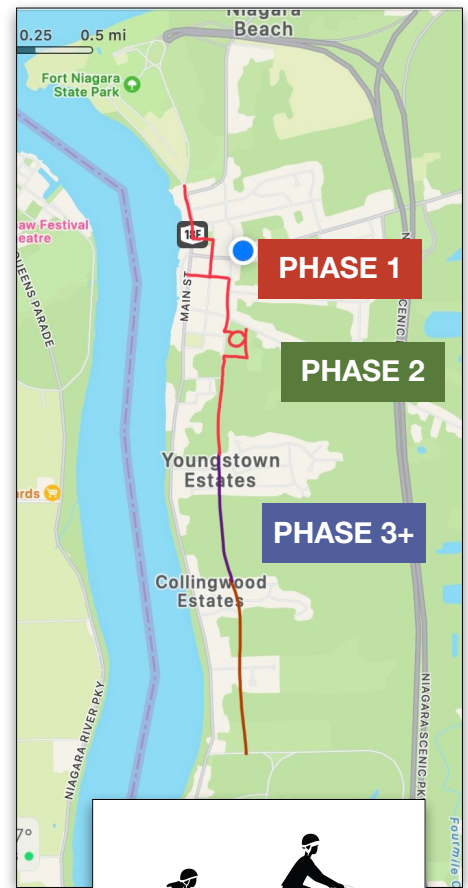


Lower Niagara Recreation Trail Project

A multiphase Project Connecting Lower Niagara River's Parks & Neighborhoods

Proposal for Phase 1 & 2

Connecting Fort Niagara State Park to the Youngstown Estates Neighborhood via a Bike Path & Amenities



Prepared for: Niagara River Greenway Ad-hoc Committee on
Recreation & Tourism

Prepared by: Christine Rath for the Village of Youngstown

Submitted by: Rob Reisman, Mayor of Youngstown NY and
Duffy Johnson, Supervisor of Town of Porter

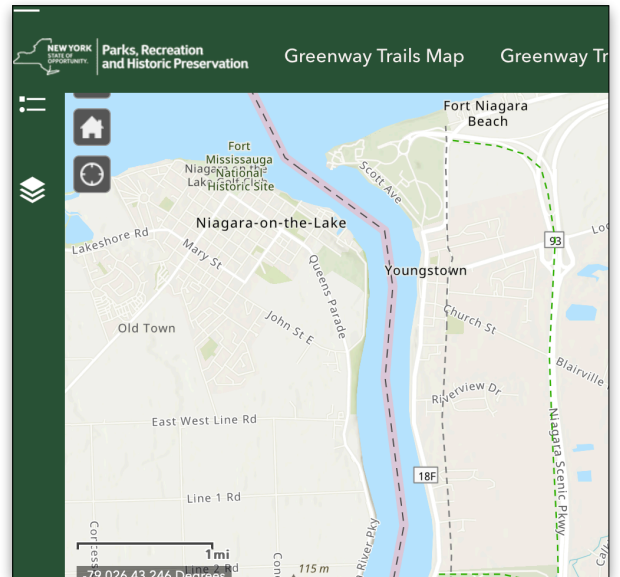
Supported by: Irene Myers, Niagara County Legislator, 1st Dist.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

New York State Greenway trails offer an opportunity for active, healthy lifestyles and enrich our communities with a sense of history, access to nature, and safe places to exercise and play. The Village of Youngstown (VOY), Town of Porter (TOP) and Niagara County are collaborating under a non-profit organization, Friends of Youngstown, Inc. (FOY) to complete the final section of the Greenway Trail between Manhattan to Fort Niagara, specifically from Joseph Davis State Park to Fort Niagara State Park. The FOY subcommittee is called River Trails Roads & Rails (RTRR).



The overall trail project is being planned in three stages:

- Phase 1: Trail path contained within the Village of Youngstown, NY; running from Fort Niagara State Park to the Youngstown Estates neighborhood. Phase 1 of the trail project is included in Youngstown's recreation revitalization plan called "Let's Get Moving Youngstown".
- Phase 2: Phase 2 is the planning and design of the trail from Youngstown Estates to Joseph Davis State Park.
- Phase 3+: Phase 3+ is planned to be the construction of the trail from Youngstown Estates to Joseph Davis State Park including Collingwood and Runaway Bay neighborhoods.



The Village of Youngstown is requesting \$404,415 from the Niagara River Greenway Adhoc Committee on Recreation and Tourism to build the Phase 1 trail including selected amenities. Additional funding for the "Let's Get Moving Youngstown" recreation project is being sought through local sponsorships, other grants and including additional in-kind costs supported by the VOY and TOP.

PROJECT BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

LET'S GET MOVING YOUNGSTOWN & LOWER NIAGARA RECREATION TRAIL

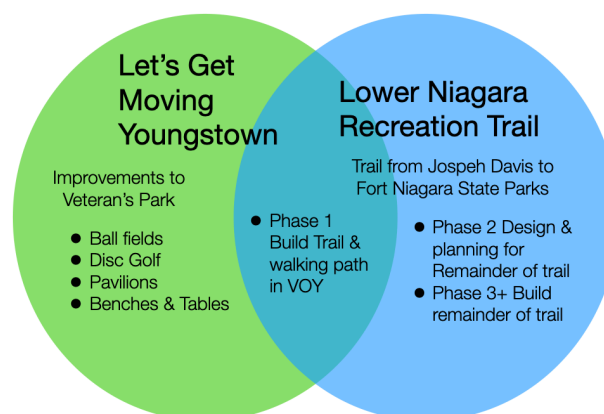
The Village of Youngstown (VOY) has identified an overall need to improve physical, social-emotional, and cognitive benefits (mind/body/soul building activities) of our residents by providing a safe and engaging environment for families, and visitors. A 5-year recreation revitalization plan for Veteran's Park called "Let's Get Moving Youngstown" has been developed in conjunction with Friends of Youngstown, Inc (FOY) to spark our village revitalization and renew our "Young in Spirit, Ageless in Pride" slogan.

The Let's Get Moving Youngstown plan includes the trail on the old railway corridor connecting Youngstown Estates to Veteran's Park, plus replacement of the degraded pavilion, adding an event pavilion, renovating ball fields, adding more disc golf holes and many other outdoor activity relevant improvements.

A local community group of residents from VOY and TOP have come together to further improve the overall community by revitalizing the Greenway Trail concept from Fort Niagara State Park to Joseph Davis State Park. The collaboration between VOY & TOP has generated plans for the Lower Niagara Recreation Trail. The goal is to connect Joseph Davis State Park through the various communities along River Rd. To Fort Niagara State Park. The TOP approved LWRP also contains this project concept and various other improvements to Lower River Rd.

The plan has defined the trail in 3+ phases:

- Phase 1 as the trail in Let's Get Moving Youngstown project, connecting Fort Niagara State Park (northern border of VOY) to Youngstown Estates (southern border of VOY). The trail will run through Veteran's and Falkner Parks providing easy and safe access to community activity centers for physical play and events along with a direct connection to Fort Niagara State Park.
- Phase 2 is the planning and design of the trail from Youngstown Estates to Joseph Davis State Park.
- Phase 3+ is planned to be the actual construction of the trail from Youngstown Estates to Joseph Davis State Park including Collingwood and Runaway Bay neighborhoods.



Phase 1 Trail Project Overview - Trail from Fort Niagara State Park to Youngstown Estates:

Fort Niagara State Park has a boat launch providing access to the Lower Niagara River and Lake Ontario, woodland hiking trails, swimming pools, a view of Lake Ontario, picnic grounds, playgrounds, water fowl hunting, 18 soccer fields. In winter, visitors can cross-country ski, snowshoe, and sled. The park is adjacent to Old Fort Niagara State Historic Site. Old Fort Niagara offers living-history programs year round, plus a museum and original 18th-century buildings. It is operated by the Old Fort Niagara Association, a not-for-profit organization, and is a Registered National Historic Landmark and New York State Historic Site. Based on NY State Park press releases, the Fort Niagara State Park leads in number of visitors each year from 600,000 to over 800,000 in recent years. (Reference: <https://parks.ny.gov>)

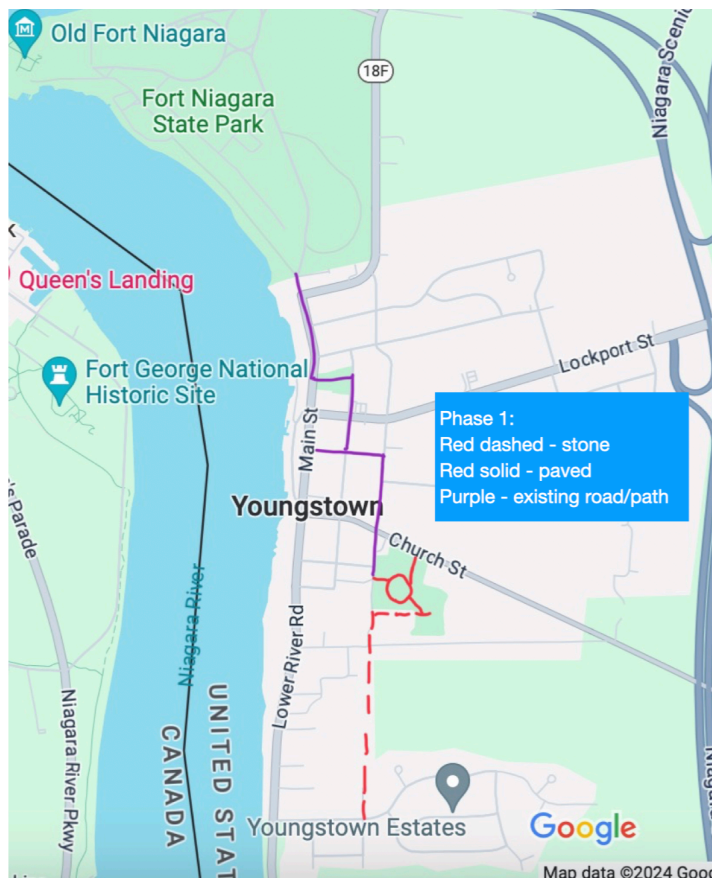
Falkner Park is the second park within the Village of Youngstown which has a well established recreation program offerings with the renovated splash pad, playsets and planned programs. The park hosts many weekly musical events throughout the summer in the pavilion. There is an existing brick walking path and beautiful gardens established in the park. Falkner Park also boasts a rich history with the War of 1812 and the underground railroad. The gazebo across from Falkner Park provides a scenic overlook with beautiful river and sunset views.

Veteran's Park is the largest park within the Village of Youngstown. The park is the home of the Town of Lewiston Girl's softball league (in which Youngstown and Town of Porter residents participate), the recently installed 9-hole disc golf course, resurfaced basketball courts, tennis courts with pickleball being added, a swing set, summer recreation programs, a community dog-park and the new Project Free Play programs. This park also hosts many family/community picnics and events throughout the year including major music events that have drawn over 1,000 attendees. Veteran's Park renovation is in process with the completion of the ball fields (a collaborative effort between Village of Youngstown, Town of Porter and the Town of Lewiston), installation of trees to add shade, planning the replacement of ballfields fencing, and installation of donated new benches and picnic tables. FOY is offering sponsorship opportunities for local businesses or residents to support the overall funding of planned renovations.

PHASE 1 Trail Content:

The following content is included in the the Phase 1 proposal to the Niagara River Greenway Adhoc Committee on Recreation and Tourism :

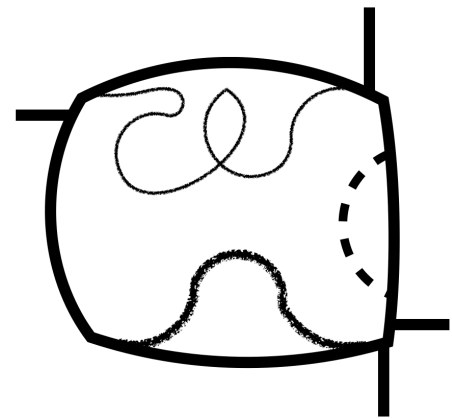
- Trail installation from Youngstown Estates to Veteran's Park: The trail will be 12 feet wide and approximately 1,800 feet long made of tamped crushed stone with a cinder finish.
- The walking/cycling loop within Veteran's Park will be a paved 8 foot wide by approximately 1,400 feet trail connecting the play activity centers and dog-park. The "loop" design will have a "bike park" theme that will combine a walking path with parallel sections that will have bike specific activities for children such as riding hills and swerves. The intent would allow parents to ride or walk next to their children while performing these fun activities. This provides a unique opportunity in the area differentiating Veteran's Park from others.
- Installation of landscaping for a butterfly trail along the path and selected areas in the park.
- Convert the existing dog-park from grass to crushed stone to facilitate winter-time/wet weather use. The trail from the east parking lot to dog-park will be maintained in the winter to ensure access.
- The remainder of the trail will be planned for seasonal use only allowing for cross country skiing and snow shoeing.



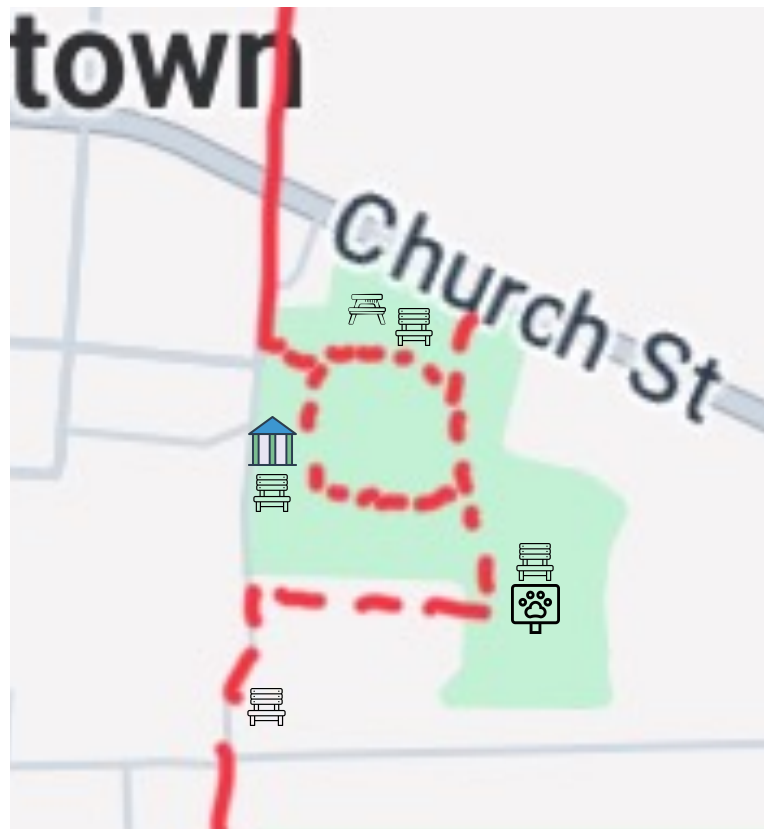
The "Loop" Walking/bike path concept:

Walking path is solid black

Bike path would merge with walking path at several locations with some type of obstacle course to ride on (bumps), rallies, and curves.



- The trail will then continue with painted sharrows on local Village Roads starting down 3rd Street/Nancy Price Dr., turning left onto Hinman St. where bike parking will be provided so the cyclists can rest and walk around the downtown business. The trail will continue north, turning right onto 2nd Street, turning left into/ thru Faulkner Park and finally turning right onto Main Street directly down to and ending at Fort Niagara State Park. The team is working to obtain approval from the County to paint shadows on the northern end of Main St. Alternatively, a sign will be posted at Falkner Park directing cyclists to Fort Niagara State Park.
- Installation of benches, two water stations (Veteran's Park and Falkner Park), and bike racks along the path.
- Installation of two Greenway signs and ten historical signs along the path to provide directions for visitors, locations of key businesses, and key historical information.



Phase 2: Planning & Design of Future Trail Phases

Phase 2 will be the planning and design for the remainder of the trail from Youngstown Estates to Joseph Davis State Park. The team is submitting a grant request to the Ralph C. Wilson Jr Foundation Grant for Design and Access in the amount of \$45,000 due in November 2024. The intent is to contract an engineering firm to develop proposals utilizing the existing railway easement, address key community input, and define the future installation and funding plan.

Remaining Content of the “Let’s Get Moving Youngstown” Plan

Pavilion Replacement:

The recreation plan includes replacing the existing aged pavilion with a multi-use pavilion able to support picnics and events. The present pavilion is aged and is deteriorating and has had some bracing installed to stabilize it for safe use. The goal would be to design a new pavilion with similar picnic space 20’x40’x12’, a grill area and a connected amphitheater pavilion 24’x30’x20’ with a raised stage. The stage area would be used for community/celebratory events, musical events, plays and outdoor movie nights. This would facilitate a large area for the community to come together and enjoy their local spirit. The pavilion provides for potential revenue in renting the facility. The combined pavilion will have a steel painted metal roof, steel columns, sufficient electric service for events. The picnic area will be designed for 4 seasons with roll-up doors.

Sample pictures are below. NOTE: rendering of a combined pavilion is being developed.



Shade Trees:

The plan includes the purchase and installation of 10 shade trees that are well suited for our climate, likely maples. The trees would be installed throughout the disc golf course to provide shade while playing and also to provide obstacles to make the course more challenging.

Advancing the Niagara River Greenway Vision

The Lower Niagara Recreation Trail project strives to meet and advance the vision, goals and objectives outlined in the Niagara River Greenway Plan consistent with the following **Greenway goals**:

- **Improve Access:** The Lower Niagara Recreation Trail Phase 1 will improve safe access to the local parks, activities and events that are held in Veteran's Park, Falkner Park, Fort Niagara State Park and the Village of Youngstown.
- **Make Connections:** This project is Phase 1 of a larger Lower Niagara Recreation Trail plan to connect Fort Niagara State Park to Joseph Davis State Park by connecting Fort Niagara to Youngstown Estates via a direct trail vs. access by various roadways. Veteran's Park, Faulkner Park and the amenities included in this plan will make these parks ideal resting/leisure stations for people traveling along the Greenway Trail. Future phases of this project will complete the overall Greenway trail from Manhattan to Fort Niagara.
- **Protect & Restore Environmental Systems:** Phase 1 of this project transforms the old Niagara Rail corridor into a useable public space. Residents and visitors will enjoy what nature has to offer on the trail as the project will clean up, restore and maintain the trail.
- **Celebrate History & Heritage:** This project targets the Village's rich history and heritage as a quaint waterfront village with beautiful views of the Niagara River, Lake Ontario and the Old Fort Niagara. The trail provides access to residents and visitors to take advantage of events and daily activities within the historic locations along the trail and learn from the signage that will be placed.
- **Spark Revitalization & Renewal:** This project is a significant part of the overall Village of Youngstown revitalization and renewal by focusing on accessibility to our parks, improved physical, social-emotional, and cognitive benefits (mind/body/soul building activities) of our residents by providing a safe and engaging environment for families, and visitors.
- **Promote Long Term Sustainability:** The addition of the Phase 1 trail along with the new pavilion, renovating bathrooms, and other efforts described in this proposal help to ensure the parks and facilities remain modern and functional and the parks remain relevant for future generations. These enhancements will increase park utilization and support the Village revitalization plan.

Community & Government Support

A community input event was held on June 15, 2024 with over 100 local residents in attendance. The FOY River Trails, Roads & Rails Sub-Committee shared the vision of the overall plan of the Lower Niagara Recreation Trail to connect Fort Niagara State Park all the way to Joseph Davis State Park. The community support was overwhelming positive. We have a petition of support with over 180 signatures from the community.

The overall input received is that the community would absolutely utilize the trail when installed as there is significant concern regarding the safety of Lower River Road for cyclists and walkers.



Attachment 1 of this proposal provides +180 signatures of community support for the overall Lower Niagara Recreation Trail from local residents and visitors.

Attachment 2 of this proposal provides the survey results from local residents citing their current experiences and identifying their preference for changes to support walking and cycling the Lower Niagara area supporting this project.

Attachment 3 of this proposal contained letters of support.

The Village of Youngstown is in the process of updating their LWRP and Comprehensive plan with an outside consultant. This will take significant time to complete but the project content is well aligned with previous documents and the overall revitalization/renewal plan that has been developed collaboratively between Youngstown Recreation Commission and Friends of Youngstown, Inc. Friends of Youngstown, Inc. is a non-profit organization that was formed to support the community of Youngstown in their efforts to revitalize, improve and ensure long term sustainability of the community for generations to come.

Existing Conditions & Let's Get Moving Youngstown Project

Veteran's Park presently contains the following:

- Aged pavilion
- Veteran's Memorial
- Swingset and climbing mound
- Historic Niagara Frontier Railway Station & Corridor (needs substantial renovation)
- Village of Youngstown Volunteer Fire Department Helicopter landing pad
- Community dog-park (grass based)
- Recreation building: bathrooms and snack bar require renovation.
- Two parking lots
- No sidewalks or paths leading to the park, thus limiting access.

Current renovations completed at Veteran's Park as "Let's Get Moving Youngstown Project"

- Recreation Building: Office (renovated May 2024).
- Two renovated ballfields (completed June 2024)
- 9-hole disc golf course (completed May 2024)
- Basketball courts (Resurfaced June 2024)
- Removed & replaced existing sidewalk around Recreation building (completed August 2024)
- Tennis courts (Plan to add striping for pickleball - target Fall 2024)
- New benches & picnic tables for pavilion (target Fall 2024)

Project Implementation

The Phase 1 project is targeted to begin in Spring of 2025 with full completion by Fall of 2025.

The Phase 2 planning & design project for the remainder of the Lower Niagara Recreation Trail is targeted to be complete within approximately 1 year of funding approval.

DRAFT BUDGET - FUNDING PLAN

The estimated total cost of the Let's Get Moving Youngstown plan for 2024-2025 is \$816,415 with an additional annual maintenance burden of \$20,000 for the VOY DPW.

The Village of Youngstown/Town of Porter is submitting this grant request to fund Phase 1 is as follows:

Niagara County Adhoc Greenway Committee on Recreation & Tourism: The grant request is for \$404,415 of the total of the \$816,450 estimated project costs to build the Phase 1 trail including selected amenities. Additional funding for the Phase 1 project is being sought through local sponsorships, other grants and includes in-kind costs.

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost	Completed
Trail installation - from Estates to Veteran's Park (stone - linear feet of trail x 12 feet wide)	1800	\$100	\$180,000	
The Loop installation - In Veteran's Park (stone base and paved- linear feet of trail X 8 feet wide)	1400	\$100	\$140,000	
Butterfly trail landscaping	1	\$5,000	\$5,000	
Benches	6	\$1,200	\$7,200	
Water stations	2	\$3,500	\$7,000	
Bike racks	8	\$1,000	\$8,000	
Signage (10 medium sized signs)	10	\$500	\$5,000	
Signage (2 Greenway signs)	2	\$12,000	\$24,000	
Engineering & Administrative	1	7.5%	\$28,215	
Greenway requested funding			\$404,415	

Ralph C Wilson Jr Grant: Design & Access through the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo:

Friends of Youngstown, Inc. is submitting a grant application due by November 2024 to the RCW Jr grant for Access & Design in the amount of \$45,000. The purpose of this grant request is to cover the design and planning of the future Lower Niagara Recreation Trail phases, connecting Youngstown Estates to Joseph Davis State Park, including Collingwood and Runaway Bay subdivisions along the trail.

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost	Completed
Planning & Design of future trail sections	1	\$45,000	\$45,000	
Ralph C Wilson Jr Grant request			\$45,000	

Village of Youngstown funding plan: VOY and FOY have already successfully funded \$49,500 in improvements of the Let's Get Moving Youngstown plan. The funding has been provided thru VOY DPW and Recreation budgets, two successful private foundation grant awards, FOY fundraising and collaboration of funding and in-kind effort between VOY, TOP and the Town of Lewiston.



The Village of Youngstown Board of Trustees will need to pass a resolution to commit to this grant as described and to fund \$108,000 towards the incremental DPW employee to handle the workload this project contains, bathroom remodel and shade trees.

Friends of Youngstown, Inc. will continuing fundraising efforts to support the Village of Youngstown as follows:

- Currently active: Sponsorships of \$500 or \$250 to have a business banner displayed at Veteran's Park to directly support the replacement of the backstop and dugout fencing areas of Field 1.
- Under development: Celebration plaques to memorialize a family member/friend or celebrate a significant event to be placed either on a bench or under one of the new shade trees.
- Under development: Veteran's Park Pavilion naming rights & sponsorships will be offered to major companies or individuals in the Niagara County Region to fund the cost of the new combined pavilion.

The overall VOY Let's Get Moving plan minus trail costs are as follows:

Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Cost	Completed
Veteran's Park Pavilion	1	\$200,000	\$200,000	
Falkner Park Bathroom renovation to be ADA compliant	1	\$25,000	\$25,000	
DPW incremental employee	1	\$75,000	\$75,000	
Shade trees	10	\$800	\$8,000	
Ball field backstop & dugout fencing replacement	1	\$9,500	\$9,500	
Recreation Office renovation - complete 2024	1			\$2,000
Ball field renovations - complete 2024	1			\$12,000
Basketball court resurface - complete 2024	1			\$1,000
Recreation building sidewalks - complete 2024	1			\$9,000
9 Hole disc golf course - complete 2024	1			\$13,500
Pavilion picnic tables & benches - in process 2024	1			\$12,000
Village of Youngstown			\$317,500	\$49,500

Source of Funding	Cost	Percentage of overall project planned
Greenway requested funding	\$404,415	50%
RCW grant funding application	\$45,000	6%
VOY	\$108,000	13%
Fundraising/sponsorship efforts	\$209,500	26%
Completed projects by VOY	\$49,500	6%
Total project	\$816,415	

WORK COMPLETION / RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Village DPW will work jointly with Town of Porter to contract out the installation of the tamped crush stone base with cinder finished pathway and paved loop trail. The project team will work to procure road millings from local municipalities to reduce the amount of crushed stone to potentially save on the total project costs.

The Village of Youngstown DPW will handle the painting of the sharrows on the Village roads, as well as installation of the benches, signs and bike racks. The renovations of the bathrooms and installation of the water stations will be contracted out.

Operation and maintenance of the trail and facilities will be handled exclusively by the Village of Youngstown DPW which is currently responsible for all other maintenance in the Village.

The DPW will work directly with a pavilion construction company to design and install the new pavilion. The DPW does have an option to contract out the engineering separately from the construction.

Trail engineering of Phase 1 will be contracted out by the Village of Youngstown.

All administrative aspects of grant management of Phase 1 will be administered by the Village of Youngstown Clerk's Office.

The planning and design Phase 2 of the Lower Niagara Recreation Trail will be contracted out to an engineering firm, subject of a separate grant request through Ralph C Wilson Jr, Design & Access and not included in the Greenway funding request.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment #1 - Community Petition Signatures in Support of Overall Trail Project obtained by FOU
- Attachment #2 - Community Survey Results obtained by FOY
- Attachment #3 - Individual Letters of support
- Attachment #4 - Historical summary of the Lewiston - Youngstown Railroad