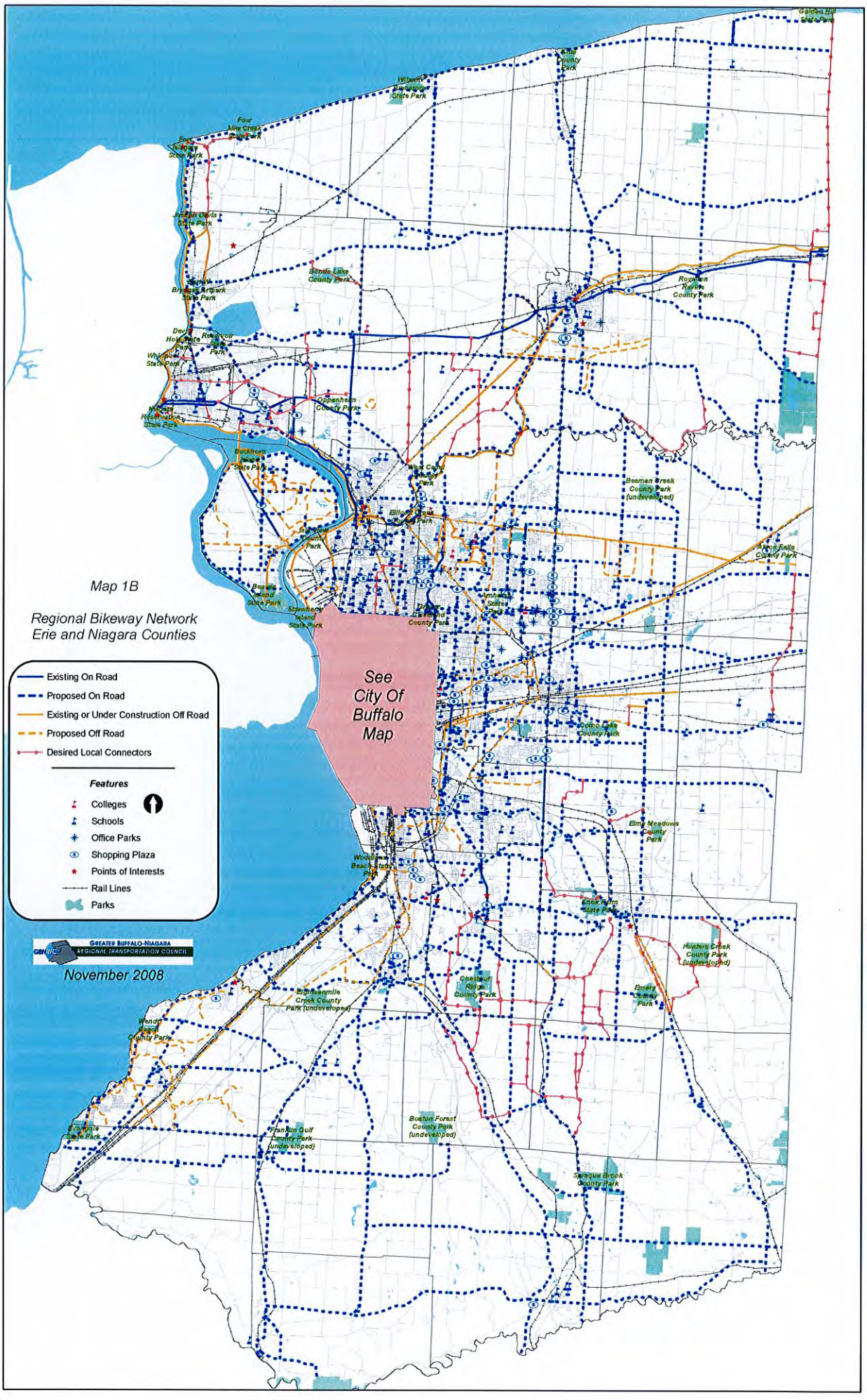
Appendix E

Excerpts / Recommendations from the Erie County Parks Master Plan and the 2008 bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Goals and Objectives


Map 1B
Regional Bikeway Network
Erie and Niagara Counties
Existing On Road
Proposed On Road
Existing or Under Construction Off Road
Proposed Off Road
Desired Local Connectors
Features
Colleges
Schools
Office Parks
Shopping Plaza
Points of Interests
Rail Lines
Parks
See City Of Buffalo Map
Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council
November 2008

2.0 REGIONAL WATERFRONT TRAIL SYSTEM

In contrast to the shorter trail loops between county parks and population centers described in Volume 3, the Regional Waterfront Trail System (RWTS) totals over 88 miles of pathways along Erie County's waterfronts. The RWTS in aggregate will create a facility that is clearly a regional asset connecting various points of county-wide significance. The purpose of this section is to provide the framework to facilitate the planning, funding, design and construction of a completed facility. Please refer to the RWTS Map Figure 5.2 for orientation relevant to this text.

The Erie County Regional Waterfront Trail system will be a continuous network of pathways connecting parks, waterfront areas, businesses and neighborhoods. The completed facility will provide for safe, identifiable and maintainable means of alternative transportation while providing recreational opportunities and improved access to the County's extensive waterfront. The Erie County Trail network is both a backbone for waterfront connectivity and the embodiment of a principle. The principle is the belief that open space and waterfront areas are public assets and that generous, green, easily accessible space at the water's edge is a necessary part of any waterfront development. This study reinforces the vision that someday the recreational trails will pass through all waterfront activity centers throughout the County. What has been successfully accomplished with the built Riverwalk along the County's northern waterfront must continue along the southern waterfront to complete the vision. A completed facility will provide pedestrians, bicyclists, joggers, skaters, strollers, skiers and others with an opportunity for improved quality of life, which will make for a better Erie County. To that end, this system is being coordinated with the Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) and its member agencies.

A completed Trail system would also advance the vision of making this network a state owned and operated facility. Being one of New York State's great waterfronts, worthy of a first-class amenity, the RWTS would allow for the completion of a continuous Trail System

from Fort Niagara on Lake Ontario to Evangola State Park in southern Erie County.

The impacts of a completed waterfront trail facility will be far reaching and justify the capital expense necessary for implementation of the RWTS. When completed, the facility will provide the following specific benefits to the residents of the County as well as the tourists who visit the area:

1. *Increased public access to the waterfront.*
2. *Unprecedented linkage of local attractions, most of which are currently seen as disconnected and isolated from each other and from adjacent land-uses.*
3. *Increased economic development by increasing traffic, and therefore the commercial potential of the waterfront. The RWTS is a low-tech, relatively inexpensive way to expand the use and profitability of the County and its waterfront.*
4. *Reduced traffic congestion by allowing and encouraging safe bicycle and pedestrian travel between neighborhoods, the waterfront and various attractions.*
5. *Increased recreational opportunities and green space for the region's residents, for whom the RWTS will be a symbol of their inclusion in waterfront life.*
6. *Increased integration of the County's recreational opportunities including the City's magnificent Olmsted Parks which will be linked to the waterfront and to each other through the greenway network.*
7. *Increased educational opportunities through elements such as the Industrial Heritage Trail on the Buffalo River, historic markers along the RWTS, linkage to the proposed Cobblestone Historic District in downtown Buffalo and through the impact of simply bringing the public to areas with such a rich and varied history.*
8. *Enhanced quality of life and health to the Great Lakes human and wildlife communities as waterfront access leads to public concern for the areas significant natural resources.*

9. *The RWTS could also function in many places as a buffer, protecting the County's waterways from structures that might otherwise be placed right at the water's edge.*

2.1 DESCRIPTION AND STATUS:

The entire Trail System will be comprised of a network of individual trail segments that are at various stages of development ranging from early conceptual planning to built and in-use. The following text will serve to describe each segment and its current status. The format places emphasis on the primary waterfront alignment beginning at the Erie Canal to the north and moving south along the Niagara River, the Inner Harbor and then Lake Erie. Each segment of this facility's "backbone" is identified with numbers 1 - 16. Letters are used to identify the significant connecting linkages from adjacent communities to the primary trail, again, beginning in the north and moving south. These linkages include:

A. *The Ellicott Creek Trail in the Town of Amherst*
B. *Two-Mile Creek Trail in the Town of Tonawanda*
C. *The Sherwood Greenway in the Town of Tonawanda*
D. *The Beaver Island Bike Path in the Town of Grand Island*
E. *The West River Trail in the Town of Grand Island*
F. *The Scajaquada Pathway in the City of Buffalo*
G. *The Industrial Heritage Trail in the City of Buffalo*
H. *The Buffalo River Greenway in the City of Buffalo*
I. *The Lake Road Trail in the Town of Evans*

2.2 PRIMARY WATERFRONT RECREATION TRAIL SEGMENTS

Again, we refer to exhibit Figure 5.2 for a coordinated orientation with the following text.

1. AMHERST CANALWAY TRAIL: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This segment, approximately 5.7 miles in length, is situated along the south edge of Tonawanda Creek and the Erie Canal in the Town of Amherst. Built in two phases, one in 1980 and the other in 1984, the trail begins at the Amherst Museum at New Road and currently ends at Sweet Home Road. It consists of both off-road and limited on-road segments. The Town of Amherst maintains the trail. Please note the NY State Canal Corporation will be constructing an off-road trail from the Amherst Museum northward along the Erie Canal all the way to the City of Lockport and beyond.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- THE FUTURE CANAL TRAIL TO LOCKPORT
- AMHERST VETERANS CANAL PARK
- AMHERST NATURE VIEW PARK

2. ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL (PHASE 3): PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED

Approximately 2.0 miles long, this segment is situated along the south side of Tonawanda Creek between Sweet Home Road and Niagara Falls Boulevard. Designed in concept only, this is the last remaining segment of the north end of the RWTS. It is anticipated that the Town of Amherst will maintain the trail once completed.

The key potential linkage of this segment includes:

- ROUTE 62, NIAGARA FALLS BOULEVARD

3. ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL (PHASE 2): PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This segment situated between Niagara Falls Boulevard and the City of Tonawanda/Town boundary line. Approximately 2.0 miles long, the project will go out for construction bids by the Fall of 2003. Once constructed, it will consist of approximately 1 mile off-road trail and 1 mile on-road.. It is anticipated that the Town of Amherst will maintain the east end of the trail and Erie County will maintain the west end.

The key potential linkage of this segment include:

- ROUTE 62, NIAGARA FALLS BOULEVARD
- ELLICOTT CREEK COUNTY PARK
- ELLICOTT CREEK TRAILWAY

4. ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL (PHASE 1): CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This 2.2 mile segment, meanders along the south bank of the Erie Canal/Tonawanda Creek between the City/Town of Tonawanda border and the Niagara River. At the confluence with the river, it connects with NYS Bike Route 5 (into Niagara County) and continues south along the Niagara River. This segment is situated in the City of Tonawanda and consists primarily of off-road segments. Noteworthy of this segment is the fact that it passes through the heart of an active commercial area jointly shared by the Cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. The majority of it has been operational since 2001. Maintenance of this segment is still under review..

The key linkages of this segment include:

- THE CITY OF TONAWANDA CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
- GATEWAY HARBOR PARK
- NYS BIKE ROUTE 5
- THE RIVERWALK

5. THE RIVERWALK: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

Probably the most heavily used segment of the entire network, the Riverwalk is approximately 13 miles in length and traverses the east shore of the Niagara River from the Erie Canal/Tonawanda Creek south to downtown Buffalo. This popular segment consists of a generous 13 foot wide pavement that is off-road the entire length with one exception along Niagara Street. This exception travels "on-road" or "on sidewalk" along the Ferry Street/Hampshire Avenue section of Niagara Street. This condition is less than ideal compared to the balance of the Riverwalk, however, site constraints including the Black Rock Channel and the I-190 make this area very difficult and cost prohibitive to develop an "off-road" trailway. To date, there are no proposed improvements for this stretch of the Riverwalk.

The most heavily used area of this segment is in the linear waterfront parks of Niawanda and Isle View in the City and Town of Tonawanda respectively. The use was so heavy in this area that certain segments had to be widened in recent years to accommodate the crowds. A 3 mile section just south of the South Grand Island Bridge detours away from the waters edge and runs off-road but parallel to River Road through the industrial area of the Town of Tonawanda. The northern most portion of the Buffalo section was constructed in 2000 and the balance of the Buffalo Riverwalk has been recently renovated. However, more work remains to bring certain areas of the older section up to acceptable design standards. The Erie County Parks Department maintains the Riverwalk.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- NIAWANDA PARK
- TWO MILE CREEK TRAIL
- VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK
- ISLE VIEW COUNTY PARK
- THE GRAND ISLAND BIKE PATH

- THE FUTURE CHERRY FARM PARK
- THE FUTURE SHERWOOD GREENWAY
- OLMSTED'S HISTORIC RIVERSIDE PARK
- ERIE COUNTY'S ONTARIO STREET BOAT LAUNCH
- ERIE COUNTY'S TOWPATH PARK
- THE SCAJAQUADA PATHWAY
- SQUAW ISLAND PARK
- BRODERICK PARK / BIRD ISLAND PIER
- THE PEACE BRIDGE AND CANADA'S TRAILWAY NETWORK
- OLMSTED'S HISTORIC FRONT PARK AND PARKWAY SYSTEM
- LASALLE PARK
- ERIE BASIN MARINA
- BUFFALO'S INNER HARBOR, NAVAL PARK AND GREENWAY PLAZA
- DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL AREAS
- THE PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TRAIL AND BUFFALO RIVER GREENWAY

6. THE OUTER HARBOR / ROUTE 5 TRAILWAY: PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This segment begins in downtown Buffalo where the Riverwalk ends at the foot of Main Street and the Buffalo River. The proposed length is approximately 3.2 miles and runs south to Gallagher Beach. In absence of an on-grade Route 5 bridge, the northern portion of this segment is the most challenging as the trail proposed runs "off-road" between the north edge of the River and industrial structures, with portions "on-road" across the Ohio Street bridge connecting back with Route 5/Furhman Boulevard along the lakeshore. At the intersection of Ohio Street and Furhman Boulevard, a future spur could split north up to the outer harbor area as the main trailway turns south to connect with the existing asphalt path at the south end of the Small

Boat Harbor. Maintenance of this segment is to be determined.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- BUFFALO'S INNER HARBOR, NAVAL PARK AND GREENWAY PLAZA
- DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL AREAS
- THE PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TRAIL AND BUFFALO RIVER GREENWAY
- THE FUTURE IMPROVED TIMES BEACH AREA
- THE OUTER HARBOR AREA (FESTIVAL GROUNDS, BUFFALO YACHT CLUB, ETC.)
- THE SMALL BOAT HARBOR
- TIFT FARM NATURE PRESERVE
- GALLAGHER BEACH

7. SMALL BOARD HARBOR/GALLAGHER BEACH: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This 0.8 mile segment runs along the west side of Furhman Boulevard around the south parking area for the Small Boat Harbor (0.5 miles) and directly adjacent to the Gallagher Beach area (0.3 miles). The 0.5 mile section is asphalt pavement and was constructed in 1996. The 0.3 mile section is made of some asphalt but is primarily made of wood along a formal boardwalk that defines the beach area. The Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority owns and maintains this segment.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- SMALL BOAT HARBOR
- GALLAGHER BEACH

8. TIFFT STREET CONNECTION: PLANNED AND FUNDED

The City of Buffalo recently won a Congestion, Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant for the design and construction of this 0.5 mile 10' wide off-road segment along the west edge of Furhman Boulevard from Gallagher Beach south to the existing pedestrian

bridge over the Union Ship Canal. Construction is expected to begin in the Spring of 2004. The City of Buffalo will own and maintain this segment.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- GALLAGHER BEACH
- TIFFT NATURE PRESERVE
- THE FUTURE UNION SHIP CANAL DEVELOPMENT
- THE TIFFT STREET PLAY FIELDS 0.4 MILES TO THE EAST

9. UNION SHIP CANAL TO MILESTRIP ROAD: PROPOSED/ NOT FUNDED

Included in this segment is the short section from the Union Ship Canal to Ridge Road which is currently defined as an on-road trail (running along the old abandoned portion of Furhman Boulevard). It needs to be planned and constructed properly as a truly off-road multi-use trail and should be included with the following defined section.

The State DOT is currently studying Route 5 between Ridge Road and Milestrip as part of the Southtowns Connector Study. The EIS for this study is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2003. Included in the design options is a proposed 2.8 mile off-road trail along the west edge of Route 5. It would connect to the existing off-road trail at Woodlawn Beach. There is no current funding available, however, once the planning is done and approved, the trail could be separated from the road project and funded and built prior to any future road improvements. Maintenance of this segment is to be determined.

The key linkages along this segment include:

- THE FUTURE UNION SHIP CANAL DEVELOPMENT
- THE FUTURE BETHLEHEM STEEL DEVELOPMENT
- WOODLAWN BEACH STATE PARK

10. WOODLAWN BEACH: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This 0.5 mile existing asphalt multi-use trail was in approximately 2000, as part of the Milestrip/Route 5 interchange improvements. It meanders along the west side of Route 5 directly adjacent to Woodlawn Beach State Park. Ownership and maintenance of this segment is still under review.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- WOODLAWN BEACH STATE PARK

11. HOOVER ROAD AREA: PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This approximately one mile segment, which runs from the Woodlawn trail at the north end of Hoover Road and Route 5 south to Old Big Tree Road and Route 5, has recently been funded. The Town of Hamburg was awarded an NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grant to design and build this combined off-road (approximately 2/3 of a mile) and on-road (approximately 1/3 of a mile) trail segment. Construction is anticipated to begin during the summer of 2004. The Town of Hamburg will be responsible to maintain this segment.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- WOODLAWN BEACH AREA
- HOOVER BEACH RESIDENTIAL/RESTAURANT AREA

12. OLD BIG TREE ROAD TO OLD LAKE SHORE ROAD: PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This 4.5 mile segment is currently being studied by the NYSDOT for reconstruction of Route 5 between Old Big Tree Road to the north and Old Lake Shore Road to the south. The study is further analyzing three design options, all of which include an on-road bicycle accommodation, either a 14' wide shared lane or a 5' wide dedicated bike lane. An off-road trail is not possible in this segment due to the proposed travel lane designs in relation to the width of the right-of-

way and the desires of the waterfront residents along the segment. Sidewalks, however, are proposed on both sides of the road. The project is funded for construction sometime in 2007 or 2008. It is anticipated that future maintenance of this segment will be performed by the State.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- HAMBURG TOWN PARK AND BEACH

13. OLD LAKE SHORE ROAD IN HAMBURG: NEITHER PROPOSED OR FUNDED

This approximately 3.1 mile segment is one of two segments along the Regional Waterfront Trail System that is not proposed. This segment is defined by Old Shore Road at Route 5 on the north end, along Old Lake Shore Road south to Eighteen Mile Creek, all within the Town of Hamburg. There have been preliminary discussions by the Town to plan closing this gap but to date there have been no immediate steps taken (such as grant applications). This will be the Town's next priority after segment #10, defined previously, is underway.

14. TOWN OF EVANS MULTI-USE PATH: PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED (EXCEPT FOR SEGMENT #15 BELOW)

The Town of Evans used grant money to study the development of a multi-use trail along Old Lake Shore Road from the north town line at Eighteen Mile Creek south to Evangola State Park. This 13.7 mile segment is planned to be mostly off-road, crossing at various points to either side, with a few minor sections on-road where space is limited. Only one segment, #15 defined below, is funded; however, the Town of Evans is aggressively pursuing funding sources to complete the entire length. Determination of who will eventually maintain the trail once completed has yet to be made.

Key linkages of this segment include:

- STURGEON POINT MARINA
- WENDT BEACH COUNTY PARK

- BENNETT BEACH COUNTY PARK
- EVANS TOWN PARK AND BEACH
- CAMP PIONEER
- LAKE ERIE BEACH PARK

15. TOWN OF EVANS MULTI-USE PATH: PROPOSED AND FUNDED (BETWEEN WENDT BEACH COUNTY PARK AND EVANS TOWN PARK)

The Town of Evans recently received a Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) grant for the design and construction of an approximately 2.8 mile trail along Old Lake Shore Road between Wendt Beach and Town Park. The trail will be off-road and meanders along either side of the road, depending on the right-of-way and field conditions. Design will be completed in 2003 and construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2004. Once completed, determination of who maintains the trail will need to be made.

Key linkages of this segment include:

- WENDT BEACH COUNTY PARK
- BENNETT BEACH COUNTY PARK
- EVANS TOWN PARK
- FUTURE LINKAGE TO THE VILLAGE OF ANGOLA

16. EVANGOLA STATE PARK: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

There is an existing 1.2 mile, 8' wide off-road multi-use asphalt trail in this segment of the Regional Waterfront Trail System. New York State owns and maintains this trail as it runs along Old Lake Shore Road through Evangola State Park. There are other trails in Evangola State Park that connect this trail to the beach.

17. EVANGOLA PARK TO THE CATTARAUGUS INDIAN RESERVATION: NEITHER PROPOSED OR FUNDED

This 1.1 mile segment along Old Lake Shore Road between Evangola State Park and the Cattarugus Indian Reservation, is the final gap in the entire Waterfront Regional Trail System. To date, there is no proposal to complete the link, however, there appears to be ample space to continue the off-road pathway from Evangola State Park along the west side of Old Lake Shore Road.

The following segments represented by letters and beginning in the north and moving south, identify the significant connecting linkage from the adjacent communities to the primary waterfront trail.

A. ELLICOTT CREEK TRAILWAY: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

Constructed mainly within the Town of Amherst, this very popular off-road multi-use trail link is approximately 5 miles long and runs from the Maple Road/North Forest trailhead, northwest along the meandering Ellicott Creek to Niagara Falls Boulevard across from Ellicott Creek Park. The Town of Amherst maintains this segment. An extension of this trail through Ellicott Creek Park in Tonawanda was completed in 2001. It terminates at the Erie Canal.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- AMHERST MEMORIAL HILL GROVE
- TOWN OF AMHERST MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE
- AMHERST PEPSI CENTER
- UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO, NORTH CAMPUS
- ROUTE 62, NIAGARA FALLS BOULEVARD
- ELLICOTT CREEK COUNTY PARK
- ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

B. TWO MILE CREEK GREENWAY: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This trail linkage, approximately 2 miles in length, is situated along Two Mile Creek through the Town and City of Tonawanda. The south end, approximately 0.5 miles is on-road, adjacent to the Town golf course, with the balance of the trail off-road, meandering along either side of the Creek northward to the Niagara River and the Riverwalk. This greenway is maintained by the Erie County Parks Department.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- SHERIDAN PARK/GOLF COURSE
- THE FUTURE SHERWOOD GREENWAY
- VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK
- ISLE VIEW COUNTY PARK AND RIVERWALK
- NIAWANDA PARK

C. SHERWOOD GREENWAY: PLANNED AND FUNDED

This trailway linkage is planned as an approximately 1.8 mile off-road multi-use recreational pathway that extends the Two Mile Creek Greenway to the Riverwalk at Sheridan Drive. This segment is entirely in the Town of Tonawanda aligned through private property (Praxair, Inc.) for the first 1/5 and within the south right-of-ways of Woodward Avenue West and Sheridan Drive the remaining 4/5th's. New York State recently announced a $2.1 million dollar grant for design and construction of this pathway, expected to be completed by 2005. Once completed it will be owned and maintained by the Town of Tonawanda.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- SHERIDAN PARK/GOLF COURSE
- TWO MILE CREEK GREENWAY
- THE RIVERWALK

D. BEAVER ISLAND BIKE PATH: CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This off-road segment runs from the South Grand Island Bridge along South Parkway to Beaver Island State Park. The bike path is approximately 3.5 miles in length. It runs though a residential area of the island providing easy access to Beaver Island State Park. The path connects Grand Island and its parks to the Niagara Riverwalk in the Town of Tonawanda.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- THE RIVERWALK
- I-190
- BEAVER ISLAND STATE PARK

E. WEST RIVER TRAIL: PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED

This segment runs approximately 9 miles along the Niagara River from the existing trail at Beaver Island State Park to Buckhorn Island State Park. The proposed trail is off road between West River Parkway and the River. However, a couple of ideas are being considered, including closing one lane of the Parkway to traffic, but keeping it green for pedestrians.

Reference to Grand Island Boulevard should also be made. The GBNRTC is proposing more of a direct bicycle route through Grand Island along the Boulevard. Currently, the concept is proposed, but not funded.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- BEAVER ISLAND STATE PARK
- NIKE BASE PARK
- BUCKHORN ISLAND STATE PARK

F. SCAJAQUADA PATHWAY (PHASES I AND II): CONSTRUCTED / IN USE

This 2.1 mile trail linkage connects Delaware Park with Niagara Street just short of the existing Riverwalk. The 10' wide asphalt off-road pathway meanders along the north bank of the Scajaquada Creek intersected by two at grade crossings on Grant and Niagara Streets. The initial phase was built in 1992 and the second phase was built in 1999. The City of Buffalo Department of Public Works, Parks and Streets maintains this linkage.

I. SCAJAQUADA PATHWAY (PHASE III): PROPOSED AND FUNDED

This final phase of the Scajaquada Pathway will complete the missing section for a continuous link to the Niagara Riverwalk. The pathway alignment begins west of Niagara Street, crosses Scajaquada Creek and runs north along the east side of the I-190 and into the US Army Corps parking area where it meets the Riverwalk. The pathway is presently in final design and construction is expected to being in the summer of 2003. The City will also maintain this final segment.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- DELAWARE PARK AND THE SURROUNDING CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS
- BUFFALO STATE COLLEGE
- GRANT/AMHERST COMMUNITY
- RIVERWALK

G. INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE TRAIL: PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED

This trail linkage is unique in that it is a proposed tour route for pedestrian, bicyclist and motorists along the City streets and sidewalks in and around the mouth of the Buffalo River. The impetus behind this trail is the display and interpretation of the many existing grain elevators on Kelly Island and along South Park Avenue, Ohio Street, Smith Street and St. Clair Street. The proposed plan was developed in 1996 by the Industrial Heritage Committee, Inc., who are continually

looking for potential funding sources. A small section is being funded and constructed as part of the Inner Harbor Project.

The key linkages along this segment includes:

- THE BUFFALO INNER HARBOR
- DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL AREAS
- THE BUFFALO RIVER GREENWAY

H. BUFFALO RIVER GREENWAY: PROPOSED / NOT FUNDED

The City of Buffalo (via the Buffalo Greenways Implementation Plan) and the Friends of the Buffalo Niagara Rivers (via the Buffalo River Greenway Plan) have completed the needed planning efforts. The trail meanders along both sides of the River, along the banks, adjacent streets and neighborhoods and through the local parks. Cazenovia Creek is also included in this greenway trail making this segment a true greenway network. The intent is that as new development occurs in the area, the trail be included and be built in phases. Simultaneous to these efforts, the Friends are continually looking for funding sources.

The key linkages of this segment include:

- CONWAY PARK
- SMITH STREET PARK
- BAILEY AVENUE PARK
- SENECA BLUFFS PARK
- MONGOVAN PARK
- STACHOWSKI/HOUGHTON PARK
- CAZENOVIA PARK
- HILLERY AND BUTLER PARKS

I. TOWN OF EVANS BIKE PATH: PLANNED/ NOT FUNDED

This 1.3 mile stretch of pathway is planned to connect the proposed bike path along Old Lake Shore Road to the Village of Angola. The off-road pathway would run along the north side of Lake Avenue. Once completed it will be owned and maintained by the Town of Evans.

2.3 CONCLUSION

"Strong consideration should be given to making the system a NY State owned and operated facility."

In all, the RWTS is comprised of 88 miles of trails, of which 36 miles are existing (41%) and 52 miles have yet to be built. Through review of the existing and proposed trail segments that comprise the Regional Waterfront Trail System, the following conclusions and recommendations are made to advance Erie County's planning of the waterfront as a regional asset:

- *It is clear there is a strong desire by most waterfront municipalities to improve their existing, or plan, design and build new linkages to create a continuous waterfront trail system. An organized process and program needs to be developed and followed for optimum coordination between these municipalities and the County to facilitate completion of the trail.*

- *One such avenue is coordination with the GBNRTC Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee and the NYSDOT in development of the Shoreline Trail, which extends from Fort Niagara in Niagara County on Lake Ontario, south to Evangola State Park. There is overlap between Erie County's Regional Waterfront Trail System, the Shoreline Trail and NY State's Seaway Trail. Not to be overlooked, and equally important is the necessary coordination with the Buffalo Greenway Implementation Plan.*

- *As part of the coordination efforts, the various unbuilt segments of the Waterfront Trail need to be evaluated in a forum that will help set the regional priorities. This*

will serve to focus energy and resources on targeting specific segments for funding sources.

- *The two segments with no proposals advanced (#13 in the Town of Hamburg and #17 in the Town of Brant) should move into a planning cycle to prompt dialogue at a regional level on how and when it is best to complete the missing segments.*

- *In order to efficiently advance a completed Waterfront Trail System, a plan should be developed to educate the public about trail systems, with emphasis on the improved quality of life issues and answers to the most common concerns raised by the public. An education program geared for disseminating factual information would off-set the misinformation being commonly held, particularly regarding safety, security and property value concerns.*
- *To prepare for a public awareness process, case study research and documentation should be performed. This effort would promote factual and understandable information to the public in a consistent manner throughout the County, regardless of what municipality a trail is proposed in. Issues that need to be addressed include, but are not limited to: maintenance responsibilities/ procedures, liability concerns, property value impacts, safety/ security issues, etc.*

- *In order to promote trail system expansion to the public, consistent supervision and proper maintenance of the existing waterfront trails is if utmost importance. For example, there is a marked difference between the Ellicott Creek Trail and the Scajaquada Pathway and how each is managed. Inter-municipal agreements and procedures need to be developed and followed in order to have a consistent Regional Waterfront Trail System.*

- *Along a similar vein, it is recommended that design standards be developed and incorporated into the Trail System. A design vocabulary of consistent or at least compatible site furnishings, signage, historic markers, pavement markings, interpretation, trailheads, etc.*

should be established sooner rather than later to allow the next segments to set the stage with the agreed upon standards.

- *Where possible, through the greenspaces adjacent to the system, develop secondary connector trails to the primary Waterfront Trail. For example, new trails in Evangola State Park would connect the beach to the Waterfront Trail.*

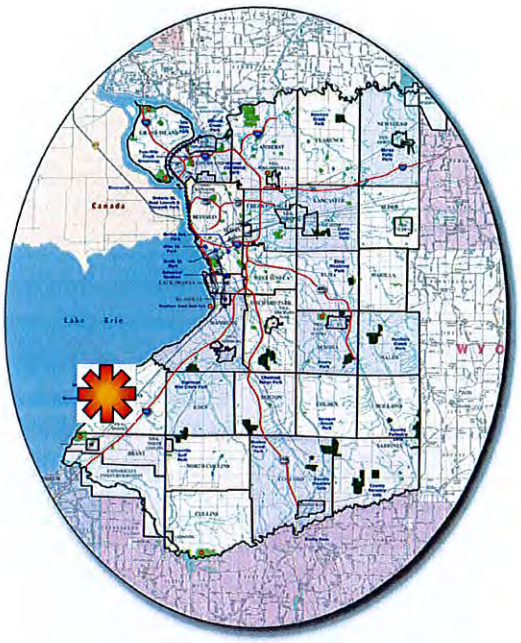
- *Finally, once the Regional Waterfront Trail System is completed, **strong consideration should be given to making the system a NY State owned and operated facility.** Erie County's trail success could be coupled with a Niagara County trail system to combine for a true regional waterfront asset. Imagine a continuous State Park Trail System beginning at Fort Niagara to the north and connected some 80 miles later to Evangola State Park to the south. State highlights along the way would include the Niagara Reservation, Beaver Island State Park, the proposed Buffalo Outer Harbor State Park and Woodlawn Beach State Park. Our beautiful State shoreline could then easily compliment that of our neighbors across the water in Ontario, Canada.*

Regional Waterfront Trail System

Figure 2-1

PARSONS

WENDEL DUCHSCHERER



3.0 WATERFRONT PARKS

3.1 BENNETT PARK

DESCRIPTION

Bennett Beach is a special place along the eastern shoreline of Lake Erie, having one of the last remaining natural sand beaches and dunes. This unique lakefront park is approximately 50 acres in size and is located in the Town of Evans. Old Lakeshore Road splits the park into two halves, with the western half as "beach-related" open space and the remainder as an undeveloped natural wooded area. The park is also bisected from the northwest to the southeast by Big Sister Creek, which is an attractive fishing spot. A pedestrian bridge provides access from an existing parking area over to the beach. In general, the park is very flat, except for the large sand dunes and an 8' high berm north of the bridge along the Creek.

Limited facilities exist at Bennett Beach, including a comfort station located at the parking area. The former Bennett Mansion was removed from the park a few years ago. Also, on the beach are old concrete foundation remains, approximately 30' long, which act as a break wall against erosion (however, it may inhibit natural dune processes). The old Angola Water Treatment Facility sits abandoned just to the south of the Bennett Beach property.

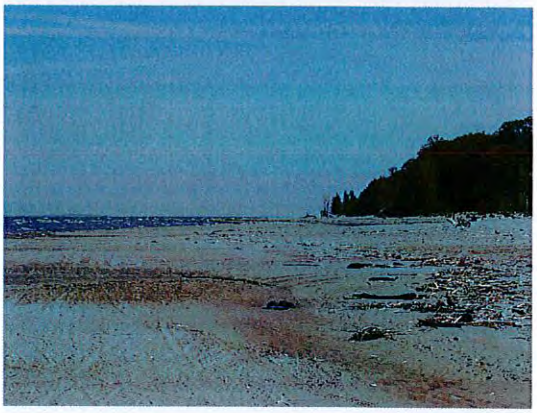
PARK AND AREA HISTORY

Bennett Beach sits on the site of the old Bennett Estate. The property was originally acquired by the City of Buffalo, and more recently was acquired by Erie County. While most beaches along the eastern Lake Erie shoreline have either been destroyed, altered or are under private ownership, Bennett Beach is one of the very few publicly held waterfront parks in this part of the County. Bennett Beach still retains some of the historic landscape features that once were so common along the Lakeshore, including a natural sand beach and impressive sand dunes. In addition, there are back-dune wetlands remaining and the natural dynamics of Big Sister Creek's outlet into the Lake.

EXISTING PARK FEATURES AND FACILITIES

- *Restroom structure*
- *Pedestrian bridge*
- *Picnic area*
- *Natural sand beach and dunes*
- *Fishing access*

It has been said that an "Old Growth" forest, with trees between 200 years and 500 years old, exists on the property immediately adjacent to the park to the north.



LOCAL CONTEXT

Bennett Beach is located approximately 23 miles south of downtown Buffalo, at the intersection of Old Lakeshore Road and Bennett Road. The beach-front property to both the north and south of Bennett Beach is primarily single family residential, with most housing options historically "summer" or "seasonal" cottages owned by people in the greater Buffalo area. Areas to the east of the park are generally low density, rural residential developments. Traveling south from Bennett Beach is the thickly settled hamlet of Lake Erie Beach (Evans), a popular summer resort area with a few seasonal commercial establishments. Recent years have seen more year round residents, as residential Lakefront property has become a very "hot" commodity. The lakefront areas to the north of Bennett Beach along Old Lakeshore Road are traditionally comprised of larger estates, many dating back to the early 1900s.

RECREATIONAL CONTEXT

Bennett Beach is a passive-oriented park, offering no structured playing fields or courts.

Wendt Beach is another County-owned lakefront park situated only one mile to the north of Bennett Beach. However, Wendt Beach is of a much different character, with the distinct and historic mansion setting, stony beach (non-sand), and the expansive soccer fields.

CURRENT ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

- *Bennett Beach does not appear to be maximizing its potential.*
- *The parking lot is poorly defined and in poor condition*
- *The existing restroom structure is inadequate and "out of character" for this beautiful lakefront setting*
- *The Old Concrete foundation on the beach is both an eyesore and a potential safety hazard in the future.*
- *The walk from the parking area to the beach is difficult on the ill-defined pathway.*

NEARBY PARKS WITH UNIQUE FEATURES

(WITHIN A 5-MILE RADIUS)

Town of Evans:

- Ayer-Stevenson Wildlife Sanctuary
  A 20-acre wildlife sanctuary
- Evans Town Park
  A resident-only beach park
- Lake Erie Beach Park
- Sturgeon Point Marina
  Town owned and operated marina

Village of Angola:

- Point Breeze Campground
  A private marina with camp sites
- Angola Rollercade

Town of Hanover:

- Evangola State Park
  A 733-acre state park with beach access

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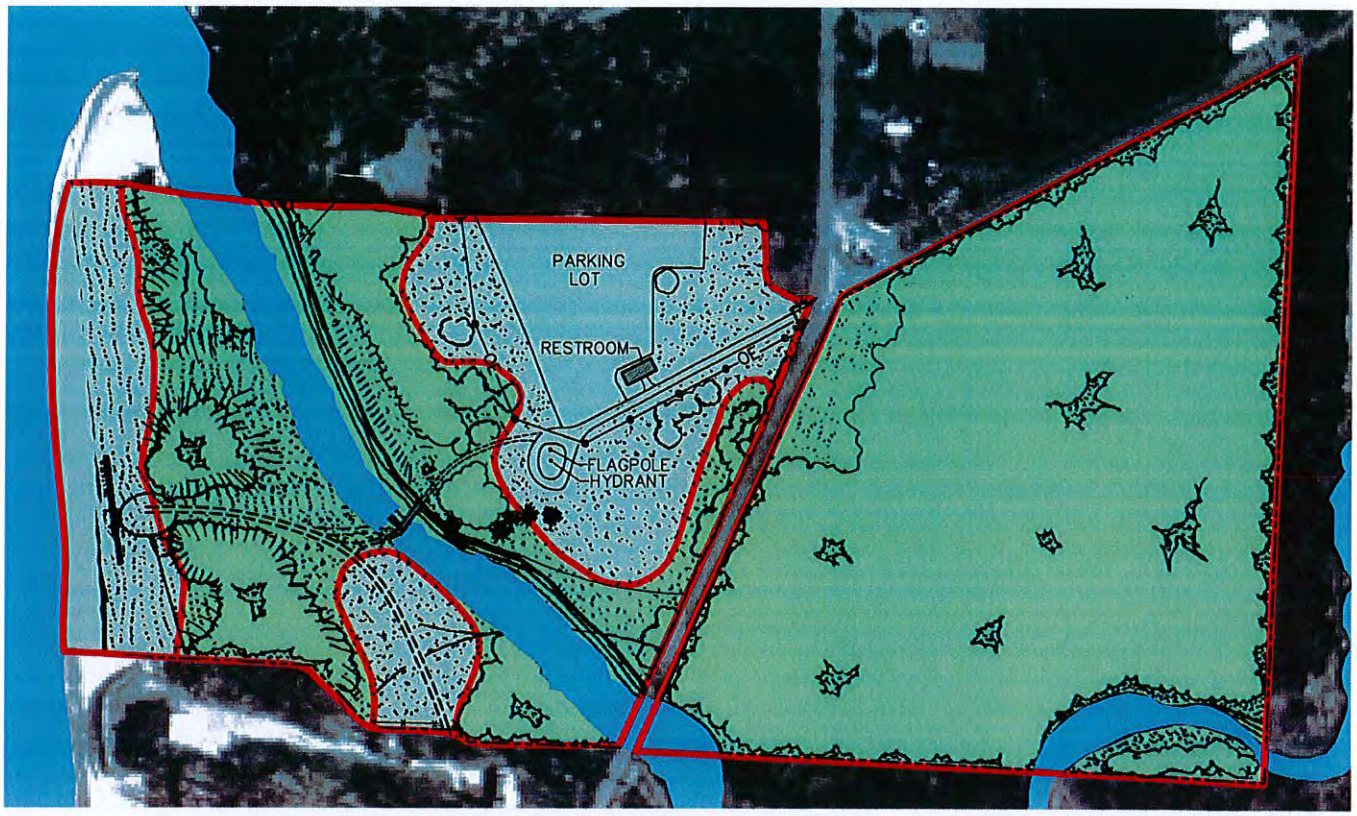


Legend

- Nature Reserve Zone
- Recreation Zone
- Heritage Zone
- Service Zone
- Zone Boundary

Nature Reserve Zones

Includes significant natural features or areas that require management to ensure the long-term protection of the natural heritage, i.e. woodlands, wetlands, natural open space areas (meadows), waterways, ravines, gorges and escarpment faces, steep slopes, etc.

Recreation Zones

(Active and Passive)

Includes the 'maintained' landscape areas of the parks in which facilities development is permitted to support low to moderate intensity recreation activities, i.e. sports fields, specialized activities, picnic areas, campgrounds, parking lots, etc.

Heritage Zones

Includes areas of significant cultural heritage or archaeological features that require management to ensure the preservation of these important heritage assets.

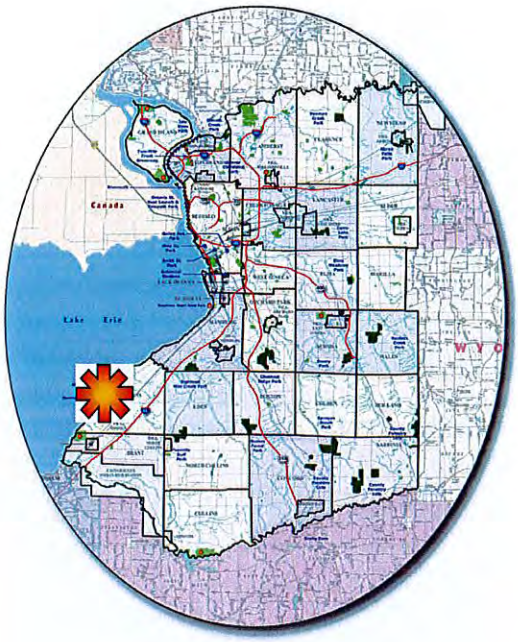
Service Zones

Includes maintenance and service areas for the developed parks, as well as access points or staging areas within the Conservation Parks (e.g. trailheads and parking lots) where minimal use facilities are needed to support allowable uses within the Nature Reserve Zone.

North

Bennett Beach Park

MANAGEMENT ZONES



3.4 WENDT BEACH PARK

DESCRIPTION

Wendt Beach is a 178-acre, multi-purpose park with both beach-related, passive activities and active recreational offerings. The featured attractions at the park are the historic Wendt Mansion, the stony beach (non sand) and vegetated bluff and the numerous soccer fields. The park has two distinct characters; one is the expanse of mowed soccer fields and open lawns you see upon entering at the western edge of the park; the other is the more natural "heritage" setting near the lake, with the historic mansion, outbuildings, natural shoreline and large wooded areas. Both appear to serve different user types and activities. A park roadway bisects the park through the center from east to west.

Just inland from the south end of the beach the park includes a forested wetland area with protected plant species such as Trillium. Roughly half the park is forested, mostly on the south side. A bluff approximately 15 feet high runs the entire inland edge of the beach

PARK AND AREA HISTORY

The Wendt beach property has a long and storied history. The Park sits on the old estate of Henry W. Wendt, Jr., which the family later renamed "The Ridgewood." The existing historic Wendt Mansion, with outbuildings and old stable structure, is reminiscent of an earlier era of influence, when the wealthy families of Buffalo recreated along the lakeshore during the summer months. The structure was built in the 1800s along the top of the dune and later moved to its current location. The interior of the main house is a remembrance of beautiful hardwood floors, a spiral staircase and railings of dark wood, window seats and bay windows, many of which overlook the lake and beach areas.

Some of the outbuildings also were part of the earlier estate. This includes the log cabin (once a playhouse and guest house), a caretaker's cottage, a garage with chauffeur's quarters, horse stables (now public restrooms), and the old pump house, where water brought in from the Lake was stored in a large tank and pumped through pipes to outside spigots for watering the gardens.

EXISTING PARK FEATURES AND FACILITIES

Wendt Beach is a unique park within the Erie County system. It is on the Lake, and yet is not a natural sand beach. Given its size, Wendt beach has become more of a multi-purpose recreation area, with its picnic areas, and numerous soccer fields. Specific features include:

- *Stony surfaced swimming beach.*
- *Historic Wendt Mansion*
- *Superintendent's Residence*
- *Office*
- *Maintenance garage*
- *Storage Building*
- *Concession Building*
- *Life Guard Cabin (Old Log Cabin)*
- *Bath House / restrooms (Old Horse Stables)*
- *Pump House*
- *Play equipment*
- *Baseball diamond*
- *Pedestrian bridge between the mansion and lifeguard station*

LOCAL CONTEXT

Located in the Town of Evans approximately 20 miles south of Downtown Buffalo, Wendt beach is less than one mile north of Bennett Beach and is accessible via Old Lakeshore Road. The Wendt Beach property marks a transition point along Old Lakeshore Road where the larger properties and estates to the north towards Sturgeon Point and beyond transitions to the smaller seasonal "cottage" properties to the south towards the center of Evans and hamlet of Lake Erie Beach. In general, most of the area is rural in character.

RECREATIONAL CONTEXT

Wendt Beach has a distinct and historic mansion setting, which overlooks a stony beach (non-sand). One must drive through a wide-open field area that is used for the local soccer clubs.

Bennett Beach Park is another County-owned passive-oriented park, offering no structured playing fields or courts one mile to the south of Wendt Beach.

CURRENT ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

- *The Mansion is in need of extensive updating and repair if it is to be fully useable and "marketable."*
- *The maintenance facility location detracts from the "Heritage" setting around the mansion.*
- *There is no appropriate "gateway" feature for such a beautiful park setting.*
- *The entrance to the park (through the mowed athletic fields) gives no idea that this is actually a "beach" park.*
- *The parking lot near the beach is in very poor condition*
- *The newer concession building is out of character from the beautiful beach and heritage setting.*

MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Restore the historic Wendt Mansion. This is a very important "heritage" area within the County parks System. Identify potential adaptive re-use that compliments the park uses.*
  - Secure National Register of Historic Places status for the house and setting.
  - Potential uses include and Inn/Bed & Breakfast similar to the Glen-Iris Inn at Letchworth State Park; a wedding/ conference facility, restaurant or tea room, meeting

NEARBY PARKS WITH UNIQUE FEATURES

(WITHIN A 5-MILE RADIUS)

Town of Evans:

- Ayer-Stevenson Wildlife Sanctuary
  A 20-acre wildlife sanctuary
- Evans Town Park
  A resident-only beach park
- Lake Erie Beach Park
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  A private marina with camp sites
- Angola Rollercade

Town of Hanover:

- Evangola State Park
  A 733-acre state park with beach access

facility, etc;

- Consider a public/private partnership when redeveloping this historic structure.
- Develop / restore a gracious landscape setting around the historic mansion with formal lawn, gardens, strolling paths, tree lined entrance road;
- Similar to the Emery Inn, the entire structure should be decorated with "period" furnishings. This authentic restoration could provide a "museum-like" setting, with photos and documents of the park's history, the earlier history of the Wendt Homestead and Farm, etc. A small gift shop could be provided to sell local park-related items, historical maps, etc.

· *Relocate maintenance facility away from historic mansion and to a more inconspicuous spot adjacent to the superintendent's house (off the back of the parking lot);*

· *Reorganize roadway and pedestrian zones to separate future "mansion" functions from public beach area;*

· *Horses have always played a big role in the history of the Wendt Estate, and the plan recommends restoring / rehabilitating the old horse stables (current concessions) into a historically accurate horse stables again which "looks" and "feels" like it is once again a part of the Mansion setting.*

- In addition, horse trails should be developed throughout the natural wooded areas.
- Overnight accommodations at the Mansion would make Wendt a potential magnet for equestrian related tourists.

· *In addition to the horse stables, retain and restore other minor structures related historically to the main house, i.e. pump house, etc.*

· *Maintain the location of the Log Cabin /Lifeguard station. This facility could be renovated for a more maximized use to include a meeting room (for environmental and historic related discussions, etc.)*

· *Develop west side of park as passive beach zone, i.e. picnicking, beachcombing. Introduce small parking/ picnic areas south of the mansion along the driveway, with turn-around loop; relocate current boat storage to a more inconspicuous location, still allowing for easy access to the beach.*

- *Introduce Volleyball Courts (sand and grass) and other beach-related activites into the overall recreational mix at Wendt Beach*

- *Upgrade the east side of Wendt Park to include more formalized, "structured" parking opportunities (stone or asphalt lots) and a support facility (i.e. permanent restrooms, concessions) for the very large soccer crowds.*
- *Enhance park entrance and identity at Old Lakeshore Road, with entrance feature. Provide a distinct transition zone between the two park sections and distinctive entrance to the heritage area of the site, i.e. possibly establish a secondary entrance feature past the soccer fields which would lead people towards the historic mansion and lake;*
- *Undertake dune restoration; although Wendt Beach is actually a very rocky beach, it still has a use and charm that is attractive to the masses.*
- *Enhance the opportunities for winter activities at Wendt beach, including the perfect setting for numerous cross-country ski trails, etc.*
- *Provide new interpretive signage and informational kiosks that tie the park better "into the mix" with other local cultural and historical attractions.*
    - *Provide an interpretive "story-line" for the Park's local history, i.e. How and when the property was first developed?; When was the area first settled?; What's the history behind the Wendt mansion and the farm structures? Did Lakeshore Road once pass through the site near the dune area?; Was there a polo field on the site?; What were some significant historic happenings in the area, or in the park?; etc.*
- *Consider a "Corporate Sponsorship" program which encourages local businesses from getting more involved with the Park, including sponsoring certain events, restoring older facilities and park features, setting up an interpretive signage program, etc.*
- *Reduce lawn mowing to provide more natural setting in non-use, little-trafficked areas, and help to shift park maintenance towards other tasks.*
- *Provide new native tree plantings throughout the park, particularly along the parking area and along Old Lakeshore Road.*
- *Provide bicycle access through the site as part of the overall lakefront recreational trail system.*

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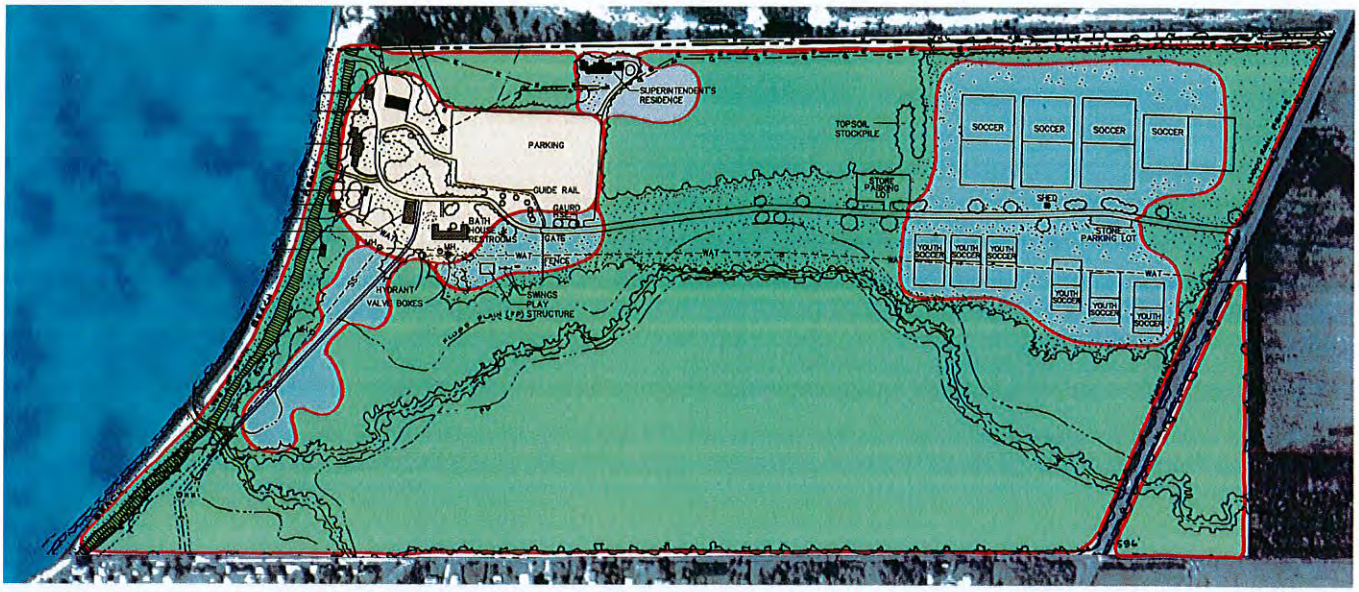

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North

Wendt Beach Park
MANAGEMENT ZONES

5.0 WATERFRONT STRATEGY

THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO HAVE A WATERFRONT TRAIL SYSTEM THAT LINKS LOCAL, COUNTY AND STATE PARKS TOGETHER FROM EVANGOLA STATE PARK AT THE SOUTHERN END OF ERIE COUNTY TO OLD FORT NIAGARA STATE PARK AT THE NORTHERN END OF NIAGARA COUNTY.

View of Lake Erie shoreline from bluff at Wendt Beach

Eighteen Mile Creek

5.1 COUNTY'S ROLE ON THE WATERFRONT

5.1.1 GENERAL

The potential for waterfront development continues to be the source of much attention and discussion within Western New York. Erie County has one of the most beautiful and historically significant waterfronts in all of the United States, including Lake Erie, the Niagara and Buffalo Rivers, Cattaraugus and Eighteen Mile Creeks and the Erie Canal, and yet much of the prime waterfront properties remain undeveloped or underutilized. Although economic development has not been as quick to start here as in other parts of the country, the County has become increasingly aware of the potential impact that a vibrant and successful waterfront will have on the future quality of life for residents and the potential lure it could have for tourists and visitors. However, given the large expense of maintaining waterfront properties, and given the current or projected fiscal difficulties facing many towns, cities and counties across the state, Erie County cannot be expected to handle all of this waterfront responsibility themselves. Partnerships for both funding and stewardship of waterfront parks and trails will need to be formed with local municipalities, and a strong pitch will need to be made to the State of New York to maximize the potential of our significant regional waterfront assets.

- *Given its regional significance, emphasis should be placed on strengthening partnerships between local municipalities and Erie County, and on encouraging more involvement from the State and Federal levels. Few counties and regions of the country have a linear trail system such as the Riverwalk or Canalway trail, and this should be seen as a wise investment and long-term stewardship effort by the State of New York, to compliment its many other area parks, recreation and historic preservation attractions.*

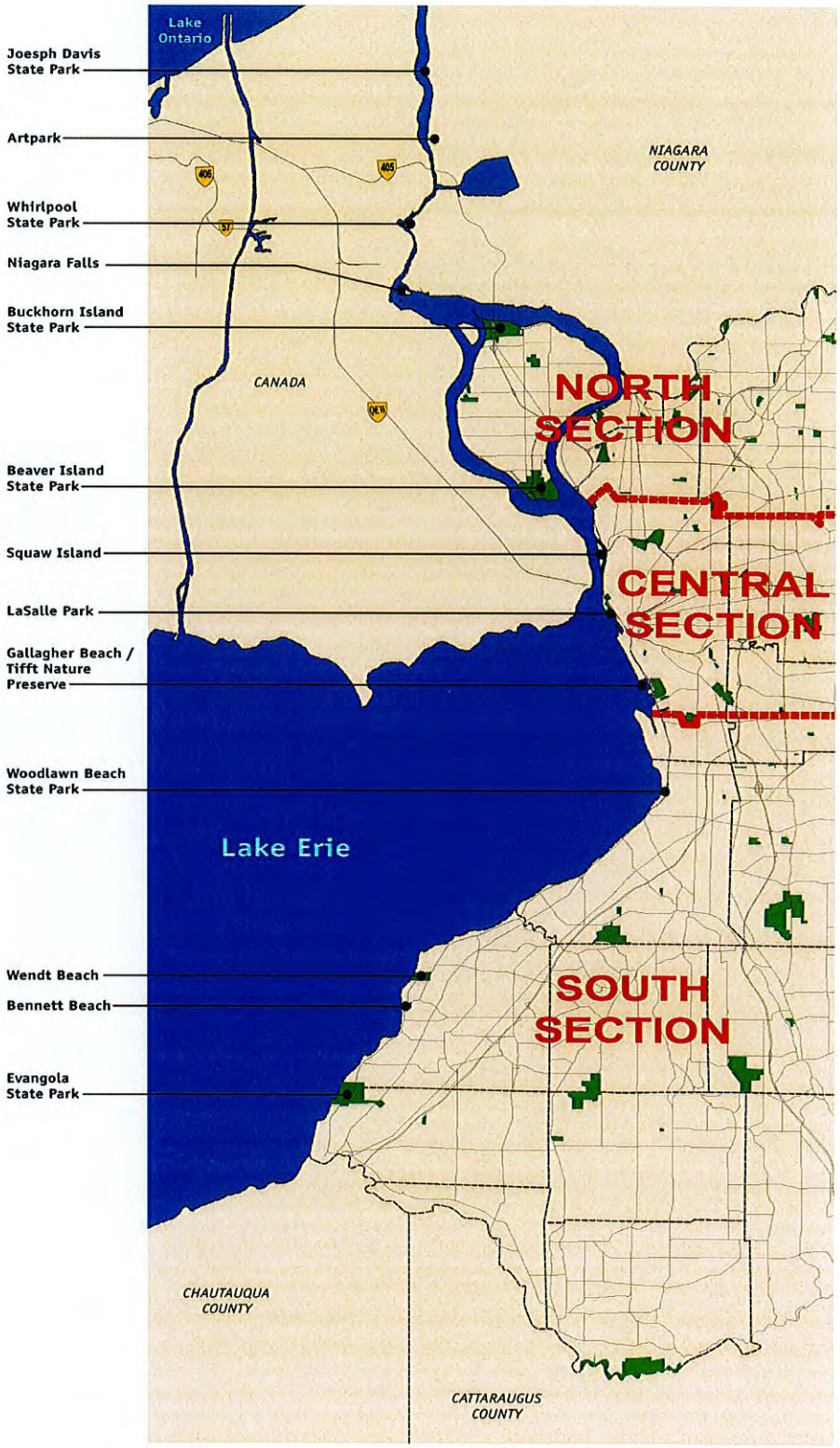
- *Erie County should partner with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation*

(NYSOPRHP) and the Niagara Parks Commission (Ontario) to enhance its role in the Eco-Tourism industry. This would elevate the county's visibility within the Niagara Region as a visitor destination for fishing, bird-watching, hiking, nature sight-seeing, water sports, etc.

5.1.2 NORTH SECTION

North of the City of Buffalo, Erie County has major involvement and investment in the Riverwalk waterfront trail system, which serves as the overall recreational "spine" linking numerous waterfront parks, including local, county and state facilities. The county also owns and operates Ellicott Creek Park along the Erie Canal, classified as a *"Heritage Park,"* and Isle View Park along the Niagara River.

- *The County should continue to promote regional trail efforts, while looking to partner with the State of New York for future trail enhancements, maintenance and marketing. This linear park and trail is certainly a regional asset that deserves attention and support at the highest levels of government. Given its significance, the county should look to develop partnering roles for the local communities, as*



well as with the State. Future emphasis should be placed on trail linkages to Niagara Falls.

- *The proposed Canalway Trail system, which includes some existing county trail sections, is an integral part of the Erie Canal "National Heritage" corridor and thus should be considered for federal involvement. A section of the trail will pass directly through the county's Ellicott Creek Park, and will link directly to the Riverwalk system. Erie County should remain a partner with Niagara County, State of New York and National Park Service (Federal Government) for all future planning efforts.*

- *In addition to Isle View Park, the Cherry Farm Park is another significant property that deserves attention from both the county and state levels of government. This reclaimed Brownfields property could be seen as a national model for land reclamation, shoreline/habitat restoration and waterfront recreation.*

- *The County should revisit portions of the existing Riverwalk alignment due to the fact that some stretches of the trail do not have much relationship to the water and travel along some very busy roadways* (Along River Road from the Grand Island Bridge to Sheridan Drive). *When constructed in the late 1970s, there were many impediments to linking the Riverwalk directly to the River due to active industries and land uses, however the past 20 years have brought with it many changes in land uses along this section of the waterfront and opportunities now exist in some areas for realignment and making a stronger and more aesthetically pleasing connection between the Riverwalk and the River.*

5.1.3 CENTRAL SECTION *(CITY OF BUFFALO)*

Erie County's role in the central urban waterfront has been steadily increasing over the past few years. The County's Riverwalk extends from the Tonawandas into the City of Buffalo and meanders its way

southward to the Erie Basin Marina and Erie Canal Harbor site. Numerous smaller park sites are linked by the Riverwalk, including two historic Olmsted Parks. Currently the County operates and maintains Tow-Path Park and Ontario Street Boat Launch, and agreement for operation are pending between the City and County for the new Squaw Island Park and existing Broderick Park – Underground Railroad Freedom Memorial. Two major waterfront development areas that warrant extensive county and state involvement are at the Inner Harbor (Erie Canal Harbor) and Outer Harbor, recently highlighted by the exciting news of a new 80-acre State Park at Gallagher Beach and the Small Boat Harbor.

- *Similar to the Northern section mentioned above, the County should also revisit much of the existing Riverwalk alignment and aesthetics along the City's urban waterfront due to the fact that some stretches of the trail travel behind buildings, do not have any relationship to the water and are considered isolated and dangerous. When constructed in the late 1970s, there were many impediments to linking the Riverwalk directly to the River due to active businesses and certain private property obstacles, however the past 20 years have brought with it many changes in land uses along the waterfront and opportunities now exist in some areas for realignment and making a stronger and more aesthetically pleasing connection between the Riverwalk and the River.*

- *The County should continue to extend its hand to the future operations and maintenance of the nationally significant Olmsted Park System, with two properties along the waterfront* (Riverside and Front Parks), *consistent with the recommendations outlined in the study recently completed by the Central Park Conservancy.*

- *Similar to the Cherry farm property in Tonawanda, the Squaw Island Park is a notable reclamation of a former Brownfields site, with great potential for shoreline restoration and habitat enhancement. The County's pending take over at this new park property will elevate*

the importance of this site to a regional level.

- *Broderick Park is a small but extremely important site for Western New York. It is home to the Underground Railroad Freedom Memorial and deserves County, State and Federal attention and future involvement. Earlier investment by the City of Buffalo has established the framework for the memorial, however a lack of continued funding has halted any further phases of development of the site. Agreements are pending for the County to assume a much needed operations and maintenance role at Broderick Park.*

- *One major waterfront park site that warrants a larger county role is at LaSalle Park. This 77-acre park sits at one of the most beautiful locations along the Erie county waterfront, and is home to many events, concerts and activities that serve a larger regional audience. A master plan has been established for LaSalle Park and early phases of construction have been completed. However, funding has now diminished and attention at higher levels of government are needed to allow this significant park maximize its full potential. The Riverwalk also travels through LaSalle Park and is in need of significant upgrades and repairs.*

- *The County should continue its partnership role at the Erie Canal Harbor site, and work closely with the City of Buffalo and State of New York to provide an urban waterfront center that is vibrant and successful for years to come.*

- *The Outer Harbor area is Buffalo and Erie County's greatest potential for economic rebirth and waterfront redevelopment. The County should continue to support the momentum currently underway with the establishment of Buffalo's first State Park. Further county involvement and partnership with the State of New York could expand upon its recent successes and extend the State Park holdings to Tifft Nature Preserve and northwards towards Downtown Buffalo with a*

linear waterfront park and trail system and to Times Beach Nature Preserve. Other notable future developments in the Outer Harbor area could include a National Industrial Heritage Corridor along the Buffalo River and a greenway connection from the Lake into Olmsted's South Park and the County-owned Botanical Gardens.

5.1.4 SOUTHERN SECTION

South of the Outer Harbor and City of Buffalo limits, Erie County has been involved in the advancement of a lakefront recreational trail that would link the Riverwalk and Outer Harbor to points south and eventually to Evangola State Park. Emphasis should be placed on encouraging greater State of New York involvement and investment in this regional trail system, which serves as the overall recreational "spine" linking numerous waterfront parks, including local, county and state facilities. Two major county-owned facilities along the southern Erie County waterfront are Bennett beach and Wendt Beach. Given their proximity to Evangola State Park, and the current sharing of manpower and resources, it may make sense over the long term for Erie County to partner with the State on both of these properties for future operations and maintenance, marketing and capital expenditures.

- *Similar to the northern reaches of the county's waterfront, the County should continue to promote regional trail efforts along the southern shoreline areas, while looking to partner with the State of New York for future trail developments, enhancements, maintenance and marketing. The proposed lakefront trail is considered a regional asset that deserves attention and support at the highest levels of government. Given its significance, the county should look to develop partnering roles for the local communities, as well as with the State.*

- *Both Wendt and Bennett Beaches should be considered for increased involvement by the State of New York. This would follow the precedent set by the State at Woodlawn beach State Park, and put greater emphasis*

WATERFRONT

Erie County's series of waterfront parks and trails should be a ***continuum of the great Olmsted tradition.*** *Buffalo/Erie County has a significant history of great parks planning and public spaces, which is highlighted by the unique series of historic parks, parkways and urban spaces designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. between the 1860s and 1890s. Buffalo's Olmsted Park System was the first of its kind in the United States.*

Another world-class model of parks planning and connectivity is only a few miles away across the Niagara River. The ***Niagara Parks System*** *in Ontario extends from Lake Erie (at Fort Erie near the Peace Bridge) through Niagara Falls and ends at Lake Ontario (at Niagara-On-The-Lake). This is a successful model of a park system with funding support from the Provincial level of Government, and numerous revenue-generating facilities that return dollars directly back to the operations and maintenance of the system.*

Similar to what Erie County hopes to achieve with greater New York State involvement along the Lake and River shoreline, the ***Ithaca area*** *is an example of where* ***New York State Parks*** *are clustered around unique natural water features, including Buttermilk Falls State Park, Allan H. Treman State Marine Park, Robert H. Treman State Park, and the nearby Taughannuck Falls State Park. In addition, Letchworth State Park is a linear park that has preserved a unique natural feature of the Genesee River Gorge.*

on Wendt and Bennett Beaches as significant regional attractions and the preservation of natural sand dunes, beaches and historic structures.

- *The County should consider working with State Parks on a seasonal marketing campaign that would link the major lake front park properties of the Outer Harbor, Woodlawn Beach, Sturgeon Point, Wendt beach, Bennett Beach and Evangola State Park.*

5.2 BACKGROUND STUDIES AND INITIATIVES

Erie County includes scenic lake and river systems, including extensive shoreline along Lake Erie and the Niagara River, which are significant regional attractions and economic assets. Waterfront land ownership is held by a number of interests, including State, County, local municipal governments and private landowners. It has been well recognized in New York State that a comprehensive approach to planning and development of the region's waterfronts is needed to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved between the protection of natural resources, economic benefits, and recreational opportunities. A strategy to address the management and development of the County's waterfront parks was deemed an important component of this Master Plan.

The Erie County waterfront strategy needs to address all water's edges including lakes, rivers and canals. In particular the Lake Erie/ Niagara River shoreline, the Buffalo River and the Erie Canal are key corridors that have been identified as paramount to environmental conservation, tourism potential and economic RENEWAL in Western New York. Several documents exist which provide over-arching or interrelated policies and guidelines to direct the waterfront strategy. As well, there are a number of key projects that are in the planning stages, particularly along the City of Buffalo waterfront, that currently have County support and involvement. These documents, in conjunction with the Parks Master Plan, need to be considered in the discussion of future land acquisitions, parks improvements or development on the waterfront.

Out of these past studies and planning initiatives comes the impetus for the current waterfront strategy, which includes an emphasis on some major guiding themes. These themes include:

- ***Encouragement of greater New York State Involvement*** *along the waterfront, in partnership with Erie County and local communities. This regional cooperation would elevate the waterfront to a higher level of recreational and tourism potential and develop it into an asset of statewide significance.*
- ***Emphasis on waterfront access and trail linkages*** *between destination parks and other area waterfront attractions. Tie into the Seaway Trail marketing efforts by New York State.*
- *Focus on* ***maintaining and strengthening the momentum that has begun on Buffalo's Outer Harbor*** *with the establishment of a New York State Parks facility. Use parks and open space as a means to leverage public support and private investment.*
- ***Preserving and enhancing the unique environmental systems*** *along Erie County's waterfront as a part of a growing regional EcoTourism market.*

A listing of specific studies and intitiatives can be found in the sidebar columns over the next few pages.

5.3 REGIONAL WATERFRONT SITES

The following is a synopsis of waterfront sites *(from North to South)* that include County owned and/or managed sites, along with other sites that represent the regional waterfront system. Many of the projects have been achieved or are moving forward with County involvement. In the future the County is likely to be increasingly asked to participate in waterfront projects of significance, such as the Erie Canal Harbor *(formerly the Buffalo Inner Harbor)* and the Outer Harbor Lands. The projects identified below are projects that may warrant some level of County involvement under a partnership or collaborative arrangement with the State and Local governments. Given the statewide significance of the Erie County waterfront, including the Lake Erie shoreline, the Niagara River and Erie Canal, emphasis should be placed on increasing New

Commissioner's Pond at Chestnut Ridge

Erie County waterfront initiatives and strategies should tie in to the efforts already in place or underway for the ***Seaway Trail.*** *This scenic route is the* ***longest National Recreation Trail in the country.*** *It runs for 454 miles from the Pennsylvania border north along Lake Erie, the Niagara River and Lake Ontario to Massena and the St. Lawrence Seaway. Historic sites, scenic overlooks and natural wonders can be found along its length.*

Although New York State has had facilities at Buckhorn Island, Beaver Island and Evangola State Parks for years, and the more recent Woodlawn Beach State Park, it is with the announcement of the State's new involvement on Buffalo's Outer Harbor (Gallagher Beach and Small Boat Harbor) that the vision of a comprehensive linear waterfront park system along Erie County's shoreline is finally getting closer to becoming a reality. With future (potential) State involvement at such sites as Bennett Beach, Wendt Beach and the Cherry Farm, and more County/State involvement at such properties as Broderick Park, LaSalle Park, Times Beach, Tifft Nature Preserve and the Olmsted Park System, etc., there would be a continuous series of major "nodes" along this linear park and trail system. As envisioned for many years, the precedent is being set for a major waterfront park, parkway and trail system that rivals Ontario's Niagara Parks System and finally receives the attention it deserves at both the State and federal levels.

5.2.1. NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF STATE, DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES, COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared in 1982 (revised 2001) the New York Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources, Coastal Management Plan *provides a comprehensive policy framework for review and approvals of waterfront projects, a number of which will have an influence on County initiatives. The Coastal Management Plan provides policies in the following areas:*

- *Development;*
- *Fish and Wildlife;*
- *Flooding and Erosion Hazards;*
- *Public Access;*
- *Recreation;*
- *Historic and Scenic Resources;*
- *Agricultural Lands;*
- *Energy and Ice Management;*
- *Water and Air Resources.*

5.2.2 NEW YORK STATE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN

The New York State Open Space Conservation Plan - NYSOSCP (2002) *prepared by the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation identifies policies and actions for conservation of open space lands, significant natural areas, and cultural heritage sites throughout the State. It encourages a collaborative working relationship between the state, the federal government and local governments to identify and protect a cohesive framework of open space lands for environmental protection and public recreational purposes. The Plan identifies major resource areas and conservation priority projects, for immediate attention by the Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, and their partners. Resource areas pertaining to the Erie County waterfront are:*

- *Great Lakes Shoreline, Islands and Tributaries*
- *Niagara River Corridor*
- *New York State Canal Recreationway System*

NYSOSCP RESOURCE AREAS IN ERIE COUNTY

The ***Great Lakes Shoreline*** *is recognized as one of the region's most significant natural resources, both from public access / recreation and wildlife and fisheries conservation perspectives. Conservation strategies proposed*

York State's future role in preserving and enhancing this vital waterfront asset. In addition, there may be specific sites, including the Erie Canal corridor, that may warrant future Federal support and involvement.

Recommendations, where proposed in earlier waterfront plans, are noted, along with updates where actions have been taken or where more current 'on the table' initiatives exist. Refer to **Figure 5-1** for locations.

TOWN OF GRAND ISLAND

1. BUCKHORN ISLAND STATE PARK

New York State (New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation - NYSOPRHP)

Buckhorn Island State Park is a 895 acre state-owned natural environment area located at the northwest tip of Grand Island, and separated from the rest of the island by Burnt Ship Creek. Comprised of marsh, meadows, and woods, the site affords some of the best wildlife viewing along the Niagara River. Major improvements were initiated in 2001, including additional observation areas, parking areas and nature trails.

2. BEAVER ISLAND STATE PARK

New York State (NYSOPRHP)

Beaver Island State Park is a 951 acre state-owned multi-purpose park located at the southern tip of Grand Island. The park is open year round and offers beach swimming, picnicking, nature trails, cross-country skiing, sledding and tobogganing along with an eighteen hole golf course. The notable Casino Building, which burned a number of years ago, if slated for restoration / reconstruction in the near future. The park charges a per vehicle admission fee.

41. HAMBURG TOWN PARK

Town of Hamburg

Hamburg Town Park is a 13-acre town-owned developed park located on Lake Erie, in the hamlet of Mount Vernon just south of Athol Springs. The park includes a beach, walking/biking and nature trails, picnicking and other related facilities and is promoted along with Athol Springs for its birdwatching opportunities. The sandy beach is patrolled and offers safe swimming, a snack bar, change rooms and rest rooms. Adjacent to the swimming area is a boat launch; with a special area reserved for windsurfers. The park is limited to use by Town of Hamburg residents only.

42. EIGHTEEN MILE CREEK

Town of Hamburg/Town of Eden/Town of Evans

The New York State Open Space Plan identifies this as a significant area. Protection of the creek mouth and gorge within a nature preserve area. Eighteen Mile Creek is a jewel along the Erie County waterfront and is renowned for its geological and prehistoric significance.

TOWN OF EVANS

43. STURGEON POINT MARINA

Town of Evans

Sturgeon Point Marina is a town-owned facility offering docking, mooring, loading and other services for recreational watercrafts in the Town of Evans. Owned, operated and maintained by the town, the site includes hard surface launching ramps, parking for 100 cars and trailers, plus 167 single cars. Fishing and picnicking, are also available. Sturgeon Point is has an undeveloped shoreline area adjacent to the marina and is accessed via Sturgeon Point Road.

44. WENDT BEACH

Erie County

Wendt Beach is a178.0-acre county-owned multi-purpose park located on Lake Erie. The park is located on the former Wendt estate and includes the old Wendt mansion, a historic structure that was also once used as a stagecoach stop. The park includes two distinct halves; the western section includes the mansion and its various outbuildings, a shale beach, vegetated dunes, natural woodland areas, and other beach related facilities. The easternmost section includes wide open, level lawn areas that is primarily used for soccer throughout the summer and fall months. Although the approach and grounds are still characteristic of an estate property, parking, maintenance and storage facilities crowd the mansion and diminish its potential ambience. The park with its heritage aspects and waterfront setting, has the potential to be a regional draw but is in need of restoration. The park was selected as one of the detailed design components of the Master Plan. Given Wendt's large size, lake access, recreational potential and its proximity to Evangola State Park, it is recommended that the State of New York become a partner with the County in the future development and enhancement of this park. *Refer to Volume 2, Section 3.0 for the Specific Park Master Plan and recommendations.*

45. BENNETT BEACH

Erie County

Bennett Beach is 47.5-acre county-owned waterfront park on Lake Erie in the Town of Evans. Located at the mouth of Big Sister Creek, the park includes a fine sand beach *(one of the last remaining natural sand beaches on the eastern end of Lake Erie)* and a backshore picnic area, with natural dune and creek environments. However facilities are limited and aging, and do not serve the beach area well. The site offers tremendous potential as the County's premier passive, beach-oriented park (similar to Woodlawn Beach State Park). The park was selected as one of the detailed design components of the Master Plan. Given Bennett Beach's lake access, natural sand beach and dunes, and its proximity to both Wendt Beach and Evangola State Park, it is recommended that the State of New York become a partner with the County in the future development and enhancement

of this unique waterfront park. *Refer to Volume 2, Section 3.0 for the Specific Park Master Plan and recommendations.*

46. EVANS TOWN PARK

Town of Evans

Evans Town Park is an 11.0-acre town-owned developed park located on Lake Erie. This multi-purpose park offers many diverse forms of recreation, including swimming and beach activities, tennis, volleyball, basketball, baseball, rolloer hockey, horseshoes, picnicking and playgrounds. These activities are supported by a comfort station.

47. LAKE ERIE BEACH

Town of Evans

Lake Erie Beach Park is 5.3 acre town-owned and developed park in the Town of Evans. Redevelopment of Lake Erie Beach represents the Town's foremost priority for revitalizing its waterfront. Facilities include a guarded beach, play areas, picnicking and fishing access. A previous waterfront plan recommended improvements to the beach, support facilities, and parking to promote revitalization of commercial sites along Lakeshore Road. A pedestrian bridge over Muddy Creek was constructed, to allow public access to approximately 5.0-acres of shoreline. The project includes a picnic area, lighting, landscaping and other associated site improvements.

TOWN OF BRANT

48. EVANGOLA STATE PARK

New York State

Evangola State Park is 733-acre state-owned park located in the Towns of Brant and Evans. Its main attraction is its beautiful shoreline and natural sand beach, lined with low shale cliffs, located on Lake Erie. The park offers a guarded beach for safe swimming, nature trails, picnic facilities, baseball and soccer fields, tennis and basketball courts and 80 campsites. Snowmobiling, hunting and cross-country skiing are also offered.

5.4 POLICY DIRECTION

5.4.1 WATERFRONT PLANNING

The waterfront strategy for the Erie County parks should build on the goals and recommendations provided in previous waterfront plans for the Erie County Waterfront. Due to changes in the economic picture over the last ten years, specific components relating to market demand and economic projections need to be updated. Notwithstanding this, the principles and underlying framework for a comprehensive and linked system of waterfront activity centers are still viable.

Although major work still needs to be undertaken on key projects such as the **Outer Harbor** and the **Erie Canal Harbor** *(Buffalo Inner Harbor area),* progress is being made and a number of significant projects, by all levels of government, have been undertaken along Lake Erie, the Niagara River, and the Erie Canal. These individual projects continue to build toward an overall waterfront recreational system. Efforts toward a linked system of waterfront recreation sites and amenities needs to be coordinated within a planning strategy that promotes sound decisions in land use planning, transportation and environmental management.

5.4.2 MANAGEMENT OF THE WATERFRONT RECREATION SYSTEM

The waterfront County Parks and their inter-linking recreational trails and greenways are key destinations within the overall waterfront plan, which also includes state and local parks and landholdings. In 1999 the County agreed to take over management of three City of Buffalo waterfront parks: Broderick Park, Ontario Street Boat Launch, and Tow Path Park. Although small in scale, these sites nonetheless contribute as *'windows on the water'* or as part of the linear Riverwalk trail system contribute to the overall waterfront greenway system. Broderick Park is also significant for its historic role in the Underground Railroad *(site of the Underground Railroad Freedom Memorial).* The County has also partnered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation on several sites along the Buffalo River

that were targeted for environmental clean-up and/or demonstration projects.

New projects aimed at revitalizing the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods, such as the Erie Canal Harbor Project, the Buffalo Outer Harbor Trail, and the Buffalo-Fort Erie Waterfront Gateway have recently been initiated, with Erie County financial involvement. As waterfront revitalization efforts continue, the County can increasingly expect to be asked to partner in other similar undertakings, and has demonstrated its commitment in the past through financial contributions on a number of projects that generate matched funds from State programs.

While funding has been made available for capital development in the past by the County and the State, a corresponding increase has not been seen in operational funding at the County level. The County has further taken on responsibilities for parks that were previously maintained by the City of Buffalo. Given the current climate of limited resources, and the higher costs associated with the management of the waterfront sites, it may not be possible for the County to continue to increase its waterfront landholdings in a significant way, unless a corresponding increase in operational funds is provided. Redevelopment of Wendt Beach and Bennett Beach alone, assuming that development costs can be secured, will generate a significant increased demand on County operational and management resources, and the balance of the parks within the County system are equally needy. There is an expectation, and an acceptance by the public, that the New York State Parks, e.g. Woodlawn Beach State Park and Evangola Beach, are based on a nominal user pay system. However, there is a corresponding expectation that the facilities provided at the State parks are of a quality that warrants a fee payment. The County waterfront parks do not currently charge for admission; however neither are the facilities up to the standards provided at the State parks.

Within the emerging waterfront parks and greenway system that is underway, there is a potential pattern of ownership/management of the waterfront sites emerging. The **Outer Harbor Project** is expected to include a State-run park component that will build on the existing network of State parks on the Niagara River/Lake Erie shoreline. As recently as January 2003, New York State has announced its intention

to manage **Gallagher Beach** and the **Small Boat Harbor** as new **State Park facilities.** The addition of this parkland in close proximity to the significant natural environment area of the **Tifft Nature Reserve** *(which is currently managed by the Buffalo Museum of Science),* suggests that these lands should all be considered as an integrated State park. It is conceivable that **Wendt Beach** and **Bennett Beach** might also fit with this state system, either as official State Parks, as a shared partnership between the State and County, or redeveloped and managed similar to the State run system.

Conversely, the smaller waterfront sites that contribute to the overall watrefront greenway trail system, or as public access points, may be more suited to management by local governments. Notwithstanding the City of Buffalo's difficulties in the past, and the transfer of management of several of its waterfront sites to the County, future County decisions concerning new waterfront land acquisitions, or the assumption of management, should ensure adherence to the mission and mandate of the Erie County parks system. With discussions over the **assumption of the Olmsted Parks** (which closely fits with the County's role), the County may wish to revisit the management of the smaller waterfront sites and the linear parks along Buffalo's waterfront with the City, or consider increasing operations and maintenance budgets to ensure a high quality standard of management.

Wendt Mansion

Bennett Beach Park

5.5 WATERFRONT PARK SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

The following are general recommendations that apply to the County waterfront landholdings. Specific park by park recommendations for key waterfront sites can be found in Volume 2, Section 3.0, Specific Park Master Plans.

5.5.1 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Niagara River has been designated the First Globally Significant Important Bird Area (IBA) in the region *(as identified by the National Audubon Society, US partners in the global IBA program).* Significant habitat sites, or "stopovers" already exist on Grand Island (Buckhorn

Recommendation 5.1 - Build on the planning policies set out in previous waterfront plans. Update the policies to be consistent with the County's Park's current Mission Statement. Recognize that an accessible and connected waterfront, linked to a regional greenways system is a powerful marketing and tourism opportunity.

Recommendation 5.2 - The County should assume a leading role in working with the state and local governments toward the protection of the Lake Erie and Niagara River waterfront environment, and the preservation of public open space, through consistent and appropriate land use planning, urban design and development controls that address environmental conservation, ecological enhancement, public access, and water-based recreation.

Recommendation 5.3 - The County should continue to work with the state and local governments to implement recommendations for waterfront revitalization contained in the Horizons Plan and other waterfront strategies, including such projects as the Buffalo Inner Harbor, the Buffalo Outer Harbor, completion of the Canalway Trail system, the Buffalo-Fort Erie International Gateway, and other projects as they arise.

Recommendation 5.4 - In contemplating acquisitions of new County waterfront sites, or assumption of management of existing sites, the County should consider the role and function of the waterfront park designations (Destination Parks, Windows on the Water, and Linkages). The lands should contribute towards an overall strategy that builds economic renewal of the waterfront communities, promotes waterfront recreation and protects significant environmental and heritage resources.

Recommendation 5.5 - The County should enter into discussions with the waterfront partners - State, County, Buffalo Museum of Science, City of Buffalo, Local governments - to develop a cohesive

Island State Park) and at the Tifft Nature Preserve. Other regional sites under consideration for development, (Times Beach, Buffalo Outer Harbor lands, Cherry Farm Park, etc.) also provide significant opportunities for the incorporation of naturalized, habitat areas that support the IBA.

Several of the County waterfront parks: the Buffalo River Parks, Wendt Beach, and Bennett Beach, include natural environment areas that contribute to the system. Towpath Park included naturalization measures in the original master plan which were never implemented. These sites and other County waterfront parks and open space areas could also provide some contributions to the IBA. The County should incorporate an underlying ecological framework for its waterfront park system, and the development of wildlife areas and specialized waterfowl and migratory bird habitat enhancement areas should be considered in the development/redevelopment of new waterfront sites. For existing small parks and open space areas, this may be limited to the encouragement of meadow and regeneration areas through reduced mowing in specific locations. For larger sites, the design should incorporate measures that target specific habitat types, such as wetland or forest habitat.

5.5.2 ACCESS AND LINKAGES

The existing network of waterfront parks, particularly through Buffalo, is not easily accessed from the main streets and lacks a cohesive system of directional signage. In conjunction with the establishment of a new County Park logo, and the development of a comprehensive family of signs, special waterfront directional signs should be developed and located along major roads and throughout neighborhoods to cue visitors and 'remind' residents that the waterfront (Lake or River) is nearby, and to offer wayfinding to highlighted waterfront destinations.

The Riverwalk system has improved public accessibility to the water and provides an almost continuous corridor. The Riverwalk is now almost 25 years old and, when built, traversed behind numerous active businesses with little relationship to the water's edge. However, land uses have changed in some areas of the trail, providing opportunities for the County to revisit the trail alignment and potentially improve the aesthetics of the overall trail setting and

experience, with respect to aesthetic fencing, buffers, and shaded rest areas.

There is a growing interest by the public in low intensity, water and nature based recreation, and a number of the County's river and canalfront parks are well situated to support this. The waterfront park system should be examined for additional opportunities to provide additional fishing access points and 'soft' canoe / kayak launch sites that are accessed and serviced by existing facilities (parking, washrooms, trails).

Towpath Park

5.6 CONCLUSIONS

Given its role within the overall planning of the region, the County needs to assume a leading role in working with other levels of government to ensure that waterfront development is undertaken in a comprehensive and unified manner. The waterfront strategy should build on past waterfront planning efforts, and work towards the underlying principles of economic renewal, public accessibility, recreation enhancement and environmental conservation.

Wendt Mansion

It would appear that there is a role to be played for all levels of government, Local, County, and State, both in planning and implementing the waterfront recreation system as well as in managing and maintaining the existing parks and the ones to follow. Capital investment that is not followed by adequate maintenance is money wasted, and will not achieve the vision of a premier waterfront park system. Therefore, it will be important for all stakeholders to rationalize the roles and responsibilities not only for purchase and capital development, but for the ongoing management of the various sites, to be in keeping with their mandate for the provision of recreation.

The County should continue to encourage the State to assume a prominent role in the management of significant sites that are in keeping with the overall State Park system and open space conservation objectives. This includes a recommended future State role at such sites as Times Beach Nature Preserve, Tifft Nature Preserve and extended Outer Harbor/waterfront trail system area *(as an extension of the current Gallagher Beach and Small Boat Harbor State Park proposals),* and may extend in the future to Wendt

Bennett Beach Park

system of ownership and management for the Lake Erie/Niagara River waterfront park system that reflects the mandate of each level of government, and ensures a system of high quality, well managed and financially sustainable parks

***Recommendation 5.6** - Waterfront parks redevelopment and upgrading, should be undertaken with a view to establishing an ecological framework throughout the system that supports the significant migratory bird corridor (Important Bird Area) along the Lake Erie and Niagara River corridors. With the assistance of naturalist organizations, the County should identify specific opportunities within new and existing parks to be implemented as part of a management strategy or at the time of redevelopment.*

***Recommendation 5.7** - Review the existing Riverwalk trail route alignments with waterfront landowners to ensure maximum connectivity , in light of land use changes.*

***Recommendation 5.8** - Develop a waterfront signage and wayfinding system that identifies all waterfront access points, and promotes a unified waterfront image.*

Recommendation 5.9 - Investigate opportunities within the County waterfront parks for improving fishing access and providing soft launches for canoeing and kayaking. .

Beach and Bennett Beach. Alternately, from a "dollars and cents" level of thought, as redevelopment of Wendt and Bennett Beaches take place the County may wish to consider a user-pay system similar to that in place in the New York State Parks to ensure that adequate future funds are available to manage and operate these vital waterfront sites to the highest quality.

The County-owned and/or managed waterfront park system already represents a significant part of the County park operational costs. The ability of any planned waterfront revitalization to generate tourism potential and economic renewal for the region will be substantially based on the quality of the recreational experience for prospective residents and visitors. This will require a high standard of park development, accompanied by a high standard of management and maintenance. Many of the existing County-owned parks are in need of redevelopment or upgrading. The County has also assumed management of several smaller, and fairly recently developed parks from the City of Buffalo, which are also in need of restoration and improved maintenance efforts.

Future County decisions concerning new waterfront land acquisitions, or the assumption of management of existing parks and open space areas, should therefore consider the mission and mandate of the Erie County Parks System, and should ensure the provision of adequate funds to manage and operate them to a high standard.

Specific recommendations for parks improvements are provided in Volume 2. However, as a general note it is recommended that visual and physical connections within the existing waterfront park and trail system be improved, through:

- *Wayfinding signs with consistent waterfront image or logo- along Riverwalk trail corridor, on main throughfares at intersections with connecting roads leading to waterfront access points, along scenic rural routes in rural areas (in tandem with the* ***Seaway Trail signage).***
- *Improvements to physical trail connections - road crossings, trail corridors, (shade, fencing, views to lake, rest areas), revisiting trail routing where land uses have changed;*
- *Improved fishing access and opportunities for canoe/ kayak launching, employing "soft" launches rather than paved ramps.*