

NIAGARA STREET NOW

A Community Vision to Guide the Streetscape Transformation



The City of Buffalo's Department of Public Works and the Buffalo Sewer Authority are leading an effort to transform Niagara Street.



What's **happening** on Niagara Street Now?

Committed to grounding the streetscape transformation of Niagara Street in community ideas and values, the City of Buffalo's Department of Public Works and the Buffalo Sewer Authority launched Niagara Street Now, a process to generate meaningful community input that can guide design elements and solutions.

Niagara Street Now builds off the work currently under construction, from Niagara Square to Porter Avenue, and will tackle a significant remaining stretch of the corridor, from **Porter Avenue up to Ontario Street**. Further, it will involve upgrades to Robert Rich Way (formerly known as the "Foot of Ferry") in accordance with the Broderick Park Master Plan, and make enhancements to the Shoreline Trail from Broderick Park to the International Railroad Bridge.

This report outlines the major community values and priorities identified through the Niagara Street Now process. It integrates the voices of more than 600 residents, business owners, and stakeholders passionate about Niagara Street and its future.



While this document's primary purpose is to inform the streetscape re-design for Niagara Street, it is a public document that can inform other planning and investment decisions.

As a product of the community, the community is welcome to use the report and its findings as it pursues projects, initiatives, or planning efforts to advance community goals for the corridor and nearby neighborhoods.

Meet the Niagara Street Now Team:

Niagara Street Now is led by **Watts Architecture & Engineering**, with support from **Stoss** for landscape architecture, the **UB Regional Institute** for community engagement, **Alta Planning + Design** for bicycle infrastructure design, **Frandina Engineering and Land Surveying** for mapping, and **Thinking Outside the Square** for signage and wayfinding.

Learn more about the team at:
www.NiagaraStreetNow.org/about



City of Buffalo,
Department of
Public Works,
Parks & Streets

Mayor Byron W. Brown



City of Buffalo



Buffalo Sewer
Authority

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Community values and vision for Niagara Street



From the start, Niagara Street Now has been focused on generating meaningful community input that can guide design solutions for the street. Below is an overview of the process used to understand the community values and vision for Niagara Street.

30+ PLANS AS A STARTING POINT

A total of 33 plans revealed community values to guide Niagara Street Now.

Community values in the plans translate to

Guiding Principles

A COMMUNITY SURVEY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S IMPORTANT

500+ responses from the community survey told us what's important to them.

Perspectives from the community created themes for design solutions

Design Themes

WHY START HERE?

As a starting point, Niagara Street Now researched and analyzed over thirty plans that speak to community values and visions for Niagara Street. These documents include citywide plans, neighborhood plans and waterfront plans.

Looking at what each of these plans say about Niagara Street, a series of “planning principles” were generated to serve as a foundation for the project. Feedback on these statements were provided by neighborhood and corridor stakeholders at an introductory meeting in December 2015 and through the community survey taken by residents, business owners, and community stakeholders.

These community-based principles for Niagara Street, shaped by the input of thousands of Buffalonians over the years, ground Niagara Street Now in the planning work that has already been done.

View a full list of plans analyzed on page 26.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO THE COMMUNITY NOW?

Building off the planning principles, a comprehensive community survey was launched to better understand the challenges along Niagara Street and gauge what the community wants out of the streetscape project. Implemented over a six week period, the survey captured the voices of more than 500 residents, business owners, and neighborhood stakeholders.

The results of the survey are a key building block toward shaping a community vision for Niagara Street Now. They give an indication on how people use the street, what and where current challenges exist, and the type of amenities they think would enhance Niagara Street for the betterment of residents, businesses, and visitors. Further, they helped shape a set of “design themes,” or organizing feedback categories, for the community to drill down deeper at community workshops.

TWO COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS TO SET PRIORITIES



73 community members shared ideas and priorities at interactive workshops.

Community members told us what streetscape elements they prefer

Preferred Design Solutions & Priorities

TRANSLATING COMMUNITY VISION INTO DESIGN FOR NIAGARA STREET'S TRANSFORMATION



This document and the community values within will guide the City of Buffalo and its team of engineers and landscape architects leading the Niagara streetscape transformation.

WHAT SOLUTIONS DOES THE COMMUNITY PREFER?

The community was invited to share in detail what they want for the Niagara streetscape at two community workshops held in February of 2016. Working with large scale maps of the corridor, participants were asked to identify specific locations of concern or detailed suggestions on where attention is needed. Further, they were given the opportunity to evaluate a series of potential design interventions that can contribute to the accessibility, safety, and vibrancy of Niagara Street, and provide their preference on what they like (and don't like).

Workshop results, taken together with feedback and comments offered in the survey and stakeholder meeting, shape a set of priorities that ground the transformation of the Niagara streetscape in community values.

HOW WILL THE VISION CONTINUE TO GUIDE DECISIONS?

Taken together, the results and “data” from these engagement activities help translate a citizen-driven vision many years in the making into actionable street design elements.

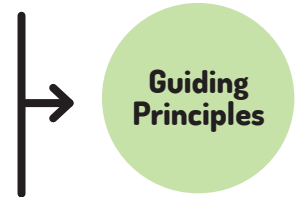
As draft design material is produced, the community will be invited to review and offer general feedback again in the summer of 2016. The project team will use this input to further shape the project, and come back with a final draft design in late 2016.

With the design process complete by the end of 2016, the City of Buffalo intends to place the work out to bid in January 2017 with a targeted construction start in the spring of 2017.

What do the plans say about community values?

GUIDING PRINCIPLES GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY VALUES

A total of 33 plans spanning the last decade and more were reviewed and summarized. Many different plans confirmed similar community values. Plans often recommended specific strategies that show how these values could be put into action, some are highlighted below.



Become a distinct and inviting gateway into the city – Buffalo’s “Front Door” for residents and visitors.

Promote Niagara Street as a distinct international waterfront gateway into the city with branding and signage

Integrate the streetscape with local culture, public parks, and multi-use trails

Improve urban design, re-develop land, and rehabilitate existing structures

Re-establish scenic views of the Niagara River along Niagara Street



Embrace the waterfront – build connections with the Niagara River and preserve it for future generations.

Establish strong visual and physical connections between neighborhoods, parks and the Niagara River

Connect to bike routes and multi-use trails along the waterfront

Improve waterfront recreation opportunities

Add signage and dedicated walking tours to honor the history of the waterfront

Connect Niagara Street to water underneath highway overpasses



Celebrate its history and heritage while promoting local arts and culture.

Embrace the street’s contribution to Native American history, the War of 1812, industrial development, and the Underground Railroad

Embrace the multi-cultural identity of connecting neighborhoods

Promote notable historic elements through interpretive signage, and education

Set up dedicated tours, like the “Freedom Walk” in the renovated Broderick Park to commemorate the area’s importance to the Underground Railroad

Preserve the unique architectural character of the corridor and spark revitalization and renewal of nearby neighborhoods

These community values are a good starting point for design decisions.

While the streetscape project cannot tackle all of these values head on, they serve as guiding principles to be considered in design decisions.



Anchor a vibrant, walkable and safe community that serves, residents, visitors, and local businesses.

—

Increase walkability by adding amenities and businesses near existing assets and design a pedestrian-friendly streetscape

Convert vacant or under-utilized sites to active, sustainable uses

Develop safe connections to adjacent neighborhoods and parks

Preserve the distinct, diverse, mixed-use character

Prioritize reinvestment in employment centers and commercial corridors



Promote sustainability by reinforcing the natural environment, adding greenspace and curbing energy use.

—

Protect shoreline habitat and guard against stream bank erosion

Use water smart landscaping to protect water quality and conserve quantity

Restore and protect ecological resources

Clean and redevelop Brownfield sites

Conserve energy

Enhance visual quality of scenic resources



Provide transportation choice – work safely and efficiently for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and trucks.

—

Redevelop as a “complete street” that accommodates all modes of transport – especially pedestrians and cyclists

Make formal modifications to include bikes into the street, including lane markers, striping, and links to multi-use trails

Make transit more accessible and convenient by improving bus shelters and prioritizing new development in areas closer to transit stops

Accommodate the needs of businesses – provide sufficient parking, and allow for the safe and efficient shipping of goods via large trucks

How the community informed the process

A COMMUNITY SURVEY
TO UNDERSTAND
WHAT'S IMPORTANT

500+
responses

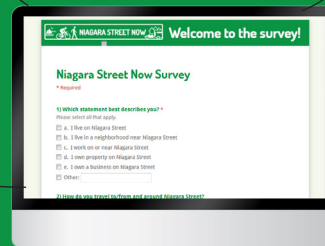


How can the street be enhanced for residents, visitors and businesses?

How do you travel along Niagara Street and where do you visit?

What challenges can be addressed by the streetscape transformation?

What should be prioritized and where?



ONLINE, DOOR-TO-DOOR, AND
ON-SITE IN THE COMMUNITY



Over a six week period, Niagara Street Now surveyed **more than 500 residents, business owners and neighborhood stakeholders** on what they think is most important for the project.

To ensure broad and representative input, the engagement team **knocked on every door in the project area** and offered businesses and residents the opportunity to take the survey on an electronic tablet.

The survey was made available online and shared widely by stakeholders and community groups. Taking into account the diverse culture around the corridor, the survey was translated into the seven most spoken languages on the West Side of Buffalo. Finally, surveyors canvassed visitors and workers at both the Niagara Library Branch and the West Side Bazaar.

WHAT DID THE SURVEY TELL US?

The results of the survey are a key building block toward shaping a community vision for Niagara Street Now. They give us a first cut at what the community thinks is important.



Design
Themes

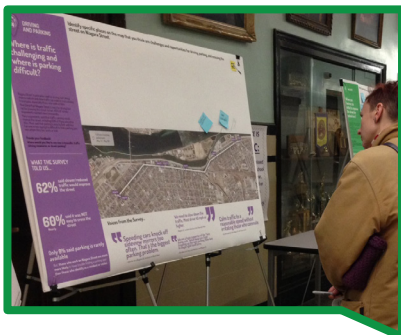
DRIVING & PARKING
WALKING
BICYCLING
GREENING
EMBRACE THE WATER
ARTS, HISTORY AND CULTURE

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS TO SET PRIORITIES

73 participants

CATEGORIES FOR ORGANIZING DESIGN THEMES

Workshops were organized around stations corresponding to specific design themes for the street.



MAPPING ACTIVITY AND DESIGN SOLUTION BOARDS



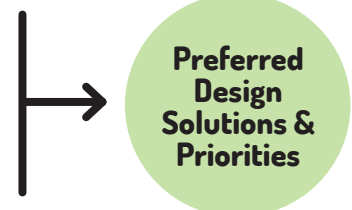
On large scale maps of the corridor, the community was asked to mark **specific places that are challenges or opportunities** for a series of topics. The comments and annotations were analyzed, along with the feedback in the survey to help understand geographic-specific desires for Niagara Street.



Design solution boards presented a series of potential design interventions that can address community concerns and values expressed in the survey and planning principles. Equipped with sticker dots, participants were able to show support (or dislike) for **design options that can transform the street**.

WHAT DID THE WORKSHOPS TELL US?

The results of the workshops told us what the community preferred in terms of **streetscape elements for Niagara Street Now**. This information helps shape a set of priorities that can guide the design of the street.



Turning Community Values into Design Themes

CATEGORIES FOR ORGANIZING DESIGN THEMES



Inspired by the planning principles and the challenges identified in the survey, a series of design themes were generated to organize how values play out in the streetscape. The community workshops were organized around these categories as are the design priorities of this vision document.

The statements that accompany each of the design themes below are broad community values that describe the general direction the community wants to see for the streetscape, as well as the reason why it values that direction.

DRIVING AND PARKING

Reduce the speed of vehicles to make Niagara Street more safe and walkable, but make sure cars, buses, and trucks can still drive and park safely on the street.

WALKING

Enhance the pedestrian experience on Niagara Street to make the corridor safer and more inviting for businesses, residents and visitors.

BICYCLING

Make Niagara Street a safe and inviting bicycle connector for neighborhoods, downtown, the waterfront, and regional destinations.

GREENING

Add green features and landscape elements to beautify Niagara Street and enhance sustainability.

EMBRACING THE WATER

Embrace the water by making it easier for people to access, view, and enjoy the Niagara River.

ARTS, HISTORY AND CULTURE

Bring Niagara Street's diverse culture and history alive through placemaking and public art.

VOICES FROM THE SURVEY

Calm traffic to a reasonable speed without irritating those who commute.

- Resident who lives near Niagara St. and Tonawanda St.

We are a huge supporter of the “lane bump outs” which keep cars from traveling up the right parking/bike lane to illegal right hand turns.

- Resident who lives near Bird Ave. and Niagara St.

Need better signage to find the bike trails and a safe bike lane away from traffic.

- Visitor who rides his bike on Niagara St. often

Protected bike lanes would make it much easier to get to work.

- Employee who works on Niagara St.

The lighting needs to be closer to the street for pedestrians – add benches, art and plantings.

- Resident who lives near Niagara St. and Forest Ave.

Public art should not be done willy-willy. Less is more.

- Niagara St. property owner

Niagara Street needs features, like more plantings, that will encourage more investment.

- Niagara St. business owner

Need better stop lights & crosswalks. Do not make the car the king of the block.

- Resident who lives near Lower Niagara St.

Please preserve the industrial feel of the area.

- Resident who lives near Niagara St. and Forest Ave.

Celebrate the mix cultures, races and nationalities that make up Niagara St.

- Resident who lives in Niagara St.

Niagara Street's proximity to the water is an underutilized asset for attracting people and businesses.

-Employee who works on Niagara Street

More signs to show links to the water for the public.

- Frequent user of the Shoreline Trail

Reduce the speed of vehicles to make Niagara Street more safe and walkable, but make sure cars, buses, and trucks can still drive and park safely on the street.

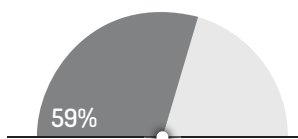


Crossing the street can be challenging.

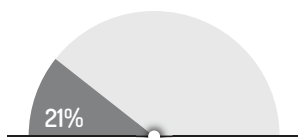
While only 1 in 5 survey respondents said driving is difficult on Niagara Street, 3 in 5 said it is difficult to cross the street. Most survey respondents said that efforts to reduce speeds (67%) and expand crosswalks (85%) would enhance Niagara Street.

FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

59% said **crossing the street is challenging.**



21% said **driving is challenging**



Parking is not difficult to find.

Less than 1 in 10 survey respondents said parking is rarely available on Niagara Street. Those who work on Niagara Street or own a business there are more likely to have trouble finding parking than those who identify as a resident or visitor.

9% said **parking is rarely available.**



Community Feedback

Through the survey and at the workshops, community members pointed out specific places where opportunities and challenges could be addressed by the street redesign project.

A closer look across all these targeted comments reveals distinct community preferences on how changes to driving and parking could improve different parts of the street.

From Forest to Ontario

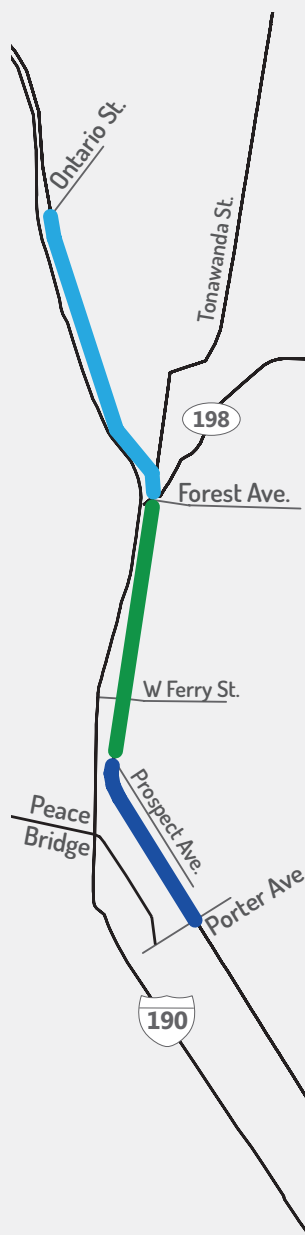
Survey results suggest that street parking is slightly harder to find in this section. Many had concerns about the area intersecting NY Route 198, as it can be unsafe for all transportation modes, and needs traffic calming and better signage to direct drivers.

From Prospect to Forest

Most find driving and parking relatively easy in this section. However, crossing the street can be more challenging here. With many businesses, bus stops and emerging street activity, community members showed a strong desire for new crosswalks and crossing signals here.

From Porter to Prospect

Survey respondents suggested that crossing the street here is somewhat easier than in other parts of Niagara Street, but driving and parking can still present a challenge. Many preferred lane reductions and traffic calming measures to accommodate the many pedestrians going to and from nearby parks and schools, but still wanted to provide parking and ease traffic congestion.



Community Solutions & Priorities from the Workshops



Across all engagement methods (the survey, stakeholder meetings, and community workshops), concerns about the speed cars travel along Niagara Street were voiced loudly. Community members suggested traffic speeds are a significant threat to street safety and make Niagara Street uninviting for businesses, residents and visitors. Traffic calming as a concept emerged as the most important driving and parking design intervention presented at the community workshops.

While the community views Niagara Street as an easy thoroughfare for driving, the same cannot be said for crossing the street. Support for crosswalks was expressed broadly in the survey and community workshops. Bump-outs also received significant support, as many citizens felt these would shorten the distance of intersection crossing. However, unlike crosswalks, support for bump-outs was not as unanimous. Some feel they will negatively impact the flow of traffic and collect large piles of snow in the winter.

Because parking is viewed as readily available on much of Niagara Street, it emerged as less of a priority for the Niagara Street community. When presented with design solutions, street parking and vegetated parking lots on side lots were met with less enthusiasm than solutions that address traffic speed and pedestrian safety.

Community members did point to some places where parking is an issue and suggested that current levels be maintained, especially with Niagara Street’s emerging popularity as a residential and commercial attraction.

Enhance the pedestrian experience on Niagara Street to make the corridor safer and more inviting for businesses, residents and visitors.

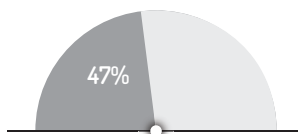


FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

Niagara Street is not welcoming to pedestrians

Fewer than half of all survey respondents find Niagara Street to be a welcoming environment for pedestrians, and only 8 percent find it to be very welcoming.

47% said walking is **not** easy or safe.



Walking amenities are lacking.

Amenities that can support a safe and welcoming pedestrian environment are lacking on Niagara Street. Survey respondents pointed to adequate lighting, sidewalks, benches, and beautifying elements like art and landscaping as elements sorely lacking on Niagara Street.

90% want **better sidewalks.**
83% want **improved lighting.**
83% want **more benches.**

Community Feedback

Through the survey and at the workshops, community members pointed out specific places with opportunities and challenges that could be addressed by the street redesign project.

A closer look across all these targeted comments reveals distinct community preferences on how the pedestrian experience could be improved at different parts of the street.

From Forest to Ontario

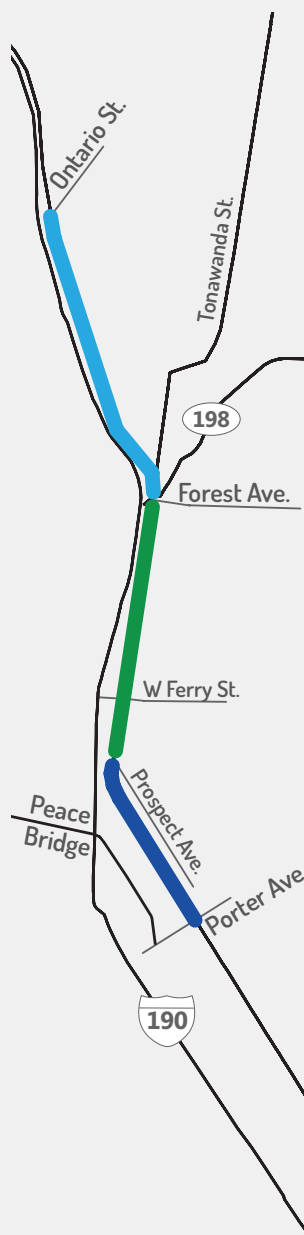
This section is generally easy and safe to walk with wide sidewalks at a safe distance from moving vehicles. Still, community members here wanted sidewalks improved, storefronts revitalized, and pedestrian access to the waterfront and Riverside Park enhanced. The area between Forest Ave and Tonawanda St. was singled out as a place in need of better lighting, signage and crosswalks to make it safer for pedestrians.

From Prospect to Forest

Prominent businesses and street activity have primed this area for new pedestrian amenities which many feel are now lacking. This section had the most support for new crosswalks, benches and street lights, especially near Ferry Street so pedestrians can easily and safely get to Broderick Park and the Riverwalk.

From Porter to Prospect

With parks and schools nearby, pedestrian amenities are already relatively abundant here, but many think they could be better connected with one other and the street itself. Many community members called for adding crosswalks, crossing signals, and making clearer connections to existing assets, like the parks, with new signage, and enhanced views.



Community Solutions & Priorities from the Workshops



Given options of amenities to enhance the pedestrian experience, participants favored “improved sidewalks” and “lighting” over less basic elements like benches or street signage. This may suggest that the community sees basic infrastructure enhancements as the greatest priority for enhancing the pedestrian experience.

These preferences were echoed in the community survey, as nine out of ten respondents supported better lighting and improved sidewalks. Further, when given the opportunity to talk about the greatest needs, survey respondents often raised safety concerns when walking on Niagara Street at night and pointed to lighting as a possible solution, along with more police security cameras.

For participants at the community workshops, activating the street with commercial activity (i.e. outdoor cafe seating or restaurant patios) was seen almost as critical as sidewalks and lighting. This suggests the community wants to see expanded opportunities for commercial entities to contribute to the vibrancy of the street.

Public benches and sidewalk-level signage are important, as four out of five survey respondents supported both of these design solutions. But in terms of priorities, they are less favored than basic infrastructure enhancements or actions that directly support outdoor activities for commercial establishments.

Make Niagara Street a safe and inviting bicycle connector for neighborhoods, downtown, the waterfront, and regional destinations.

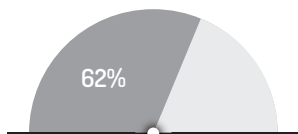


Bicycling is currently unsafe and challenging.

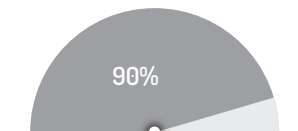
A majority of survey respondents said biking on Niagara Street is unsafe and challenging. Nine out of ten said dedicated bike lanes are needed to address this. For those who currently ride their bikes often on Niagara Street, almost all (99%) said dedicated bike lanes are needed.

FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

62% said **bicycling is unsafe and challenging.**



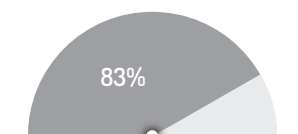
90% want **more bike lanes.**



Bicycling amenities are lacking.

Four out of five survey respondents said they'd like to see more bike racks to serve bicyclists coming to Niagara Street for work, shopping, recreating, eating, and drinking.

83% want **more bike racks.**



Community Feedback

Through the survey and at the workshops, community members pointed out specific places where opportunities and challenges could be addressed by the street redesign project.

A closer look across all these targeted comments reveals distinct community preferences on how bicycling can be improved at different parts of the street.

From Forest to Ontario

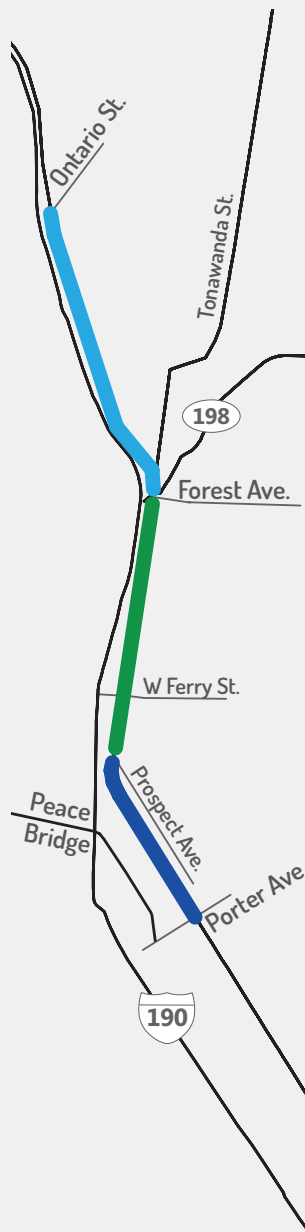
Due to high traffic volumes, bicyclists here find it easier to travel on the sidewalk than on the street. Not surprisingly, separated cycleways were preferred over bike lanes. Many suggested that NY Route 198 intersection could become a distinct node connecting new bike lanes, which could improve the street experience for everyone in this section.

From Prospect to Forest

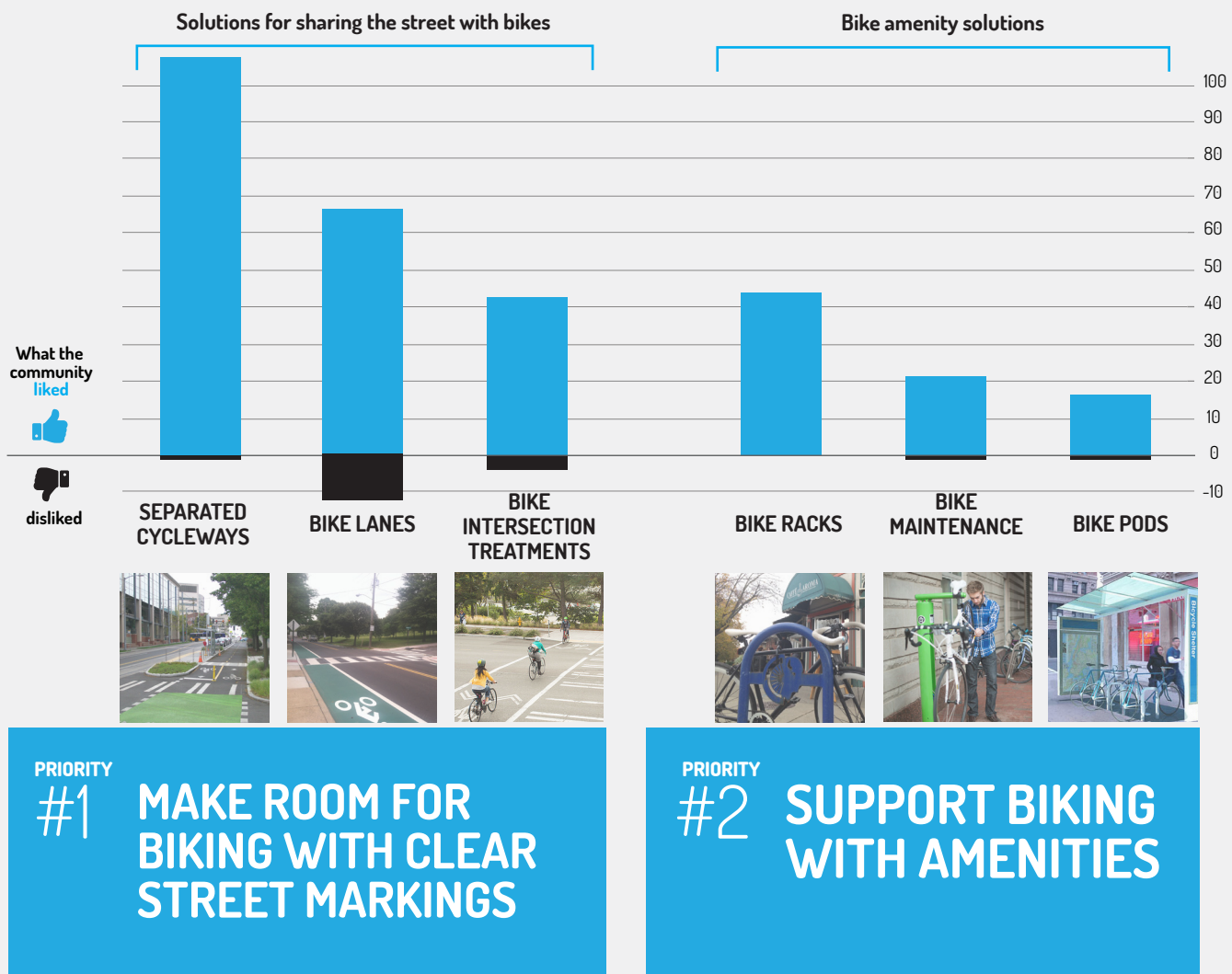
This section of the street was deemed the most unsafe and challenging for bicycling by survey respondents. Fittingly, users strongly supported separated cycleways and more bike amenities throughout this section. Bicyclists pointed to a need for clear, safe connections from this part of the street to the Riverwalk and the broader Niagara River Greenway system.

From Porter to Prospect

Though survey respondents scored this section more favorably in terms of the overall safety and convenience of biking, it remains a vital connector of neighborhoods, downtown and the waterfront. As such, bicyclists would like this area to have clearer connections to existing bike trails, and more bike amenities (like bike racks near retail). Here too, most preferred separated cycleways over bike lanes.



Community Solutions & Priorities from the Workshops



When presented with options for improving the street for bicyclists, workshop participants strongly favored street treatments that clearly demark that bicyclists are welcome on the street. Separated cycleways, or tracks parallel to the street that are dedicated to bicycling only, were by far the most favored bicycle amenity presented, and was even the second most popular design option across all workshop categories. This support was mirrored in the survey; where many write-in comments suggested a desire to see a cycleway on Niagara Street.

Bike lanes and intersection treatments were met with support as well, but not to the same degree as the cycleway.

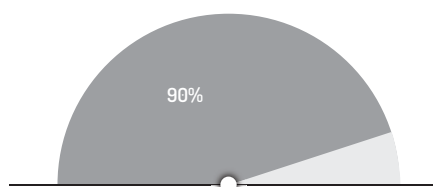
While less popular than street demarkations, amenities that can support the use of biking received some support as well. Workshop participants showed the most support for traditional bike racks over more eclectic support amenities such as maintenance stations or pods with clusters of bike racks. This appears to echo the survey where 83 percent of respondents said Niagara Street would benefit from more bike racks.

Add green features and landscape elements to beautify Niagara Street and enhance sustainability.



FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

90% want more plantings.



Plantings are currently lacking on Niagara Street.

Nine out of 10 survey respondents said more plantings would improve their part of Niagara Street. Many also commented on how plantings, by beautifying the area, could attract more visitors and encourage new investment.

Community Feedback

Through the survey and at the workshops, community members pointed out specific places with opportunities and challenges that could be addressed by the street redesign project.

A closer look across all these targeted comments reveals distinct community preferences on how greening could improve different parts of the street.

From Forest to Ontario

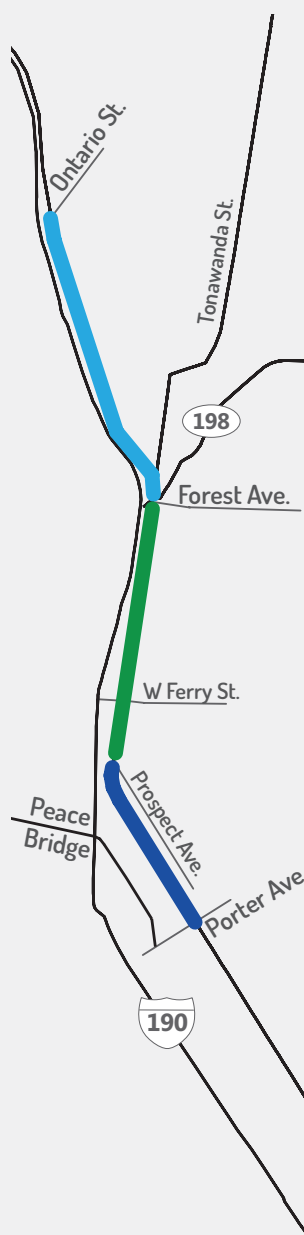
The community expressed a desire to add more street trees in this area, especially from Forest Avenue to Amherst Street. The intersection with NY Route 198 was called out as a place where greening is needed to beautify the street and mitigate negative impacts on the environment.

From Prospect to Forest

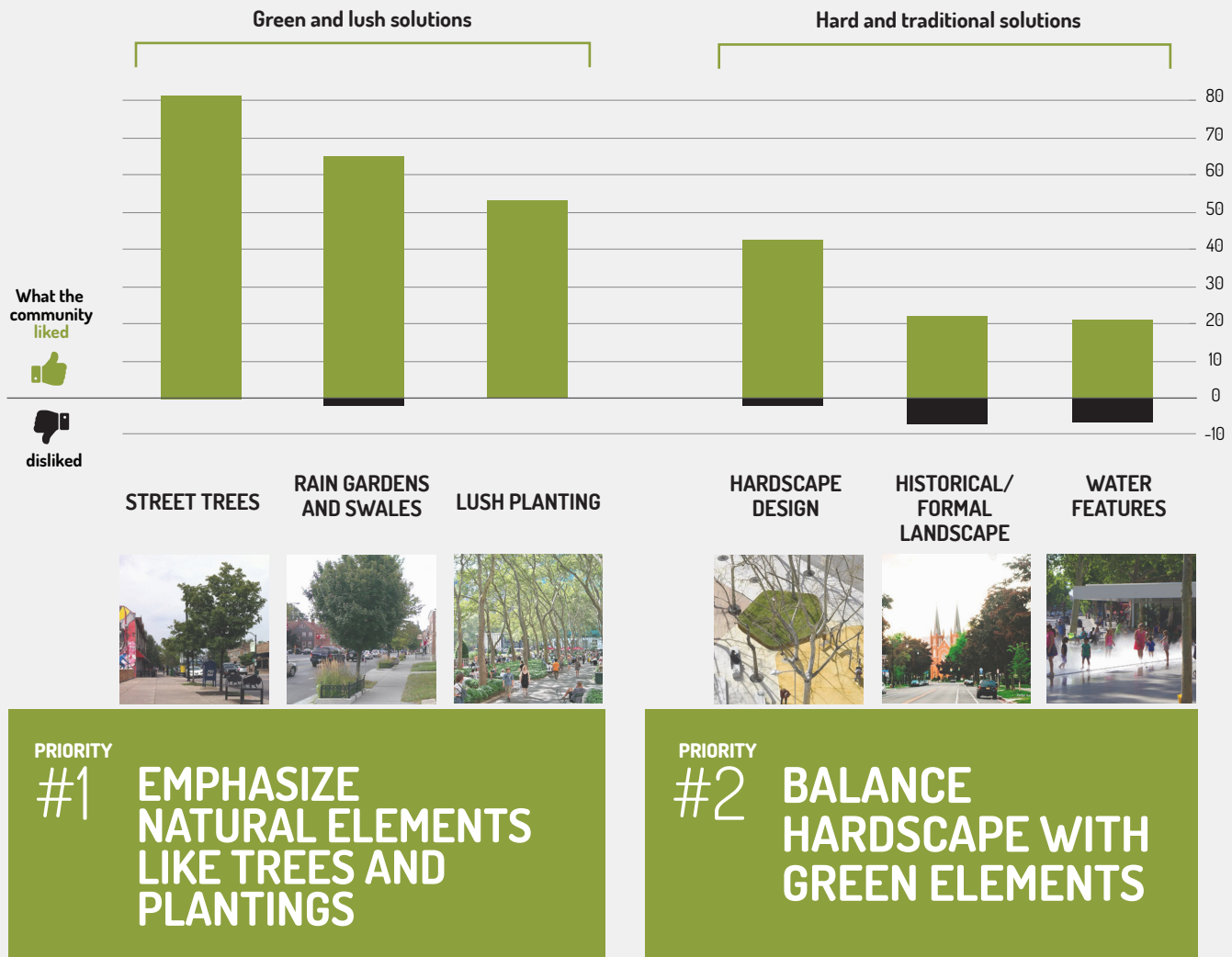
Community members in this area showed the strongest desire for greening. Some suggested integrating nature into the streetscape at key intersections and vacant lots where natural landscapes might be restored, perhaps at Lafayette or Auburn, to beautify the street.

From Porter to Prospect

With parks lining much of this section of the street, the community felt that the focus here should be to simply enhance these existing landscape elements and integrate them into the streetscape. Some wanted the street redesign to extend the natural features of Columbus and Prospect Parks to the Niagara streetscape in order to create a formal historical landscape.



Community Solutions & Priorities from the Workshops



Green and natural elements overall received more support than harder elements. Green installations were suggested to soften the landscape of the street while also supporting ecological connectivity along the corridor. Street trees gained the most support and the community made several comments recommending that they need room and support to grow and thrive. Rain gardens and swales received a lot of support as well, but community members suggested the maintenance and ongoing care of these need to be considered.

While significant support was expressed for hardscape, it appears that the community sees this as something that needs to be balanced with natural and green features that soften hardscape elements. A landscape that focuses on historical or traditional design was not as attractive as more progressive features. Water elements, like fountains or “runnels” received the least amount of support across options.

Embrace the water by making it easier for people to access, view, and enjoy the Niagara River.

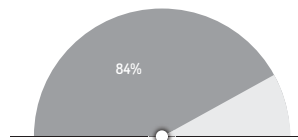


Views of the water are hard to come by.

More than four out of five survey respondents said more views of the water would enhance their section of Niagara Street. This was especially true for respondents connected to the middle section of the street - from Prospect to Forest.

FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

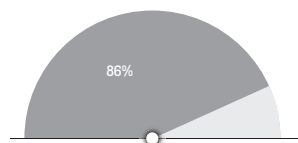
84% want more views of the water.



Wayfinding to attractions is lacking.

A great majority of survey respondents said signs for visitors would enhance Niagara Street. Comments suggested existing trails and waterfront access points are not widely known and awareness of their presence could be enhanced through wayfinding signage.

86% want more signs for visitors.



Community Feedback

Through the survey and at the workshops, community members pointed out specific places with opportunities and challenges that could be addressed by the street redesign project.

A closer look across all these targeted comments reveals distinct community preferences on how embracing the water could improve different parts of the street.

From Forest to Ontario

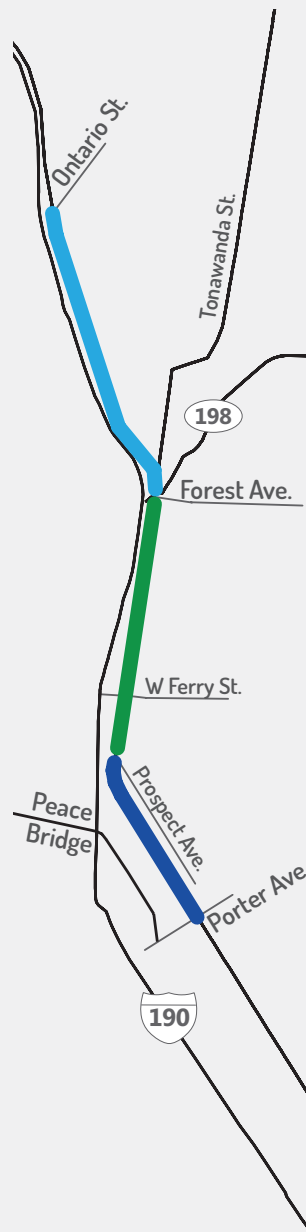
This section currently has the most access points to the Niagara River, but getting to the waterfront can still be difficult and confusing. Many here wanted more gateways and wayfinding for clearer public access to the waterfront and Riverwalk. Many suggested the area around the 198 intersection could be transformed to enhance connections to the waterfront.

From Prospect to Forest

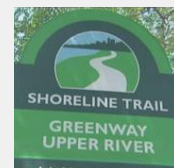
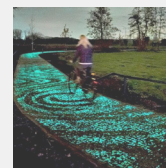
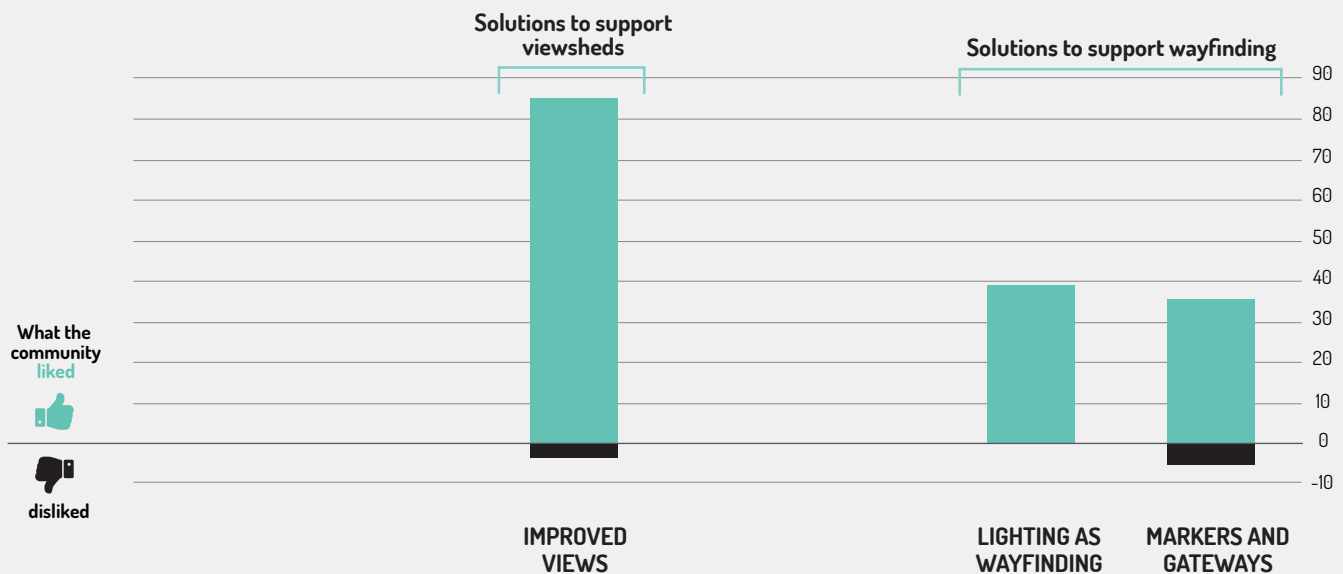
Survey respondents to this area supported creating better views of the water more than any other section. Clearly marking the access point to Broderick Park and integrating it into the streetscape, was a high priority for many users.

From Porter to Prospect

This section lies a bit further from the Niagara River, but the community's desire to embrace the water here is obvious. New signage and wayfinding could help connect people here with waterfront access points to the north and south. Many wanted the streetscape to build aesthetic connections to the river. Some suggested opening up potential views to the Peace Bridge, like where Niagara Street meets Busti Avenue.



Community Solutions & Priorities from the Workshops



PRIORITY

#1

**IMPROVE VIEWS
AND CONNECTIONS
TO THE WATER**

Across all design elements presented at the community workshops, improved views received the greatest level of support. This reflects the important role the water plays in the corridor, its neighborhoods, as well as the city and greater region.

Four out of five survey respondents said they use Niagara Street to get to the water and that the street would benefit from better views of the river. At the same time, as was expressed often by residents and business owners mentioned during the survey, re-connecting to the water is challenged by the physical isolation posed by the NYS Thruway.

The challenge for Niagara Street Now will be to find creative ways to make the streetscape project support existing access points, or when possible, open new opportunities to view the water.

PRIORITY

#2

**MAKE IT EASIER FOR
PEOPLE TO FIND AND
REACH THE WATER**

While not prioritized as strongly as improved viewsheds, signage and other wayfinding that can bring people to the water is a clear priority for the community. Almost all of the comments from the workshop at the water-themed station were focused on places to enhance signage and the clarity of connections between trails and water access points.

Lighting was given slight preference over more traditional forms of wayfinding. This could be a reflection of the community's desire to see more unique ways of bringing people to the water, as well as the overall theme that the street needs better lighting for safety and emphasizing opportunities along Niagara Street.

Bring Niagara Street's diverse culture and history alive through placemaking and public art.

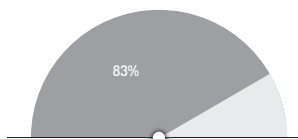


Art and culture should be featured more.

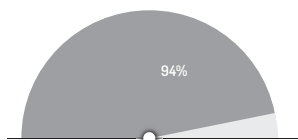
Support for integrating arts, culture and history in the Niagara Street transformation was strong in past plans, the survey, and in the feedback generated at workshops. Four out of five survey respondents said public art would improve their part of Niagara Street, and an even higher level of support was offered for the planning principle around arts, culture and history.

FROM THE COMMUNITY SURVEY

83% want more public art.



94% said arts, culture and history should be featured



Community Feedback

Through the survey and at the workshops, community members pointed out specific places with opportunities and challenges that could be addressed by the street redesign project.

A closer look across all these targeted comments reveals distinct community preferences on how celebrating local, history, culture and arts could improve different parts of the street.

From Forest to Ontario

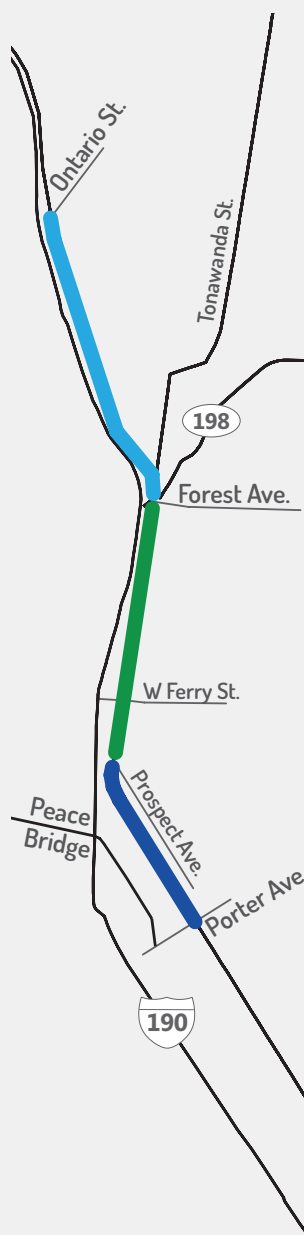
This section has a number of historical sites that are already marked, but could be made more prominent by the street redesign. Some pointed to this section as a possible venue for hosting public events and street activities.

From Prospect to Forest

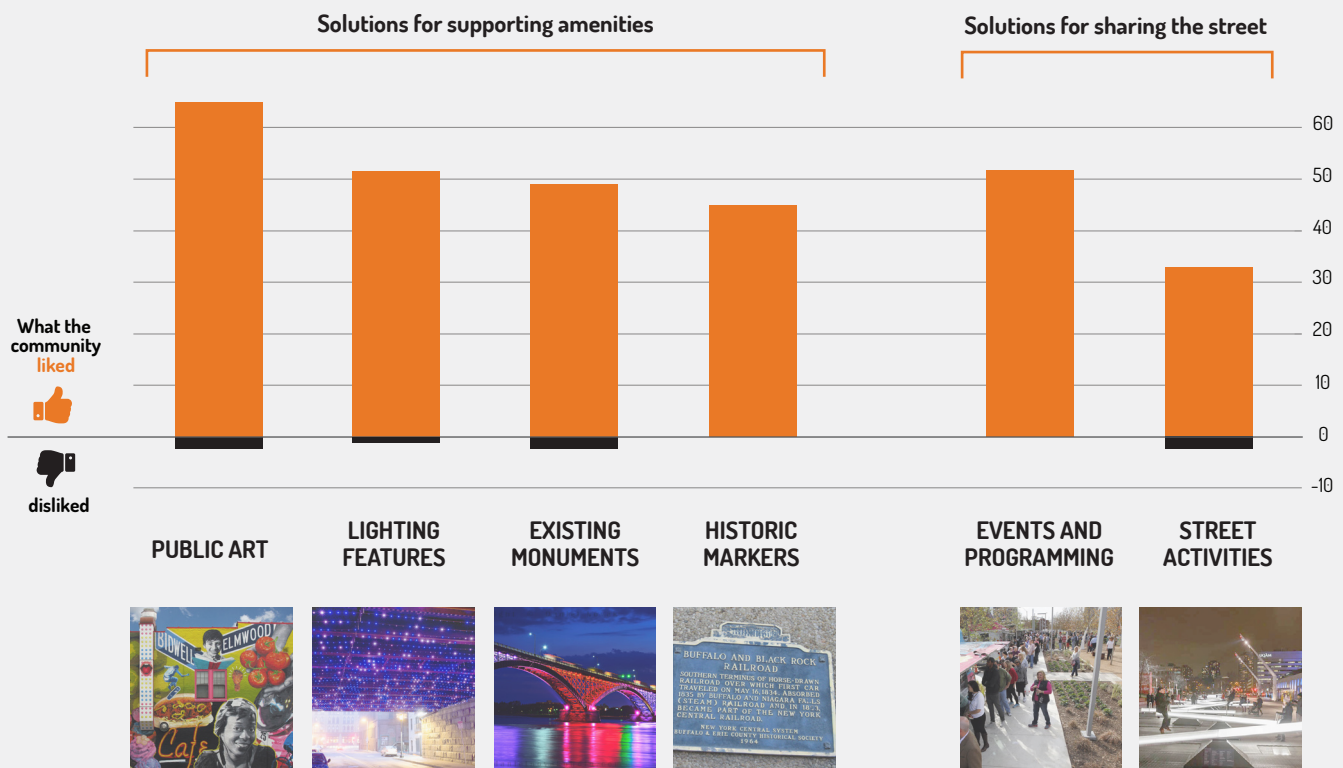
This section is home to rich history and an emergent arts community. Community members wanted the industrial heritage of this area to be preserved, while honoring its diverse history more prominently at certain sites. There is also great potential and support for public art displays in this section.

From Porter to Prospect

This area lies near a number of high profile monuments that many would like to be more visible from the street - like the Peace Bridge and the Connecticut Street Armory. Some suggested that the sides of some large buildings here (at the corner of Busti Avenue for instance) could be used for murals or other public art installations.



Community Solutions & Priorities from the Workshops



PRIORITY

#1

A DIVERSE APPROACH TO PLACEMAKING, EMPHASIZING BOTH OLD AND NEW

Across the engagement, support for embracing arts, culture, and heritage into Niagara Street's sense of place has been very strong. Yet, perhaps reflecting the richness and diversity of cultures connected to the street, the community sees a varied and balanced approach to how this gets accomplished. A range of comments call for emphasizing the evolving diversity of people connected to the street - embracing the role of longstanding ethnic groups connected to Niagara Street (such as Italian Americans and Hispanics), as well as the wide range of ethnicities and nationalities of newer West Side and Black Rock residents. Emphasis on diversity extends to how the community wants history and heritage embedded into the street. Community members called for highlighting important structures or sites that tell the unique story of Niagara Street. Others have suggested that while embracing heritage is important, elements that can highlight the changing nature of Niagara Street should not be forgotten.

PRIORITY

#2

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO BRING PEOPLE TO THE STREET

Events and programs that bring people to the street were also popular, although organized events (i.e. festivals or food truck nights) were seen more favorably than playful works of art or other activities installed into the street.

Community Priorities

Following a review of this draft vision document, community members were invited to rank each of the 13 priorities. Feedback was provided in March 2016 at a community meeting and online via the project website. The aggregate ranking of that feedback is provided below:

How the priorities rank



SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK BY SECTION

Along with general feedback, the community had many specific suggestions for certain parts of the street. A closer look across all the targeted comments, including those heard in the survey and at the community workshops, reveals distinct community preferences for different parts of the street. These ideas are summarized below along with **key opportunity areas** where the community made a number of related suggestions for transforming the streetscape.



FROM FOREST TO ONTARIO

Make it easier for bikes and pedestrians to access the waterfront with clear signs and gateways.
Revitalize street activity with more active storefronts and improved sidewalks.
Add more green features (especially in the section between Forest and Amherst).
Explore the possibility of hosting public events, or street activities.
Provide street parking for local businesses and visitors.

Transform the intersection of 198/Forest Ave/ Tonawanda Street

- Clearer directional signage for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians
- More crosswalks, crossing signals
- Better lighting
- Traffic calming (including 198 on/off ramps)
- A node for bike lanes (preferably separated) with clear wayfinding
- More greenery and improved views
- Enhanced visual and physical connections with the water

FROM PROSPECT TO FOREST

Add crossing signals and crosswalks to create a safe pedestrian environment, especially near retail.
Celebrate history by preserving the industrial feel of the district and adding historical markers.
Incorporate public art that represents local culture and the growing arts community.
Support emergent street activity with more pedestrian amenities.
Integrate natural landscapes at key locations to beautify the area.

Transform the intersection of Ferry Street and access point to Broderick Park

- Crosswalks and crossing signals here and on streets nearby
- Formal markers and gateways to the street to point access to Broderick Park, the Riverwalk and the broader Niagara River Greenway system
- Natural features to create visual connections from the street to Broderick Park and the waterfront
- Bike amenities to welcome bicyclists riding the Riverwalk to the street

FROM PORTER TO PROSPECT

Leverage existing assets, monuments, and destinations to revitalize the street.
Take advantage of view sheds and surfaces that could be used for new public art installations.
Enhance existing natural features and parks and integrate them into the streetscape.
Create clearer, safer connections to bike trails, and waterfront access points.
Add more crosswalks, crossing signals and traffic calming measures.

Transform the intersection of Busti Avenue

- Crosswalks, crossing signals and benches to make it pedestrian-friendly
- A primary node connecting cars, bikes and pedestrians to downtown
- Bike lanes, intersection treatments and wayfinding for bicyclists
- Enhanced views of the waterfront and Peace Bridge
- Green features and natural elements to beautify the area

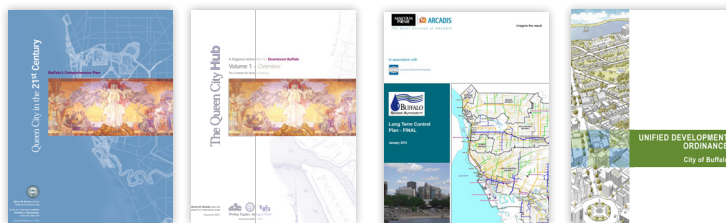
What **planning work** has been done and how can it guide Niagara Street Now?

A total of 33 plans spanning the last decade and more were reviewed and summarized. These plans cover a wide range of planning activities from watershed management to transportation planning, and each offers useful insights for Niagara Street Now. Though every plan touches on many topics, they generally fit into certain categories. These types of plans, and what they can tell us about Niagara Street Now, are briefly described below.

City Plans

Often informed by stakeholder input, city plans create a broad, guiding vision for all communities of Buffalo. These include comprehensive plans that collectively address the many issues that impact a city, and others that focus on specific concerns, such as zoning. Each citywide plan has a unique focus, but all aim to establish Niagara Street as a vital gateway into Buffalo by revitalizing the corridor and its surrounding neighborhoods, expanding transportation options, adding greenspace, and enhancing public access to the waterfront.

Queen City for the 21st Century: Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan, 2006
Queen City Hub: A Strategic Regional Action Plan for Downtown Buffalo, 2007
BSA CSO Long Term Control Plan/Green Infrastructure Master Plan, 2014
Buffalo Green Code: Land Use Plan and Unified Development Ordinance, 2015



Neighborhood Plans

Commonly developed by community groups or neighborhood planning associations, these plans provide broad visions for specific neighborhoods and suggest strategies that reflect community values. Though Niagara Street crosses many engaged neighborhoods, they all recognize its importance as a critical corridor for economic revitalization, historical preservation and environmental restoration.

Building a Neighborhood of Choice: A Neighborhood Plan for the Riverside Planning Community, 2007
Historic Black Rock: War of 1812 Bicentennial Community Plan, 2008
Rediscover Riverside: 2010 Riverside Community Plan, 2010
West Side Sustainable Community Plan, 2010
Conceptual Design for Re-imagining Niagara Street as a Complete Street, 2011
PUSH Buffalo-BNSC: Building for the Future: Community Development Plan for the Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Green Development Zone, 2012
Tonawanda Street Corridor: Brownfield Opportunity Area, 2014
Imagining the Future of Niagara Street, 2015
Upper Rock Local Historic Preservation District Plan, 2015



Waterfront Plans

These plans focus on revitalizing our waterfronts. They recommend that the Niagara Street corridor becomes a distinct gateway into the city by improving public waterfront access, restoring shoreline ecology, and celebrating history along the Niagara River.

Queen City Waterfront: Buffalo Waterfront Corridor Initiative: A Strategic Plan for Transportation Improvements, 2007

Buffalo Waterfront Plan: Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, 2015



Environmental/Parks Plans

These plans lay out strategies for restoring parks and nature. Though they vary in scale, these plans commonly suggest that the Niagara Street corridor should serve as a significant environmental destination; one that is in need of ecological restoration, protection from pollution, and enhanced access to public open spaces that embrace the waterfront and its history.

Scajaquada Creek Initiative: Watershed Master Plan, 2002

Great Lakes Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, 2005

Niagara River Greenway Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, 2007

The Olmsted City: The Buffalo Olmsted Park System: Plan for the 21st Century, 2007

Black Rock Canal Park Feasibility Analysis, 2010

Green Infrastructure Solutions to Buffalo's Sewer Overflow Challenge: Draft Feasibility Study, 2011

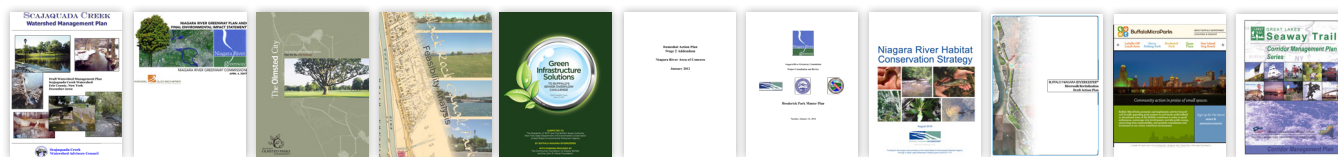
Remedial Action Plan Stage 2 Addendum: Niagara River Area of Concern, 2012

Broderick Park Master Plan, 2014

Niagara River Habitat Conservation Strategy, 2014

Riverwalk Revitalization Draft Action Plan, 2014

Buffalo MicroParks, 2015



Transportation Plans

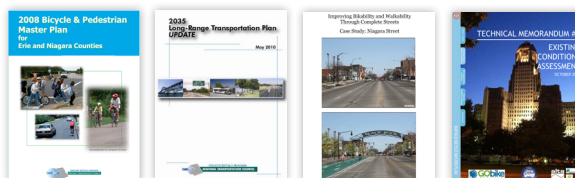
By studying local trends and preferences, these plans aim to accommodate the transportation needs of cities or regions. Even those with a broad, regional focus recommend that formal accommodations be made to integrate bikes, pedestrians and public transit in our roadways, especially key routes like Niagara Street.

2008 Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan for Erie and Niagara Counties, 2008

2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan, 2010

Improving Bikability and Walkability through Complete Streets: Case Study: Niagara Street, 2014

Buffalo Bicycle Master Plan: Technical Memorandum #1: Existing Conditions Assessment, 2014



Regional Plans

These plans bring communities together to develop a broad vision to help shape the future of the entire region. Regional plans support strategic investments near waterfronts and existing commercial corridors, like Niagara Street, in order to promote sustainability and revitalize the regional economy.

A Strategy for Prosperity in Western New York: WNY Economic Development Strategic Plan, 2011

Western New York Regional Sustainability Plan, 2013

One Region Forward: A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara, 2015



Glossary of Design Choices

A range of design choices that can contribute to the accessibility, safety, and vibrancy of Niagara Street were presented at community workshops as a basis for identifying priorities and design preferences. The definitions and imagery below explain what these design choices are and what they may look like if implemented.

DRIVING AND PARKING



Crosswalks

Striped crosswalks with clear, well-lit crosswalk signals and countdowns. This increases overall safety and comfort for pedestrians.



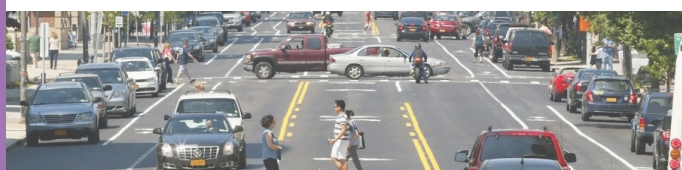
Bump-Outs

Bump-outs widen the sidewalks at key intersections to slow automobile traffic and make crossing the street shorter and safer.



Street Parking

Allowing for ample on-street parking can serve businesses, residents and visitors. It can also assist in slowing traffic and increasing awareness of drivers.



Traffic Calming

Traffic calming efforts can slow automobile traffic and make it easier for pedestrians and bicyclists. Measures can include adding a flexible middle turning lane, introducing bicycle lanes, and maximizing on-street parking.



Vegetated Parking lots

These parking lots dedicate a significant portion of their surface to permeable ground, planted trees, shrubs and grasses. They help provide shade, screen undesirable views, slowly release surface water runoff back into the ground water and improve air quality.

WALKING



Storefront Activity

Increasing width of sidewalks in select areas can encourage more retail shopping and outdoor experiences, such as bistro tables and chairs, seasonal pop-up shops, farmer's markets, and more.



Improved Sidewalks

Widened and more attractive sidewalks can create more vibrant, welcoming streets for pedestrians of all ages and abilities.



Street Lighting

Street lighting improves visibility on city streets and invites increased nighttime pedestrian activity.

WALKING



Signage

Wayfinding signage, educational signs and historic markers help direct people to sites and features of significance in the urban landscape and help visitors navigate neighborhoods and parks.



Seating

Playful, iconic benches and seating elements in the streetscape can encourage a welcoming public atmosphere. They reinforce street activities, aid in identity and offer resting points for senior citizens.

BICYCLING



Bike Lanes

Addition of bike lanes in both directions of traffic along Niagara Street can make it safer and inviting to bike. It also reminds motorists of the need to share the road with other forms of transportation.



Bike Maintenance

These stations are a free public amenity, and allow cyclists to air-up tires, check tire pressure and make minor adjustments and repairs to their bicycles.



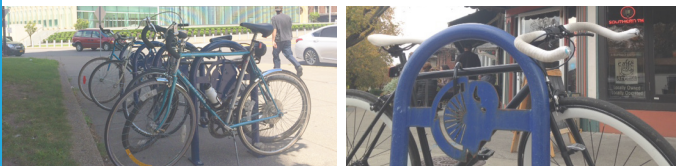
Bike Parking Pods

These bicycle structures help shelter bicycles from the harsh winter climate of Buffalo, and communicate a commitment on part of the city to encourage and facilitate bicycle commuting.



Separated Cycleways

While similar to bike lanes, these separated cycleways create an added level of safety from the risks of riding adjacent to both moving and parked automobiles. The separation also helps improve safety between cyclists and pedestrian traffic and even overall travel efficiency.



Bike Racks

Standard bicycle racks provided by the City of Buffalo could facilitate bicycle usage throughout the entire corridor of Niagara Street.



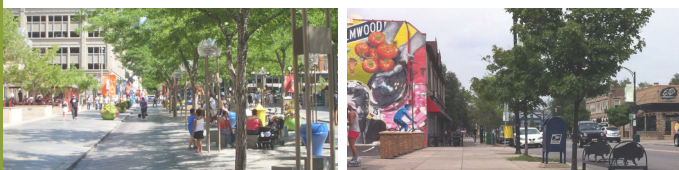
Bike Intersection Treatments

Explicit marking of the bicycle lanes through traffic intersections ensure cyclist safety and generate greater awareness of bicycle right-of-ways in relationship to automobile traffic.



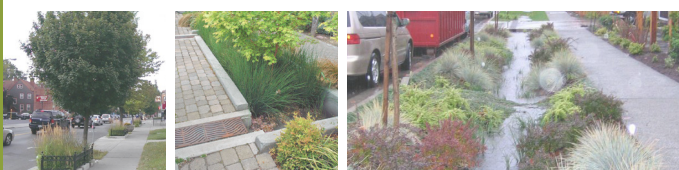
Water Features

Small water features such as a runnel, fountain, or mist can help bring the feeling of water to Niagara Street, despite being dislocated from the actual river front. The sounds and visual effects can enhance the streetscape experience.



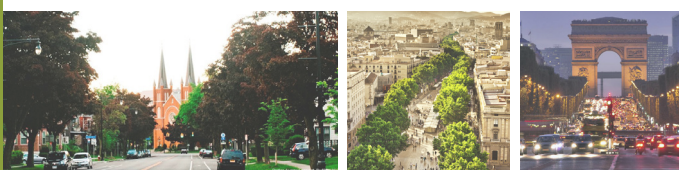
Street Trees

Trees bring numerous benefits to cities, including beautification, improving shade-cover and air-quality, and assisting urban water management.



Rain Gardens and Swales

Made up of well-maintained water-tolerant grasses, shrubs, and trees, green infrastructure elements improve storm water and snow-melt management. They can also beautify, improve air-quality, provide shade and cool the air when it is hot.



Historical/Formal Landscapes

The landscape character of Niagara Street could take a variety of themes and styles. One possibility would be a historic reference to Frederick Law Olmsted's legacy in designing Buffalo's parks system, as well as a more formal European aesthetic.



Lush Planting

Lush green plantings integrated into the streetscape. This design theme works well with green infrastructure initiatives to manage storm water and snowmelt in an aesthetically-pleasing way.



Hardscape Design

Portions of the street could have a character that uses stone or concrete paving, with select areas of turf and garden beds. Hardscape designs work well to host public events, markets and gatherings, and often feel open and airy.



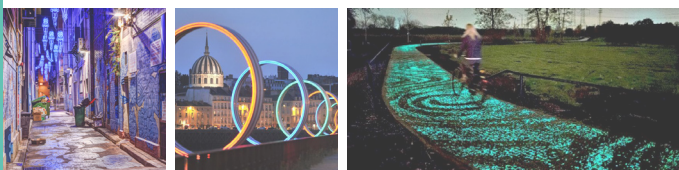
Markers and Gateways

A system of signs and markers just off the sidewalk or throughout the urban landscape that delineate routes to the waterfront, routes to certain neighborhoods, downtown, or other desirable districts in Buffalo.



Improved Views

Finding opportunities within the urban fabric to open up views toward the shoreline of the Niagara River. This could involve elevating the viewer onto simple viewing 'platforms' or clearing out vegetation to make the water more visible.



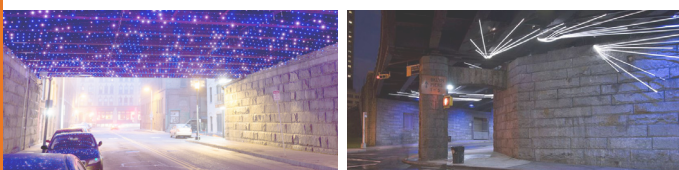
Lighting as Wayfinding

Enhancing the visibility and memorability of markers and gateways at nighttime through color and distinctive lighting scheme. A lighting scheme used to enhance the wayfinding signage also improves visibility of walkways at night, and helps increase landmark branding through a complimentary nighttime appearance.



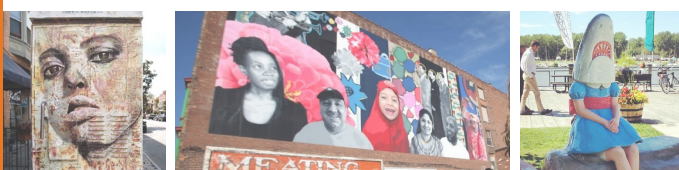
Historic Markers

Signs and/or systems indicating historic landmarks and other sites.



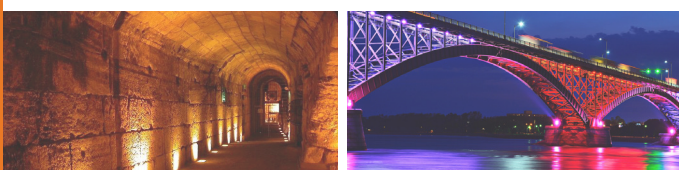
Lighting Features

Lighting elements that create a certain mood or energy. Meant to enrich the public experience and provide a playful sense of place, and safety at night. Could be designed with local artists and illuminate historic sites or important places.



Public Arts

Murals, sculptures, or light installations in public space created by artists to help enhance landmarks, or make better use of large blank walls in highly visible areas.



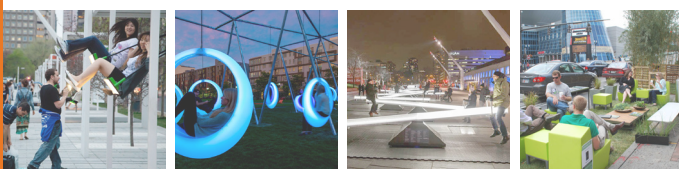
Existing Monuments

Celebration through lighting or public art installations to highlight both traditional and non-traditional monuments. They might include old factories, bridges, or historic infrastructures, as well as more traditional monuments in Buffalo.



Events and Programming

Increasing the amount and diversity of large public events such as parades, public concerts, outdoor movies, or similar events. This could mean creating more public open spaces that could double as flexible event spaces.



Street Activities

Inviting more active and vibrant street life such as farmers markets, seasonal holiday markets, food truck areas, into Niagara Street. This could mean widening sidewalks, or dedicating certain lots or vacant land for use by temporary pop-up events.



The City of Buffalo and its partners guiding Niagara Street Now would like to **thank each and every member of the community who participated** in a survey, attended a workshop, or offered comments at meetings.

From the start, **Niagara Street Now** has been focused on **generating meaningful community input that can shape design solutions for the street**. This document and the community values within would not be possible without the **contribution of 600+ voices** that shaped it - **residents, business owners, and community stakeholders**.



The City of Buffalo's Department of Public Works, Parks & Streets and the Buffalo Sewer Authority are leading an effort to transform Niagara Street.

Mayor Byron W. Brown