Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.  
Centennial Park  

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation | University at Buffalo Regional Institute

Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc.  
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First Community Workshop - 17 January 2019

Photo Courtesy of University at Buffalo Regional Institute
What We Heard

**Events**
- More and larger events (arts, culinary, local business, etc.)
- Improve quality and increase number of flexible event spaces.

**Passive Uses**
- Capture and diversify lake views with topography, planting, and furnishings.
- Design spaces specifically for family use.
- Offer flexible spaces for year-round passive use.

**Athletics**
- Upgrade sports fields.
- Incorporate additional sports that are important to local cultural communities.
- Expand and improve running and biking routes.
- Introduce winter recreation opportunities.

**Play**
- Create a signature accessible playground unique to the Buffalo area.
- Incorporate safe, innovative, and interesting play opportunities for all age ranges (including teens and adults), particularly interactive water play elements.
- More swings!
What We Heard

Food
- Include food venues that operate on weekday evenings and weekends year-round.
- Food options should be affordable, varied and local.
- Offer space for food trucks and festivals.

Planting
- Introduce planting that is colorful, varied, and native.
- Plant more trees!
- Integrate the park into broader ecological efforts and create wildlife habitat.

Water Access
- Provide both active and passive opportunities to interact with the water.
- Address concerns about water quality and contamination.

Entrances
- Make current entrances welcoming and add more park access points.
- Provide wayfinding signage.
- Make entrances more bike and pedestrian friendly.
What We Heard

Parking

• Provide parking near activities to increase accessibility.
• Create parking areas that can support large events.
• Balance the amount of parking at the water’s edge with passive and recreational spaces.
• Add bike parking.

Also

• Incorporate opportunities for youth education.
• Provide opportunities for workforce training during construction and operation.
• Incorporate locally-operated businesses into permanent and event-based park programming.
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park is a Regional Asset
Connect Park Circulation to the Larger Regional Network

Niagara Street

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr Centennial Park

United States

Canada

Lake Erie

Niagara River

Buffalo River

Lake Erie

0 0.5 1 MILE

0 0.5 1 MILE
Give the Park its Own Identity
Access to the Waterfront

Map showing various neighborhoods and areas in Buffalo, New York, with access to the waterfront indicated by arrows. Neighborhoods such as Allentown, Downtown, West Side, Lower West Side, and various parks like Elmwood, Hamlin, Martin, and others are labeled. The Niagara River and Lake Erie are also marked.
Build on the Regional Ecological Assets
Build Connections to Regional Cultural Assets

- Albright-Knox Art Gallery
- BUFFALO NIAGARA WATERKEEPER
- BUFFALO AUDUBON SOCIETY
- West Side Audubon Society
- West Side International Soccer
- Puerto Rican & Hispanic Day Parade
- West Side Bazar
- West Side Little League
- RITC James
- The Barkyard

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park
Initial Design Goals for Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park
1. Build on the Strengths of LaSalle Park

Use strategic interventions to develop Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park into a world class park.
Strengths of LaSalle Park

Legend:
- Lake Views
- Active Recreation
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area
Active and Passive Uses
2. Engage the Waterfront.

Integrate a mix of hard and soft edges along the waterfront that reveal daily and seasonal water level changes and provide opportunities for the community to interact with the water in diverse ways.
Existing Waterfront Edge
Proposed Waterfront Edge

Legend:
- **Seawall Edge**
- **Rocky Edge**
- **Soft Edge**
- Boating Access
- Seaplane Ramp
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area
Examples of Waterfront Edges

- **Seawall**
- **Soft Edge**
- **Rocky Edge**
- **Water Access**
Opportunities to Interact with the Water
Park Elements that Encourage Education
3. Add Topography and Planting.

Introduce topography and planting to articulate spaces, hide and reveal views, block undesired sounds and sights, add rhythm and complexity to circulation network, display seasonality, and provide protection from elements.
Existing
Proposed Topography and Planting

Legend:
- **Yellow**: Valley
- **Green**: Hills
- **Black**: Project Boundary
- **Dotted Line**: Additional Study Area

Key Locations:
- Lake Erie
- Black Rock Canal
- Niagara Street
- Porter Avenue
- Hudson Street
- Jersey Street
- Interstate 190
Proposed Topography and Planting
Diversify Lake Views

Framed View

Hidden View

Close View

Elevated View
Sun - Wind - Noise
Improve Flexible Event Spaces

Large Gatherings

Small Events

Temporary Uses

Intimate Happenings
Introduce Plantings that are Colorful, Varied, & Native
4. Improve Park Circulation and Strengthen Neighborhood Connections.

Provide safe, welcoming, and accessible entrances to the park to facilitate arrival from surrounding neighborhoods. Establish a hierarchical circulation network that allows visitors to move and experience the park in unique ways.
Existing Pedestrian Bridge at Hudson Street
Existing Neighborhood Connections
Proposed Neighborhood Connections

Legend:
- Neighborhood Connections
- Future Neighborhood Connections
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area

Front Park Neighborhood
Lakeview Neighborhood
Waterfront Neighborhood
Columbus Neighborhood

Legend:
- Neighborhood Connections
- Future Neighborhood Connections
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area

Legend:
- Neighborhood Connections
- Future Neighborhood Connections
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area

Legend:
- Neighborhood Connections
- Future Neighborhood Connections
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area

Legend:
- Neighborhood Connections
- Future Neighborhood Connections
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area
Make Entrances Bike & Pedestrian Friendly
Existing Roads and Parking
Existing Park Circulation - Vehicular + Parking

Legend:
- Park Access
- Road
- Parking
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area
Proposed Park Circulation - Vehicular + Parking

Legend:
- Park Access
- Road
- Potential Road Connection
- Parking
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area

0
250
500 ft
Parking Near Activities
Accommodate Food Trucks and Food Festivals
Existing Bike and Pedestrian Circulation
Legend:

- **Park Access**
- **Bike and Pedestrian**
- **Bike and Pedestrian on Road**
- **Pedestrian**
- **Project Boundary**
- **Additional Study Area**
Proposed Park Circulation - Cycle + Pedestrian

Legend:
- Park Access
- Bike and Pedestrian
- Potential Bike and Pedestrian Connection
- Pedestrian
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area
Expand Running & Biking Routes
Proposed Park Circulation

Legend:
- Park Access
- Bike and Pedestrian
- Potential Bike and Pedestrian Connection
- Pedestrian
- Road
- Potential Road Connection
- Parking
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area
Proposed Neighborhood Connections and Park Circulation

Vehicular Circulation and Parking

Bike and Pedestrian Circulation

Bike Parking

Pedestrian Circulation
5. A Place that is Diverse and Welcoming Year-round.

Orchestrate an ensemble of diverse and flexible spaces that provide opportunities for active recreation, passive uses, and temporary occupation throughout the year for Buffalonians of all backgrounds and age ranges.
Existing Program
Proposed Program

Legend:
- Passive
- Active/Athletics
- Playscape
- Picnic
- Barkyard
- Nature
- Circulation
- Project Boundary
- Additional Study Area
Upgrade Sports Fields
Increase Variety of Sports

Volleyball

Sepak Takraw

Basketball

Pickleball
Introduce Winter Recreation Opportunities

Sledding

Ice Skating

Art

Cross Country
Design Spaces for Families

Picnicking

Grilling

Gatherings

Play
A World Class Playground

Nature Play

Themed Play

Swings

Water Play