

Focus Group Meeting #1 Summary

2021 River Rock Connections Project

City of Buffalo, New York

Overview

The City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning and consultant team held a focus group meeting on September 29, 2021 at the Amvets Medallion Post 13 located at 25 Review Place within the study area. The purpose of the focus group meeting was to provide a forum for discussing issues and concerns related to neighborhood and waterfront connectivity, and the possibility/feasibility of a rail-to-trail project along the CSX-owned rail corridor.

The focus group meeting was open to anyone from the public. The meeting was advertised on the City of Buffalo website and with a flyer distributed to the project's stakeholder advisory group and to other identified stakeholders in the community. In total, 11 members of the community participated in the meeting.

Summary of Meeting Attendee Input/Feedback

City staff and the consultant team were on hand to facilitate the focus group meeting and to take notes. A brief overview of the guided walking tours which took place earlier in the day was also provided. Meeting participants were actively engaged in the discussions and provided valuable insight and input. Participant observations and comments are provided below.

1. The waterfront has a lot of diverse residents including immigrants that fish and use the waterfront frequently/daily
2. Basic human needs mentioned including water and bathroom facilities
3. Concern about how green space would connect to water



4. Hertel Ave truck route is an issue, loud traffic and vibrations
5. Austin Street underpass safety concerns
6. High level of need for more recreational facilities and playgrounds
7. Opportunity for placing a recreational facility on top of former railroad property or in the River Rock Drive area
8. Arthur/Rano/Tonawanda “very hot” for rail trail, recreational area, complete streets
9. Use open space behind the Grant Street Tops for recreation (outside of study area)
10. Storm water management opportunities at underpasses and daylighting the underpasses.

Focus group meeting attendees participated in a prioritization exercise. Using dots numbered 1-4 they indicated their top priorities from among potentials discussed from the guided walking tours and from the topics discussed during the focus group meeting.

Priority	Location	Comment
1 2 4	25 Rano St	<i>Develop vacant land at Rano & Tonawanda St. Bring creek to surface in this area.</i>
2 3 4 (star)	Tow Path Park	<i>Tow Path Park</i>
3	Tow Path Park	<i>Enhance Hertel Entrance & Vista’s to Tow Path Park</i>
(Star)	Tow Path Park	[None]
2 2 3 (star)	Unity Island Entrance	<i>Unity Island Entrance</i>
1 1 1 3	CSX Rail Corridor centered on Amherst St	<i>Rails to Trails [undecipherable] to River Rock to Ontario</i>
1	CSX Rail Corridor near River Rock Dr	<i>Rails to trails from Parish St to Ontario St</i>
4	CSX Rail Corridor near Austin St	<i>Playground</i>
1 4	CSX Rail Corridor near Austin St.	<i>Making tow viaducts: both Austin + Amherst safe for pedestrians and bicyclists</i>
1 2 2 3	CSX Rail Corridor near Parish St	<i>Rails to trails idea because it seems a relatively small lift for a big impact with “bathhouses”</i>

Priority	Location	Comment
3	Hertel Ave and Niagara River	<i>Foot of Hertel feels enclosed + despite the green space feels small nothing draws people to grass</i>
(star)	Arthur St and Tonawanda St	[None]
4	Ontario St and Niagara St	<i>Improve/resolve connection to foot of Ontario waterfront</i>
2	Amherst St and Austin St Underpasses	<i>Day light Amherst + Austin Viaducts</i>
(star)	Tonawanda St and Niagara St	[None]

Project Contact Information

Project Website:

www.buffalony.gov/1403/River-Rock-Connections

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