
- Ed Healy**, Visit Buffalo Niagara
- Bryana DiFonzo**, PUSH
- Doris Carbonell-Medina**, United Way ESPRI/THRIVE
- Steve Harrison**, PUSH

Arts & Culture

- Michelle Agosto**, City of Buffalo Public Schools
- Lorna Hill**, Ujima Theatre
- Chris Kameck**, Old First Ward Community Association and Community Artist
- Barbara Owens**, Land Conservancy
- Don Owens**, WNY Railway Historical Society and Land Conservancy
- Monica Pellegrino-Faix**, Buffalo Central Terminal

Nature-Wellness

- Justin Booth**, GoBike Buffalo
- Jay Burney**, Friends of Times Beach Nature Preserve
- Allison Dehoney**, Urban Fruits and Veggies
- Brian Dold**, Olmsted Parks
- Kristen Guadagno**, Erie County Environment and Planning
- Sara Heidinger**, Assemblyman Pat Burke
- Chris Kameck**, Old First Ward Community Association and Community Artist
- Bonnie Lawrence**, Erie County Environment and Planning
- Josh Smith**, Silo City/Rigidized Metals
- Greg Stevens**, Niagara River Greenway Commission
- Gail Wells**, Coppertown Block Club and Land Conservancy
- Greg Wilder**, Grassroots Gardens
- Katherine Winkler**, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

RESOURCES

All links included below are active as of May, 2020.

Community Building

Ensure community residents are involved in governance and decision-making processes.

Follow an engagement framework that is developed by the community.

- The [Atlanta BeltLine Community Engagement Framework](#) was developed by a team of community members who assembled at the start of the project to create community-supported strategies to keep the community actively engaged in the design, construction, and use of the BeltLine.

Form a resident advisory council to advocate for the needs and concerns of nearby residents

- In Detroit, MI, an [advisory council](#) made up of residents from each city council district near the planned Joe Louis Greenway was created to directly inform the process by communicating residents' concerns to city public service departments, and keeping local residents engaged, in the design, construction, and after the greenway is complete.

Partner with existing community groups to guide investments and organize activities.

- [NYC Partnerships for Parks](#) is a program with public-private partners that promote a network of community leaders who maintain and advocate for parks and green spaces in local neighborhoods.
- The [Metro Community Partnerships program, in Portland, OR](#) partners with community organization to strengthen communities by focusing on connecting people of color with nature at parks.

Enable social interactions by using The Riverline as a community gathering space.

Incorporate informal communal spaces, seating areas, and other amenities to facilitate social interaction and communal activities among park users.

- In El Cerrito, CA's Fairmount Park, there is a "pop-up" community garden that serves as an [informal community gathering space](#).

Design areas to accommodate public events and social activities.

- This could include more formal events as well, like Canalside open seating areas where [fitness classes](#) are held.

Give the community decision-making power over the programs, facilities, and locations of community gathering spaces and activities.

- Professors at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia [tested out the "Park in a Truck" concept](#) which gives community residents the tools and training to construct and maintain parks in their neighborhoods.

Actively inform nearby residents about greenway development, programming, and other opportunities.

Engage in direct outreach methods to reach residents that have been traditionally excluded from conventional public input processes.

- In Buffalo, the Land Conservancy project team canvassed neighborhoods, knocking on doors of residents and businesses along The Riverline.
- The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's [Community Engagement Plan](#) states that equitable decisions and policies should be prioritized for the benefit of "traditionally underrepresented communities across race, geography and income." To go about this, they offer direct, community-based engagement through open houses at strategic locations where populations are concentrated.

Formalize public reporting of progress toward community goals.

- [The NYC Parks Report on Progress 2014-2016](#) showcases recent achievements, and progress toward goals with data and featured projects.

Host events that bring together the community with park planners, designers, and decision-makers.

- [Unity Park, Greenville, SC](#) hosted a neighborhood cookout bringing 300 community members together with park planners and decision-makers. This was part of a broader robust public outreach process that also included a ["mobile recreation vehicle" and other play equipment for children](#).

Retain a community engagement specialist on the project team.

- Even in the current economic climate there are active and recent job postings for these community engagement positions for parks and greenways in many cities, including [Washington, D.C.](#)

Leverage social media and other technology to involve residents in decision-making.

- The [Atlanta BeltLine, Facebook page](#) keeps residents engaged, organized, and active in park programs, and informed on community goals and concerns.

Leverage organizational partnerships to build capacity of neighborhood-based organizations and individuals.

Identify leadership development opportunities.

- Through the [Atlanta BeltLine Ambassador Program](#), community members are recruited into leadership roles to promote events and programs, including fitness, artistic, and environmental programs. Ambassadors are featured in personal profile stories on the BeltLine website.

Build relationships with city and regional agencies, organizations and public officials.

- [KABOOM!](#), a national nonprofit that works with communities to build innovative, kid-designed playspaces has a [City Partnerships program](#) that works to “forge multi-year partnerships with public housing systems, city planning departments, school districts, and other local government organizations.”

Seek funding for shared programming that advances mutual goals.

- [Cromwell Park](#) in Shoreline Washington is jointly maintained by the City’s Parks & Recreation Department and the Surface Water Utility promoting the shared goals of stormwater management and public space access. The [Green Shoreline Partnership](#), a public-private partnership with multiple community groups and nonprofit members, was established to promote a sustainable network of trails throughout the City.

Cross-promote events and projects to address common concerns of neighborhood-based organizations and individuals.

- [Riverfront Park in Spokane, WA](#) has significant amenities, like rides and a theater. The park created a [Groupon deal to attract guests](#) to the park by offering discounts on rides and other recreational events and facilities.

Housing

Leverage The Riverline to provide diverse, quality affordable housing options for the community

Use Community Benefits Agreements to guarantee nearby developments are community-approved and benefit nearby residents.

- A Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is a contract signed by community groups and real estate developers that requires developers to provide specific amenities and/or mitigations to a local community. Site specific CBAs ensure that the projects create opportunities for local workers and communities. A local [group](#) in Chicago is working to pass a city ordinance creating a CBA to prevent displacement in communities near the Obama Presidential Center. And in Pittsburgh, developers of a new hockey arena provided \$8.3 million for neighborhood improvements, while also setting local hiring requirements and protections for workers.

Create a community-driven joint-development framework for the development/redevelopment of city/nonprofit owned land.

- The joint-development framework model is often used for transit projects and transit-oriented development, but there is a potential application to open spaces. These frameworks are public-private partnerships, which can involve private developers, affordable housing groups, land conservation nonprofits, and government agencies, that provide funding, enable long-term leases and set development principles for development projects. A [group in Los Angeles](#) is promoting a joint-development framework to mutually benefit open spaces and affordable housing. The model would integrate development on parks with nearby lands. Benefits could include cost-sharing, park stewardship, and capturing the economic value of new parks.

Offer financial incentives to promote the development of affordable housing.

- A Housing Linkage Fee places a fee on new market rate housing developments that can be used towards affordable housing. This fee requires a study showing a link between new development and an increased demand in affordable housing. Examples can be found in Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, and [San Diego, CA](#).
- Commercial Linkage Fees require commercial developments to pay fees that can be used towards affordable housing. [Boston, MA](#) has a commercial linkage fee (approx. \$8 per sq. ft.) that generated \$45 million in revenue funding 5,000 new affordable units from 1986 to 2000. Money is used to support subsidized rent and housing vouchers.
- Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) Districts allow companies/ developers to divert a portion of their taxes to help finance development in an area, or project site. Increases in property tax revenue generated by the TIF are invested

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

in the TIF district. In [Portland, OR](#), 40% of TIF funds were dedicated to affordable housing, generating nearly \$250M over 9 years.

Facilitate affordable housing development through zoning, policies, or processes.

- With Condominium Conversion Ordinances, an owner changes a multi-unit building from a one-owner property to condos that are deeded to multiple owners through an ordinance, and may require a seller to pay a fee for affordable housing. This can be a one-for-one replacement of converted units or require a percentage to be sold at an affordable price. In [Los Altos, CA, a Condo Conversion Ordinance](#) was applied to a planned unit development. Developer was required to assist displaced residents by acquiring an adjacent property and converting it into rental units that were affordable. Six of these rentals were affordable housing units.
- Zoning ordinances can allow accessory dwelling units, or second family dwellings, to be built on the same grounds, or attached to an existing single family home (garage apartments, basement apartments, tiny homes in backyards).
- With inclusionary zoning, developers are either required or incentivized to designate a certain percentage of affordable units as Below Market Rate (BMR). The proportion depends on the size of the project. [NYC implemented inclusionary zoning](#) which offers developers density bonuses allowing them to increase the size and unit count of a project beyond existing zoning regulations to compensate for the affordable housing units.
- Streamlining or expediting permitting processes for affordable housing can make it easier for developers to construct affordable housing units. This is usually included as a part of a package of incentives, with clear eligibility criteria, and adopted standards.

Form partnerships, community organizations, or community land trusts to develop quality, affordable housing to serve the community.

- A Community Land Trust (CLT) or other nonprofit/city-owned organization can be used to provide affordable housing. A CLT is a nonprofit that owns the land, and works closely with the city to ensure land is always used in ways that benefit the community. [Washington DC's 11th St. Bridge- Douglass Community Land Trust](#) and [Buffalo's Fruit Belt Community Land Trust](#) are two relevant examples. Along with providing affordable housing, CLT's organize community meetings and public events, preserve and develop good community spaces, such as parks, gardens and public centers, and may require development projects to hire locally.

Collaborate with nonprofits, community groups and government agencies to provide funding and services to improve housing stability for residents.

Increase housing security of current homeowners by providing financial and legal supports.

- [The Old First Ward Community Association \(OFWCA\) runs an Acquisition-Rehab-50/50](#) to help homeowners with low incomes pay for home rehab projects by offering grants that cover half of rehab costs. The OFWCA provides other financial supports and workshops for homeowners.

Create pathways to homeownership for current renters with financial and other support.

- New York State offers a [First-Time Home Buyers Club](#) where eligible first-time homeowners receive matching funds towards their down payments from participating banks, based on their savings.
- Rent-to-own programs give renters the option to buy their apartment before the lease expires, if one has rented a home for a period of time. These can be two types of agreements: 1) a Lease-Option gives tenants the right to buy, but it is not an obligation, 2) a Lease-Purchase legally obligates one to buy when the lease ends.
- Tenant Right-to-Purchase policies give tenants the first opportunity to buy property, or a space, at the same price and same terms and conditions as a third party offer, or at a set price owner has already agreed to if they decide to sell in the future. [NYC's Administrative Code](#) gives tenants exclusive rights to purchase for 90 days.

Work with government agencies and community groups to promote policies that improve neighborhood housing stability for residents.

Promote legislation or policies that stabilize and lower housing costs to increase housing security among existing neighborhood homeowners.

- In the [Foreclosure Prevention Project](#) of WNY, the Legal Aid Bureau, WNY Law Center, and Center for Elder Law & Justice work together to cover residential foreclosure defenses. A financial hardship package is prepared with the aid of certified housing counseling agencies. Services are free, and free informational workshops are held twice a month.
- A Property Tax Freeze for homeowners with low incomes locks in place the amount of tax homeowners currently pay. [NYS' Property Tax Relief credit program](#) is one example.
- In response to property reassessments, the [Buffalo Property Tax Coalition](#) proposed legislation to the Common Council that would [freeze assessments](#) for seniors with low incomes in designated census areas who have owned their home for 25 years or more.

Facilitate use of rent stabilization, or other policies to prevent displacement of current residents and ensure access to quality affordable housing for residents with lower incomes.

- [New York State’s Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019](#) defines unlawful evictions. Landlords must prove an eviction was not retaliatory. Unlawful evictions can result in misdemeanor charges. Evictions are allowed under certain conditions depending on the lease agreement. Tenants can legally dispute the eviction if they disagree with the landlord.
- Rent Control limits the price a landlord can charge for rent and restricts the right of the owner to evict tenants. In [NYC](#), a tenant must be continuously living in an apartment since July, 1971 to qualify (a qualifying family member can take that over).
- Rent Stabilization sets a maximum rate for annual rent increases and entitles tenants to receive required services from landlords. In [NYC](#), apartments in buildings of six or more units built from 1947 to 1973 are eligible for rent stabilization. A rent guidelines board meets yearly to determine how much rent can be charged. Violations by a landlord may cause rent to be lowered.
- [NYS’ Emergency Tenant Protection Act](#) allows municipalities to opt into the program if they can establish a housing emergency (the vacancy rate must be under 5%), only applies to buildings built before 1974. Benefits include: (1) limit on how much a landlord can raise rent after renovations or between tenants, and (2) an end to “vacancy decontrol”, which is when a rent controlled apartment is taken out of rent control after it becomes vacant. Rochester, Kingston and Albany have all begun a vacancy study of buildings that they wish to regulate.

Engage renters and homeowners to improve neighborhood housing stability.

Provide community outreach, education, and financial and legal counseling services to current renters and homeowners.

- [Belmont](#) Housing Resources for WNY hosts a Homebuyer Education Workshop to help homeowners keep their homes affordable.

Create a neighborhood association, renters’ commission, or advocacy group to advance the needs and address the concerns of residents.

- A neighborhood association is a group of volunteer residents who help organize and advocate for their community. [The Oak Park Estates Neighborhood Association](#) hosted a “How to Prevent Displacement” workshop last May.
- Renters Commissions are usually comprised of low-income/marginalized groups that meet and make recommendations that are then shared with City Hall to help shape laws and policies. [Seattle](#) passed an ordinance in March 2017 establishing a Renters’ Commission.

Arts and Culture

Prevent cultural displacement while revitalizing the neighborhood.

Enact policies to guarantee nearby residents are provided with culturally appropriate opportunities for employment, shopping, and recreation.

- A [Downtown Master Plan for Missoula](#), MT proposed a Cultural Density Bonus Program to stipulate that developers identify and provide affordable arts and culture space in exchange for additional height or density of developments.

Add a requirement in the zoning ordinance or historic district designation to ensure new development reflects existing community character.

- [Rock Hill, SC Zoning Ordinance](#) works to preserve existing community character by “... ensur[ing] that new residential and business development is consistent with the general character of the City, and is compatible with surrounding uses.”

Ensure programming reflects and empowers the history and culture of surrounding neighborhoods.

Create a community advisory group to make decisions on cultural programming and art installations along The Riverline.

- In Seattle, the mayor and city council appointed a 16-member [Seattle Arts Commission](#) with a mission of “advocating for arts policy, creating access for equitable participation in the arts, and fostering enriching arts engagement for all residents.”

Use culturally appropriate signage, branding, and outreach materials, including using multiple languages.

- A [Downtown Master Plan for Missoula](#), MT proposed a Heritage Interpretive Plan to strengthen and connect cultural assets and public spaces through branding, marketing and culturally-relevant streetscape elements, such as wayfinding, signage, historical markers and public art.

Promote arts and cultural opportunities for current residents.

Partner with local institutions or artists’ groups to host artistic/cultural events and activities for the community.

- Community residents and performers worked together to provide a free performance for the community near NYC’s HighLine with [“The Mile-Long Opera.”](#)

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Dedicate space for culturally-significant public art installations.

- Local examples include the Albright Knox Public Art Initiative's "The Freedom Wall" on Michigan Avenue, and "ONE through ZERO (The Ten Numbers)" at Wilkeson Pointe (2019).
- In Houston, TX Buffalo Bayou Park added the "[Monumental Moments](#)" installation.

Identify nearby cultural sites and buildings and explore opportunities to promote and celebrate these resources.

- The [East Harlem Neighborhood Plan \(2016\)](#) includes an inventory and map of community assets and artistic, historic, and cultural resources.

Create a community platform for artistic expression to strengthen and stabilize communities and provide sustainable opportunities for residents.

- [Project Row Houses in Houston, TX](#) is a neighborhood-based organization that offers a platform for marginalized urban communities to enrich themselves with art and cultural programs, focusing on disadvantaged neighbors, small businesses, and local artists.

Nature and Community Wellness

Ensure equitable access to Riverline from nearby neighborhoods by all transportation modes (walking, bicycling, transit, and driving).

Enhance the overall walkability and bikeability of nearby neighborhoods, focusing on streets that connect to The Riverline.

- In Tucson, AZ, a [neighborhood walkability assessment](#) used feedback from walkability workshops, a neighborhood 'walk & talk', and walkability audits conducted by local residents to make recommendations to improve neighborhood walkability.

Identify and remove access barriers to strengthen connections between The Riverline and nearby neighborhoods.

- The City of Lebanon, NH developed a "[Safe Routes to Play](#)" program that enlisted children to identify access barriers to parks and play spaces, including traffic, safety, and physical barriers, and proposed solutions to improve access. A national "Safe Routes to Play" initiative was launched in [2010 by GPRED](#).

Create designated routes and signage to connect neighborhood residents to The Riverline.

- [San Francisco's Green Connections project](#) is a citywide effort to create a network of "green connector" streets that provide safe, inviting connections to parks by walking or biking.

Improve access to The Riverline via low-cost, non-active transportation modes (like public transit).

- In Vancouver, WA, the county transit system partnered with the Parks & Recreation Dept., and local schools to launch a [Youth Opportunity Pass](#) program, providing youth free or discounted transit trips to local parks.

Explore ways for the community to engage in, connect with, and benefit from the restored natural ecology and wildlife along The Riverline.

Incorporate informational signage and other elements to explain natural elements along The Riverline, and their significance to health or culture.

- The [Great Rivers Greenway](#) in St Louis, MO created an Interpretive Strategy plan in 2017 to set themes and strategies for signage.
- In [Mouat Park on Salt Spring Island](#), BC, resident focus groups [contributed](#) to the visual and written content of [interpretive signs](#).

Engage residents, community groups, and citizen scientists to address invasive species and improve conditions for native plants and wildlife.

- Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper organizes [shoreline sweeps](#) where volunteers help to clean up area waterways.
- [The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) runs a citizen science and volunteer conservation program to monitor park ecosystems, maintain gardens, and provide community education in parks.

Invite colleges, schools, museums and other institutions to teach park users about the flora and fauna along the nature trail.

- The Buffalo Museum of Science offers [tours of Tiffit Nature Preserve](#) (which it also manages).
- The [High Line in NYC](#) partners with local schools and offers self-guided tours for classrooms.

Promote active recreation opportunities and healthy lifestyles on The Riverline.

Actively engage local residents in events, activities, and programs that encourage physical activity.

- The [Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board's StreetReach program](#) reached out directly to get nearby residents involved in productive, healthy activities and programs, targeting youth.
- In Philadelphia, "[We Walk PHL](#)" launched walking groups in 5 different parks. The program provides free 12-week programs where groups take moderate 1-mile walks, popular among seniors.
- [Atlanta's BeltLine Partnership](#) operates a variety of free outdoor fitness classes each year.

Incorporate universal design and other amenities to encourage physical activity for all ages and mobility levels, year-round.

- The "Fitness Zone" in Newark, NJ's [Jesse Allen Park](#) has outdoor fitness equipment to promote wellness and fight obesity. It's part of the Trust for Public Land's national [Fitness Zone program](#) which provides parks with outdoor fitness equipment.
- In response to community feedback, Adams Park in Atlanta, GA added a [walking loop boardwalk](#) to boost park use. One [study](#) found that parks that have [walking loops](#) attract 80 percent more users and more than twice as many older adults.

Monitor progress toward community health goals through community surveys, tracking park use, or public data on mental and physical health outcomes.

- Durham, NC used the [SOPARC](#) (Systematic Observation of Play & Recreation in Communities) tool to [study childrens' park use](#) and found certain amenities can increase childrens' physical activity.

Conduct a Health Impact Assessment to evaluate potential health impacts and prioritize strategies to promote community health.

- [The Atlanta BeltLine](#) and the [Quequechan River Rail in Massachusetts](#) conducted Health Impact Assessments to understand existing public health conditions and inform strategies to improve health outcomes in surrounding neighborhoods.

Promote mental health with amenities, programs, and partnerships.

- [Josh's Benches for Awareness](#) is a suicide prevention nonprofit in Palm Beach County, FL that installs locally-built yellow benches in parks to spur conversation and overcome the stigma around mental health.
- In Canton, OH, the County Park District works with a local mental health service provider to offer [Mindfulness Walks](#) for the public.

Foster the creation and enhancement of parks and greenways across the city.

Partner with existing community organizations, nonprofits, foundations, and others to promote and enhance Buffalo's park system.

- A [nonprofit worked with the city](#) Parks Department in Cleveland, OH to create new and revitalize existing open spaces.

Work with community groups, government agencies, and others to improve residents' access to natural areas beyond their immediate neighborhood.

- In Cleveland, the [Red Line Greenway and Downtown Connector Trail](#) connects the city's existing trails and bike network.

Build and enhance parks and playgrounds nearby, and connect them with The Riverline

- In Buffalo, the [Imagine LaSalle](#) project transforming LaSalle Park into RCWJ Centennial Park includes designs for strengthened connections to nearby Waterfront/Emerson, and 4th Street Parks.

Enhance residents' access to healthy, affordable food in nearby neighborhoods.

Host farmers' markets and other events to offer local residents healthy, low-cost, and culturally-relevant foods.

- Washington DC's Healthy Schools Act lifted a ban and standardized permitting to host [farmers markets](#) in city parks.
- Farmers Park in Springfield, MO hosts a weekly [farmers market](#).

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Use The Riverline to host events and workshops to promote local food network and food security.

- A number of [states](#) and [cities](#) use public parks as pick-up sites for USDA's [Summer Food Service Program](#) which offers children under 18 free breakfasts and lunches in summer.
- In Seattle, the [Giving Garden at Marra Farm](#) offers tours and service learning opportunities for local school students.

Prioritize the development of a full-service supermarket near The Riverline to enable access to healthy foods in nearby neighborhoods.

- New York City's Food Retail Expansion to Support Health ([FRESH](#)) program creates financial and zoning incentives for developing healthy food stores in underserved communities.

Create community gardens, or other opportunities for growing safe and healthy food, along The Riverline to engage and educate local residents while they grow their own produce.

- Farmers Park in Springfield, MO, has [community gardens](#), with free plots open to the public.
- Minneapolis' adopted a [Parks Community Garden Policy](#) in 2018 to outline designated areas, procedures, and rules for creating community gardens in city parks.
- A Women Infant and Children (WIC) program in [Del Paso Heights, CA](#) worked with residents in a diverse, low-income neighborhood to create a community garden that is now used by 85 families.
- [The Freedom Trail](#) in Boston, MA has a variety of fruit trees along its path, planted as part of a broader grassroots effort.
- In Madison, WI the City Council passed a [law](#) to enable edible landscaping on city-owned properties through a permit process.
- [The West Tennessee Farmers' Market](#) in Jackson, TN was created to fill the need for healthy foods in a food desert. The Market hosts workshops and is a community [hub](#) of a revitalizing neighborhood.

Partner with local corner and grocery stores to offer locally-produced healthy foods in nearby neighborhoods.

- Buffalo's [Healthy Corner Store Initiative](#) works to support local convenience stores, provide nutrition education for residents, and strengthen farm-to-store relationships.
- The Plan4Health coalition implemented a "farm to community" model in [Summit County, OH](#), opening 3 food pantries and working with 5 corner stores to improve access to healthy foods.

Governance

Keep The Riverline safe and ensure the privacy and security of neighbors.

Work with local residents to determine the locations of fencing, security systems, event spaces, and other features that impact privacy or security.

- The City of Fresno, CA set standards for privacy fencing along trails and greenways in a 2017 [Trail Design Guidelines](#) plan.

Create a neighborhood watch group, or similar community-based organization, to monitor crime and safety on the nature trail while ensuring all groups feel welcome on the greenway.

- Anchorage, AK formed a [Trail Watch](#) program where volunteers regularly monitor safety, and maintenance conditions along the city's extensive network of recreational trails. Volunteers post incidents and suspicious activity on a Trail Watch website.

Use multiple, innovative revenue streams to sustainably fund operations.

Form partnerships with foundations, governments, community groups, residents, landowners, and others to sustainably finance operations.

- Local property owners and philanthropists together formed the nonprofit [Bryant Park Corporation](#) to maintain NYC's Bryant Park.
- The [Buffalo Olmsted Park Conservancy](#) manages the city's Olmsted park system. It relies on foundations, grants, and donations from individuals and businesses to maintain and improve the system.

Host volunteer events, form volunteer groups, or provide jobs, focusing on nearby residents, to assist in maintenance of The Riverline, its facilities and amenities.

- The [Midway Greenway Coalition](#) in Minneapolis, MN is a volunteer group that works to promote safety and maintenance of local greenways and their amenities through numerous efforts.

Quantify the fiscal benefit of The Riverline's ecosystem services, and enact an ecosystem service delivery fee to be paid by potential beneficiaries.

- Used mainly in rural, developing areas, but the concept has been [explored](#) for urban areas. As an example, adding rain gardens and other natural features would reduce stormwater runoff, which would lower costs to operate the sewer system. A portion of the value of these services could be paid by the sewer authority to The Riverline to help fund park operations.

Explore policies and strategies to dedicate revenues and taxes generated by The Riverline to fund improvements and reinvest in nearby neighborhoods.

- The town of [Gilbert, AZ](#) set up 11 neighborhood-based Parkway Improvement Districts. Residents have an opportunity to set what investments to pursue for their parks in community meetings. All residents within the district are mailed a ballot to voice their opinion, and are taxed separately to fund these budgets.

Promote equitable development goals throughout Buffalo and the Western New York region.

Work with the Racial Equity Roundtable to extend equitable development goals and strategies beyond The Riverline to other parts of the city.

- In Buffalo, [The Racial Equity Roundtable](#) brings together over 30 community leaders from private, public, and nonprofits “to advance racial equity and promote the change required to accelerate a shared regional prosperity.”
- The Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the regional transportation planning organization in the San Francisco Bay Area, formed a [Regional Equity Working Group](#) in 2015 to promote social equity throughout implementation of a regional long-range transportation plan.

Establish a citywide equitable development framework to promote The Riverline equity goals throughout the entire city and region.

- The [Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development](#) developed an Equitable Development Implementation Plan in 2016.

Economic Access and Development

Strengthen connections from nearby neighborhoods and commercial districts to The Riverline.

Add branded signage and designated pathways to connect The Riverline to nearby commercial districts (e.g., Michigan Ave, S Park Ave).

- [San Francisco's Green Connections project](#) is a citywide effort to create a network of “green connector” streets that provide safe, inviting connections to parks by walking or biking.

Consider location of entrances and access points to coincide with business nodes.

- The master plan for the [Little Sugar Creek Greenway](#) in Charlotte, NC includes signage along “connector trails” that are strategically placed along high-activity commercial areas.

Enhance economic and ownership opportunities for nearby residents.

Incorporate community benefit principles into development agreements or city ordinances so nearby residents have training, and employment opportunities associated with maintenance and construction.

- This could include local or first source hiring ordinances for construction jobs; Community Workforce Agreements between developers, governments, nonprofits, or community organizations; and education and workforce training programs for neighborhood residents.
- Section 19 of [Ordinance 05-0-1733](#) (the BeltLine Ordinance) mandates that “capital projects that receive funding from TAD [tax allocation district] bond proceeds shall reflect, through the development agreements or funding agreements that accompany such projects, certain community benefit principles, including but not limited to: prevailing wages for workers; a ‘first source’ hiring system to target job opportunities for residents of impacted low income ‘BeltLine’ neighborhoods; establishment and usage of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs for workers of impacted BeltLine neighborhoods.”
- A first source hiring requirement was put into effect as part of the Community Benefits Agreement for the [BeltLine](#) Tax Allocation District in Atlanta.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Work with lending institutions and philanthropists to offer individual development accounts (IDAs), also known as matched savings accounts, to nearby businesses and entrepreneurs, especially those with lower incomes.

- [Mercy Corps Northwest](#), a nonprofit in Portland, OR, offers an IDA program where every \$1 saved by a participant is matched by \$5 in grant funds for small business development.

Improve access to existing and potential job centers for neighborhood residents.

- The [Detroit Greenways Coalition](#) works to promote access to jobs for bicyclists and pedestrians by integrating the city's greenway network into the street grid, and hosting Bike to Work day events along the city's greenways.

Leverage The Riverline to promote the growth of small, local businesses nearby.

Perform an economic impact study to gauge the effects The Riverline could have on nearby development and the real estate market.

- A [2014 economic impact study](#) for the 11th Street Bridge Park (Washington, D.C.) highlighted how spin-off economic activity could lead to displacement, and an equitable development framework was created as a result of this finding.

Promote policies or ordinances to ensure new businesses provide relevant and affordable options for nearby residents.

- The Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development proposed an [Equity Transfer of Development Rights \(TDR\) for Affordable Commercial Space](#) where developers can sell development rights in target neighborhoods to provide affordable commercial space for eligible businesses.

Identify and promote opportunities to close localized market leakage in key retail segments to keep money within the community and promote local business development.

- A [2018 Small Business Support Plan for Battle Creek, MI](#) used a retail market gap analysis to identify specific retail sectors where retail leakages exist, and worked with stakeholders to understand the local potential and need for these business types.

DATA SOURCES & NOTES

Study Area Definition

The framework focuses on three neighborhoods—the Old First Ward, Perry, and the Valley. For the purposes of study, the boundaries of these neighborhoods are defined by U.S. Census block groups. But, in cases where data is limited, census tracts are used, which cover a larger area. The table below summarizes the block groups and census tracts used for The Riverline neighborhoods. Please refer to the notes throughout the report and below to determine the statistics for which these geographies are applied.

Neighborhood	Census Tracts	Census Block Groups
The Old First Ward	Census Tract 5	Census Tract 5: Block Groups 1 and 2
Perry	Census Tract 164	164: Block Groups 1 and 2
The Valley	Census Tract 163	163: Block Group 3

The Riverline and the Equity Opportunity

“...similar projects recently created in other cities led to unintended displacement”: Rigolon, A., & Németh, J. (2019). “Green gentrification or ‘just green enough’: Do park location, size and function affect whether a place gentrifies or not?” Urban Studies.

“The Old First Ward, Perry, and the Valley all have a less active housing market, higher levels of poverty, and fewer adults with college educations”: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, 2013-2017.

What we heard from the Community

“Nearly three-quarters (74%) of residents are generally positive about The Riverline”: Based on 65 responses from residents in the community, Land Conservancy and Make Communities, 2018. 20% of residents were unsure/undecided and 6% were generally negative.

Barriers Residents Face to Accessing Outdoor Spaces: Based on 58 responses from residents in the community, Land Conservancy and Make Communities, 2018.

Quotes are from residents who live along, or in the neighborhoods nearby, The Riverline corridor, Land Conservancy and Make Communities, 2017-2019.

Neighborhood Assets

Neighborhood Asset Map: Neighborhood assets were compiled from a variety of sources, including Parcel Data from the City of Buffalo (2019) and the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (2018); The National Parks Service, National Register of Historic Places, Database of Registered and Eligible Historic Places (2018); and input by local stakeholders and representatives (2020).

The Old First Ward: “the highest poverty rate (41%). Most residents are white (78%)”: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, 2013-2017.

Perry: “The [BMHA Commodore Perry] complex has a total of about 740 high-rise and row-house apartments”: Susan Schulman, “BMHA under scrutiny over spending on 40 percent-vacant Perry complex,” Buffalo News, November 17, 2018.

“... half of its residents identify as Black... the lowest homeownership rate”: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, 2013-2017.

The Valley: “...lowest median home value, also a majority-white neighborhood (72%)”: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates, 2013-2017.

“it has the highest percentage of physically active adults (64%)”: Centers for Disease Control, 500 Cities Data, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2016. Based on census tract geographies.

Neighborhoods by the Numbers

% Adults with Limited Physical Activity and likelihood of experiencing poor physical or mental health: Centers for Disease Control, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 500 Cities Data, 2016.

All other non-health related statistics: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year estimates, 2013-2017. Based on census tract geographies.

Equitable Development Needs and Concerns

Potential Displacement Concerns: Based on trends from 2010 to 2017 for block groups in the study area. US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-year estimates, 2006-2010; and 2013-2017.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Vacant or Underused Land: UBRI analysis of Parcel Data from the City of Buffalo (2019) and the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (2018). Property ownership type and location is determined using information on owner names and addresses provided in public tax records from the City of Buffalo (2019) and Erie County (2018). Vacant parcels are selected by property class code assigned for tax assessment purposes (codes 300-399). Underused parcels are those where the assessed value of the land is greater than the assessed value of the structures and other improvements built on that parcel. This method was used by Community Planning Workshop in the “Eagle Point Buildable Lands Analysis,” June, 2001. Accessed January, 2020 at <https://pages.uoregon.edu/rgp/PPPM613/downloads/EP%20Housing%20and%20Economy%20Final.pdf> and similarly applied by Community Attributes International in the “City of Minneapolis Land Capacity Analysis,” June, 2010. Accessed January, 2020 at http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@cped/documents/webcontent/convert_261135.pdf

Residents Vulnerable to Displacement: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-year estimates, 2013-2017. Based on Census Tract data.

Case Studies

Recent Research on Displacement Risks: Rigolon, A., & Németh, J. (2019). “Green gentrification or ‘just green enough’: Do park location, size and function affect whether a place gentrifies or not?” *Urban Studies*.

11th Street Bridge Park: “Frequently Asked Questions.” *Building Bridges Across the River*. Retrieved March 2020 at <https://bbardc.org/bridge-park-faqs/>; Bogle M., Diby, S., and Burnstein, E. (2016). “Equitable Development Planning and Urban Park Space: Early Insights from DC’s 11th Street Bridge Park Project.” *Urban Institute*.

BeltLine: “2019 Annual Report,” Atlanta BeltLine, Inc., 2019; “BeltLine Equitable Development Plan,” Atlanta BeltLine, 2009; “An Atlanta BeltLine for All: Equitable Development Assessment” Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, 2013; “Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer Position Created at Atlanta BeltLine,” Atlanta BeltLine, April 17, 2018.

Joe Louis Greenway: “Joe Louis Greenway,” Detroit Greenways Coalition, Retrieved March 2020 at <https://detroitgreenways.org/joe-louis-greenway/>; “Joe Louis Greenway Advisory Council,” City of Detroit, Retrieved March 2020 at <https://detroitmi.gov/news/joe-louis-greenway-advisory-council>; Aaron Mondry, “The latest updates on the Joe Louis Greenway as end of planning phase nears,” *Curbed Detroit*, December 12, 2019.

A Framework for Equitable Development

Feedback from focus groups: Quotes are from facilitated discussions and written comments of local agency representatives and community experts at focus group meetings, February-April 2020.

Local Models and Potential Community Partners: Compiled from written and verbal feedback of local representatives and experts at focus group meetings held from February to April 2020. Organizations are mentioned to illustrate how strategies may be applied and opportunities for collaboration. Partners listed are not comprehensive or directive. Logo images are from organization websites (May, 2020).

Principles and Strategies: Developed through neighborhood research, community feedback, and case studies in equitable development of urban greenways and related projects (see “Case Studies” and “Resources”). Principles and strategies were revised with focus group feedback. In each focus group, participants were asked to rank the relative importance of principles. In each table, principles are placed in descending order based on this feedback. “High priority” strategies are based on focus group feedback. At each focus group, participants were asked to score the relative priority of each strategy on a 1-5 scale, with 1 being “Not a priority” and 5 as “Essential.” Strategies that received an average score of 4 out of 5 from this feedback are marked as “High priority.” In the Economic Access and Community Building focus groups the project team supplemented quantitative feedback with qualitative feedback to determine “High priority” strategies.

A preliminary survey of area residents asked residents to rate each focus area on a 1-5 scale (with 5 being “Very important” and 1 being “Not important at all”), The average importance of each focus area based on this survey was: Community Building=4.6; Housing =4.6; Arts & Culture=4.0; Nature & Community Wellness=4.6; Governance=4.8; Economic Access & Development=4.6.

Image Credits

Case Studies: *Building Bridges Across the River* (BBAR), 11th Street Bridge Park, 2019 (bbardc.org); Atlanta BeltLine, 2019 (beltline.org); City of Detroit, Joe Louis Greenway, 2019 (detroit.curbed.com).

Photos: [In alphabetical order] Larry Brooks, Brian Conley, Jordan Hawkins, James Hoggard, Jacob Jordan, Calvin Nemec, John Paget, Paula Sciuk, Abby Songin, Nancy Smith, Dave Spiering, 2017-2020.



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