

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Downtown Committee
of
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation**

**65 Niagara Square
901 City Hall
November 15, 2023
12:00 p.m.**

Committee Members Present:

Catherine Amdur
Daniel Castle
Nathan Marton
Brendan R. Mehaffy (Committee Chair)
Kimberley Minkel

Committee Members Absent:

Darby Fishkin
Dottie Gallagher
Darius G. Pridgen
Karen Utz

Officers Present:

Brandye Merriweather, President
Rebecca Gandour, Executive Vice President
Kevin J. Zanner, Secretary

Guests Present: Evan Allen, AmeriCorps; Katie Campos, Executive Director, Ralph Wilson Park Conservancy; Alexis M. Florczak, Hurwitz Fine P.C.; Jay Renkens, MIG (via Zoom); Angelo Rhodes II, BUDC Project Manager; Mike Schmand, Buffalo Place; and Abby Vincent, AmeriCorps.

Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 12:07 p.m. A quorum of the Committee was not present. Agenda item 2 was presented first for informational purposes. Ms. Amdur joined the meeting during the presentation of agenda item 2, at which time a quorum was determined to be present.

- 1.0 Approval of Minutes of the August 16, 2023 Meeting** – The minutes of the August 16, 2023 meeting of the Downtown Committee were presented. Ms. Amdur made a motion to approve the August 16, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Marton and unanimously carried (5-0-0).
- 2.0 Buffalo’s Race for Place – Downtown Waterfront Improvement Plan Project Presentation by MIG Consulting** – Ms. Merriweather introduced Jay Renkens, MIG’s principal-in-charge, and she noted that a public engagement meeting will be held December 5th for the Smart Streets Design Plan and the Downtown Waterfront Improvement Plan. Mr. Renkens presented an overview of the draft Downtown Waterfront Improvement Plan report, including key findings and recommendations. Equity, experience, and identity are key values. Mr. Renkens outlined the four “Big Moves” in the draft report: connecting neighborhoods to Buffalo’s waterfront; enhancing wayfinding and providing a welcoming experience to the waterfront; integrating development along the Erie Street Greenway; and linking the waterfront to the Western New York region. The Committee discussed the draft report and thanked Mr. Renkens for his presentation.
- 3.0 Ralph Wilson Park – Ralph Wilson Park Conservancy Update** – Ms. Campos provided an update regarding the Ralph Wilson Park Conservancy and introduced AmeriCorps volunteers, Abby Vincent and Evan Allen who are working with the Conservancy. Ms. Campos updated the Committee

regarding Park construction, noting that the shoreline work is progressing with creation of an armored slope and natural scalloped shoreline that will restore the Park's shoreline and enhance fish and wildlife habitats. Ms. Campos also reported on the Conservancy's community outreach and engagement efforts. This has included assisting the City of Buffalo with messaging construction progress to the community, which now includes the circulation of weekly construction updates with photos via email. The Conservancy has participated in several community events to further engage the community regarding efforts to create a safe, accessible and inclusive park. Ms. Campos also reported that the Conservancy will be hiring a Director of Park Operations, who will start in mid-January. The Committee thanked Ms. Campos for her report, with Mr. Mehaffy commending Ms. Campos for the Conservancy's community outreach efforts.

- 4.0 Ralph Wilson Park – General Update** – Ms. Gandour presented a general update regarding the Ralph Wilson Park project. BUDC has executed the 9th grant agreement with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, which provides for grant funding in the amount of \$14.4 million dollars to be used towards Park construction. The execution of this grant agreement will allow BUDC to move forward with the 12th amendment to its agreement with MVVA and the 7th amendment to the subgrant agreement with the City of Buffalo. Ms. Gandour also reported that BUDC has submitted a capacity grant request to the Wilson Foundation, which is currently under review. An on-site team meeting with representatives from BUDC, Gardiner & Theobald and the Wilson Foundation will take place on November 16th.
- 5.0 Buffalo's Race for Place – General Update** – Ms. Merriweather presented an update regarding Buffalo's Race for Place. BUDC is working to schedule meetings regarding the implementation of the Downtown Waterfront Improvement Plan. BUDC is also working with UBRI regarding its state and regional economic development plan, which will highlight placemaking and smart growth as two of its goals. Ms. Merriweather reported that a kickoff meeting for Queen City Pop-Up and Downtown Dollars will take place Tuesday, November 21st with the City of Buffalo, Buffalo Place and other partners. Approximately 30-40 small businesses are expected to participate this year. The program is structured as a series of social media giveaways that will provide winners with shopping certificates to participating businesses. BUDC is working with Mayor Brown's communications team to highlight small businesses with a series of short videos regarding the revitalization of downtown Buffalo. BUDC is also partnering with the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor to host events in the future.
- 6.0 Partner Updates** – Mr. Schmand provided the Buffalo Place update. The annual tree lighting ceremony will take place December 9th at Rotary Rink. Depending on the weather, the ice rink is anticipated to open the Friday after Thanksgiving. The 2022 Main Street grants have been finalized. Nine participants are moving forward with the 2023 Main Street grants. The Cars Sharing Main Street project continues on the 400 block of Main Street. A series of surveys are being issued to downtown residents and workers to further downtown programming moving forward.
- 7.0 Adjournment** – There being no further business to come before the Downtown Committee, the November 15, 2023 meeting of the Downtown Committee was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin J. Zanner
Secretary