

Humboldt Parkway, The Dream of a “Green Parkway”

Neighbors living around Humboldt Parkway are rallying together in hopes that one day they might see the revitalization of their neighborhood, with a transition from freeway to “Green Parkway”. A new University at Buffalo study/report* brings to light the huge economic impact that would be realized if the project was to come to fruition (exceeding \$1 billion – property values, construction employment of hundreds of jobs, etc). The area that is most impacted by the transition stretches the length between the Fillmore Business District and the Jefferson Street Business District.”

“Already a number of different interests are speaking out about their enthusiasm for the drastic change that would take the parkway back to the way Olmsted first envisioned it. “We absolutely embrace the vision to re-create a viable, walkable, green environment on all sides of the Museum,” says Mark Mortenson of the Buffalo Museum of Science. “That is the environment that the Museum celebrated until it was tragically lost by the construction of the Kensington Expressway.”

Looking back to the way Humboldt once seamlessly connected the Olmsted park system, it’s crazy to think that we would have lost our way so drastically. This is truly an epic Moses vs. Olmsted [ideology] battle that is still not over yet. The majestic parkway that once connected Delaware Park and The Parade (now MLK Park) is not lost, just buried under a sea of freeway that also disconnects vital areas of the city. “Six rows of mature shade trees once provided a wonderful canopy not only to connect Olmsted’s Delaware and Parade Parks, but also to provide a valuable green space where everyone was welcome to enjoy nature, enhancing the visual character and quality of life for the whole community. Restoring this green anchor on the East Side of Buffalo is a major priority of the Conservancy,” stated Olmsted Parks Conservancy President Thomas Herrera-Mishler.

Restore Our Community Coalition (ROCC) chairperson Stephanie Geter stated, “We want to update the community on the progress toward reaching our goal to restore the Olmsted vision of a vibrant, green community space, to remediate the devastation caused by the construction of Route 33, and to create a beautiful gateway to Buffalo’s Medical Corridor. ROCC came together in 2007 to bring this issue to the attention of local and state leaders, focusing our coalition power on the New York State Department of Transportation. Much work has been going on behind the scenes, and we have a plan to make this vision a reality.”

Richard Cummings, President of the Black Chamber of Commerce, asserts that “while the Kensington Expressway construction led to community devastation, we are optimistic that some of the damage can be reversed. Even though the introduction of the expressway in the 60’s isolated the East Side from the rest of Buffalo, we are working with businesses, residents and city leaders to reverse that decline. We believe that our community can be restored.”

For years there has been a battle going on regarding just how to restore the freeway back to a boulevard. Infill? Decking? There are those who say that the freeway must continue to allow cars to get in and out of the city. They oppose infill. Then there are those who say that decking is too costly, and that the money would be hard to come by. Stanley Fleming, who serves as the Executive Director for ROCC, stated, “ I was elated to meet several leading planners and urbanism experts [at a Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) workshop in Buffalo this past June] who affirmed the human, economic and environmental benefits of sustainable planning projects such as our proposal to create a green deck over a portion of Route 33. Projects like this are going on around the country, and at even greater expense than the projected \$560 million that a Green Humboldt Deck would cost, because the point is that this is an investment, which will reap returns. It is not just a transportation cost to correct an urban sprawl mistake. An investment to turn part of this highway into a green boulevard will reap dividends in terms of job creation and increased property

values. An investment to restore a Green Humboldt Parkway will bring to our Buffalo Renaissance the beautiful gateway that our Downtown Revitalization deserves.”

The Restore Our Community Coalition (ROCC) will share highlights of the UB report with the general public on Tuesday, July 22, 2014 from 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Buffalo Museum of Science Cummings Room.

**Study commissioned by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the UB School of Architecture and Planning in conjunction with its Regional Institute Urban Design Project, a team of experts led by principal investigator, Robert Shibley. Key study investigators Paul Ray of the UB Urban Design Project and Professor Hiro Hata, who led a team to develop potential implementation designs for a green parkway, will also be on hand at the meeting.*

via Buffalo Rising: <http://buffalorising.com/2014/07/humboldt-parkway-the-dream-of-a-green-parkway/>