

The Buffalo-Niagara Plan-Net

SPRING 2017

Message from the Director

By Jonathan Bleuer

Summer is nearly upon us! As the days get warmer and our lives get busier, this is our opportunity to experience the best that WNY has to offer. I would encourage you to remember that, wherever you find yourself and whatever you find yourself doing, planners probably had a part in making that place or activity happen. So your “daily grind” matters, and people taking advantage of a gorgeous WNY summer just might be the reason why.

As we look forward, there are a few great opportunities that the WNY APA Board and Committee are pursuing on your behalf. Have you ever been on a pedal tour of Buffalo? How about another lunch-and-learn? Keep on the lookout for future emails and communications. As always, we appreciate any ideas or suggestions you may have. Also, if you have a project that you want to share with fellow planners, let us know by dropping an email to wnyapa@gmail.com.

Finally as we look behind us; WNY APA is coming off of two great events, a cross-border event in partnership with the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) and the Annual Awards Reception at Resurgence Brewing Company. Both events were incredibly well received, and the cross-border event even seems to be gathering some national attention! Many thanks to our own George McKibbon for his leadership in making that event, not only a success, but the continuation of a collaborative movement! The Annual Awards Reception featured another packed house. This is the second year that our attendance has pushed towards 90, more than doubling previous years. Your enthusiasm and quality of work shows that the region is back on track. Many thanks to our own Rocky Navarro for capturing the spirit and selecting the stellar venue for our celebration!

Thank you **all** for encapsulating WNY APA, and making great communities happen.



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2017 Annual Awards Reception at Resurgence Brewing Co.

The 2017 Annual Awards Reception at Resurgence Brewing Co. celebrated leading practice, leadership and achievement in planning and the planning profession on Monday, May 15. Seventy-eight people participated in celebrating awards for planners and planning projects selected from applicants from the Counties of Niagara, Erie, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties and Southern Ontario.



The Awards offer the opportunity to recognize and showcase leading practice across a range of planning disciplines and sectors. We celebrate and reward outstanding planning as well as outstanding planners, which includes emerging planners in our field some of whom will be joining our professional ranks in the very near future.

Without the Awards Committee there can be no awards. This year's awards committee included Angela Keppel, Chair of the Awards Committee, Kelly Dixon of GBNRTC, Amy Fisk, Niagara County, and Sarah Gatti, Orleans County. Thank you for your generous insight, experience and expertise in selecting these awardees.

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Starting with the award for Comprehensive Planning, brownfields are a cause near and dear to our hearts, and we understand how difficult redevelopment of areas with concentrations of brownfields can be, especially in smaller towns and villages.

The Village of Gowanda was once home to industries such as tanneries and glue companies. As industries closed or relocated, residents were left without employment opportunities and the Village was left with vacant and underutilized tracts of land. Working under the New York State Brownfield Opportunity Area program, the Project Team identified key brownfield sites for redevelopment that will provide opportunities for revitalization of the Village, including significant assets such as Cattaraugus Creek.

Some recommendations in the plan include streetscape improvements with traffic calming, improving water access, implementing stormwater management and green infrastructure, creating versatile public spaces, leveraging existing assets, redefining industry and celebrating wins. The project team identified three focus areas with specific projects to act as catalysts for the redevelopment of the Village of Gowanda. Crystal Surdyk from Joy Kuebler Landscape Architecture and her project team accepted the 2017 WNY Award for Comprehensive Planning.

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The second award category focused on Best Practices. This category emphasizes results and demonstrates how innovative and state-of-the-art planning methods and practices help to create communities of lasting value.

The Richardson Olmsted Complex's redevelopment is a part of Buffalo's resurgence as an art and culture destination for enthusiasts from around the world. After 40 years of sitting vacant, the Richardson Center Corporation has revitalized the complex, with the first phase completed this year, turning the 140-year old former Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane into the Hotel Henry. Staff from the Richardson Center Corporation accepted the 2017 WNY APA Award for Best Practices.

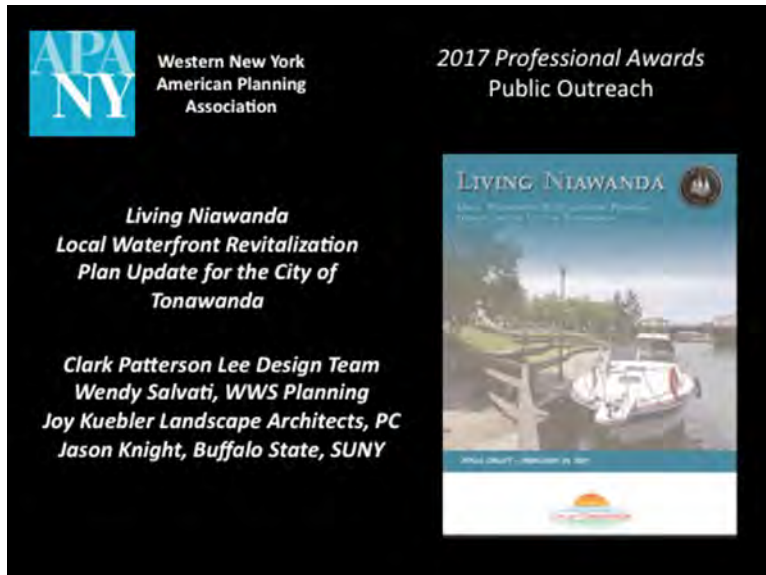


The next award category was for Implementation, which recognizes an effort that demonstrates a significant achievement for an area in accomplishing positive changes as a result of planning.

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The Tonawanda Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2014 and adopted in 2015. Implementation of the plan is ongoing. The Planning Board plays a lead role in identifying projects from a list of more than 100 action items. Each year, the Town Board receives a report on the status of the implementation plan along with a budget request. This annual review and follow up has made the Tonawanda Comp Plan a valuable tool for setting policy and prioritizing projects. Examples of some of the projects completed under the Comp plan are:

- Zoning amendments to commercial corridor developments standards;
- Zoning amendments to “right-size” parking standards for commercial development;
- Adopting the waterfront land use plan;
- Road landscape design plans, complete construction and marking of the Youngmann Commerce Center;
- Adopting a Complete Streets Policy, providing pedestrian and bicycle accommodations to increase connectivity; and
- Collaborating with the school districts to better assess trends and changes in the community.



The next award category was for Public Outreach. This award honors an individual, project, or program that uses information and education about the value of planning to create greater awareness among citizens or specific segments of the public. The award celebrates how planning improves a community's quality of life.

The City of Tonawanda's history is rooted in its relationship with the water – including the Niagara River, Tonawanda Creek/the Erie Canal, Ellicott Creek and Two Mile Creek. The LWRP identifies ways to better incorporate and use the waterbodies in the city. Living Niawanda engaged residents through exciting and interactive opportunities for them to see, touch, and come to better know the land and water that surrounds them. The project team facilitated a process that invited the steering committee, elected officials and the general public to play in the landscape and experience it in real time. This process was conducted through the use of interactive games, walking through the parks, and boat tours to allow them to discuss the waterfront from the actual water. Two tactile urbanism events were conducted that allowed the community to try design ideas out, including an event to set up a one block district with traffic calming, additional pedestrian circulation and examples of restaurants and shops for one night during a “public meeting party”. The Living Niawanda project team accepted the 2017 WNY APA Award for Public Outreach.

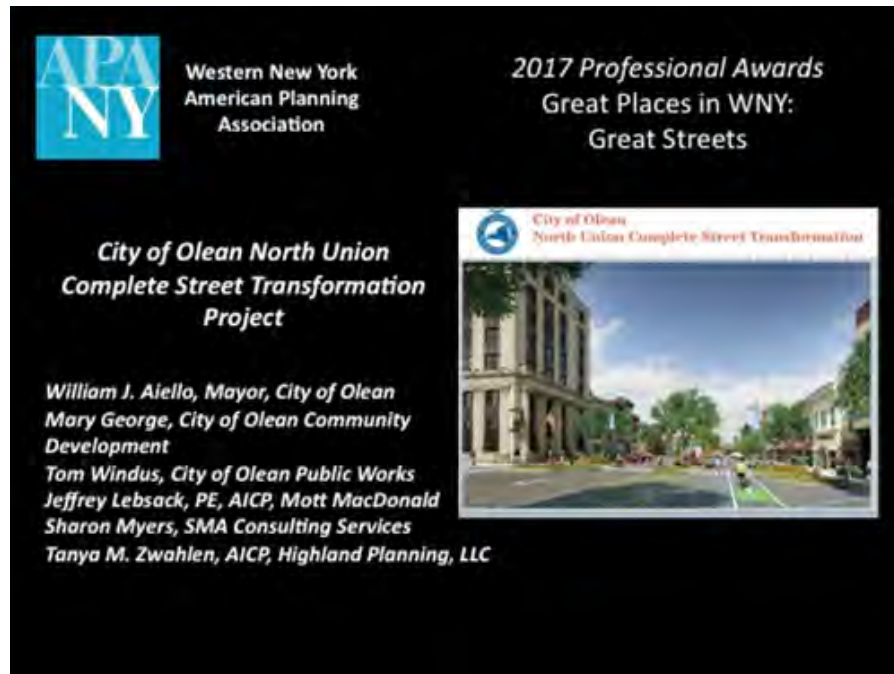
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The next project received an Honorable Mention in the Public Outreach Category. Niagara Street Now undertook a robust engagement process to ground the redesign of a 2 mile stretch of Niagara Street, from Porter Avenue to Ontario Street. Niagara Street serves as one of the City of Buffalo's major commercial corridors, a highly utilized public transit route, a growing target for private investment and a gateway to downtown from the Peace Bridge and Canada. Diverse residents and a wide range of businesses, nonprofits and major institutions surround the street.

Due to the complexity of the project and the importance of Niagara Street as a corridor made public engagement important to the success of the project. The approach incorporated both traditional and new technologies to develop a foundation for the project, including a six-week community survey. This survey integrated tablets and GPS technology to capture specific locations of concern as well as translation tools to engage the diverse populations. The approach was comprehensive in scope and every property, business and residents alike were targeted to take the survey on the tablet, as well as making the survey available online. It was translated into the seven languages most commonly spoken in the neighborhoods surrounding the corridor. The plan developed integrated the voices of more than 600 residents, business owners and stakeholders passionate about Niagara Street and its future. Bart Roberts from UB Regional Institute accepted the WNY APA Honorable Mention for Public Outreach.

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The next award was for the Great Places in WNY category. This category recognizes places that demonstrate exemplary character, quality and planning and represent the gold standard in terms of having a sense of place, cultural and historical interest, community involvement and a vision for tomorrow. A great street comprises the entire three-dimensional visual corridor, including the public realm and how it relates to the adjacent land uses.

The North Union Complete Street Transformation converted a four-lane automobile-oriented arterial roadway into a two-lane complete street. North Union Street is the downtown of the City of Olean, which is the biggest city in Cattaraugus County. The complete project supports economic vitality, addresses water quality concerns with innovative stormwater treatment and improves mobility, safety and accessibility for all users.

The project includes five roundabouts, bicycle lanes, permeable pavers and landscaped rain gardens to treat runoff. The project had to incorporate special design to ensure that the large “super trucks” from Dresser Rand could navigate the roundabouts to limit the impact the new street would have on businesses. Street lighting was also designed to ensure that they could accommodate holiday decorations to continue the Santa Clause Lane for the community.

The North Union Street Transformation project team accepted the 2017 WNY APA Great Places Award for Great Streets.

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The next category is Outstanding Student Project. Scajaquada Creek Uncovered: a Historic Cultural Landscape in the City of Buffalo was a graduate level studio project that looked at the Scajaquada Creek corridor.

A team of 14 students developed a master plan and design guidelines for Scajaquada Creek. The project integrated concepts of preservation planning with the technical skills of environmental and land use planning. The students studied the creek over the course of 200 years of history, including significant events such as the Battle of Scajaquada Bridge. The final report is a comprehensive plan for the Creek, building off of existing studies and reports to provide guidance for local officials, government agencies, private and nonprofit organizations and citizen groups about what should be done to advance the public interest in the community to leverage the Creek as a vital natural and cultural resource. Professor Kerry Trayner and her students accepted the 2017 Award for Outstanding Student Project.



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Next was the award for Distinguished Leadership for an Elected Official. This award goes to an elected official for a significant contribution to excellence in public planning.

Brian Kulpa's first experience as a village of Williamsville volunteer was on the Parks Committee, which he joined in 2005 after attending community meetings for several months with his wife. In 2007, Brian was elected a village trustee. As a trustee, Brian played an instrumental role in molding the Village Community Plan, which was adopted in 2010. Since being elected Mayor in 2011, Mayor Kulpa has helped lead the village in addressing more than 90 percent of the focus areas addressed in the Community Plan, including the award winning Picture Main Street plan.

Since his election in 2011, Mayor Kulpa has helped secure more than \$8 million dollars in state and federal funding and has championed the restoration of over 13,000 square feet of village right of way, planting of approximately 1400 street trees and consolidated the Village's water department with the Erie County Water Authority. He oversaw the redevelopment of the historic water mill. His latest focus is improvements in the South Long Neighborhood, including park improvements, streetscape and storm water infrastructure. Additionally, he leads extensive community planning efforts to address redevelopment of the former Darling Construction Yard, enabling a village voice in seeking a plan that is in the best interest of all residents. The Section congratulates Mayor Brian Kulpa's excellent service with the 2017 award for Distinguished Leadership for an Elected Official.



The next award is the AICP Excellence Award. Upon the nomination of the faculty in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University at Buffalo, the Section is pleased to recognize Enjoli Hall as this year's AICP Excellence Award Winner.

Ms. Hall is a second year MUP student at University of Buffalo. She is an Arthur Schomburg Fellow and Western New York Prosperity Fellow and serves as president of the Graduate Planning Student Association. She currently works in the Food Lab at UB, providing research support to the Growing Food Connections project focused on understanding barriers and opportunities to community food systems planning.

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The faculty of the Department of Geography and Planning at Buffalo State College selects the Student of Merit Award. This year, the faculty unanimously nominated Andrea Folgherait to receive this year's Student Merit Award.

Andrea is an Urban and Regional Planning Major with a minor in geography. During her time at Buff State, Andrea completed two internships – first with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development working as a member of the Place Based Outcomes Team for Niagara Falls. Her second internship has been with Westminster Economic Development Initiative, where she has been working on grant research and writing, as well as assisting with economic development workshops and business development outreach. She seems ready to apply her classroom training to real world work experience and ready to join the world of professional planners.

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The Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association, together with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University at Buffalo, established the Michael Krasner Memorial Scholarship in Planning in honor of Mike who was an adjunct professor at UB and a practicing planner in Western New York.

A \$1,500 tuition scholarship is awarded annually to a student who is entering their final year of graduate study in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at UB and whose academic interests and professional career plans exemplify a commitment to planning issues in WNY.

This year the award goes to David Riley. David left his job with a daily newspaper in Rochester to enroll full-time in the Master of Urban Planning program at the University at Buffalo where his focus is on neighborhood planning and community development. His overarching goal is to become a planner who can help residents to establish clear goals for their communities and empower them to carry out their vision, not simply impose my ideas on others. David plans to practice planning in Rochester once he graduates.

Upcoming Events:

Please check Section Events webpage.

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