

Town of Niagara

Master plan taking shape in Veterans Memorial Community Park

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO
Tribune Editor

On Monday, officials from the Town of Niagara held a groundbreaking ceremony in Veterans Memorial Community Park where construction for phase three and phase four of the park's master plan is set to begin this week.

Phase one and phase two of the plan saw the completion of the Remembrance Square Veterans Memorial and a summer splash pad. Supervisor Lee Wallace said the upcoming enhancements will continue to enrich parkgoers' experiences with the park.

"We believe phase three and phase four will provide a significant increase in the recreational opportunities for a wide range of users," Wallace said. "The project will advance public well-being, and promote physical and emotional wellness through the experiences that it will offer by providing both active as well as passive recreational opportunities and amenities for those with special needs, as well as supporting or relaxing atmosphere for visitors."

The final phases include a number of new amenities and enhancements, including a new building dubbed the Community Square. It will house some concession stands, lavatories, storage and an outdoor gathering area that will include gas fire pits, patio seating and a pergola-style roof. Additionally, the park's central focal point will be a 30-foot clock tower, which will be surrounded by gardens, walkways and old-fashioned light poles.

A major aim for the project is to increase recreation in the park. As such, the project will see the construction of a miniature golf course, six artificial turf bocce courts, as well as both a large and small dog park. It will also see the expansion of Elmer's Pond in an



The Town of Niagara has grand plans for Veterans Memorial Park. (Greenway meeting screen grab)

Councilman Samuel Gatto, Councilman Marc Carpenter, Supervisor Lee Wallace take part in a groundbreaking ceremony for phase III and phase IV of the Veterans Memorial Community Park master plan.



effort to create better access as well as better fishing opportunities. Plans are to widen, lengthen and excavate the pond, making it deeper to allow for the addition of more species of fish and wildlife. Wallace said currently the fish that are in the pond die off in the winter, as the water is too shallow. The pond will see an addition of a dock and a boardwalk, which will help make it more handicapped-accessible.

Despite the additions, Wallace made assurances the park will maintain its otherwise natural character.

"The footprint for this park is

more than 125 acres," he said. "Once phase three and phase four is completed, we will barely have touched the green space in this park; and the majority of the green space will remain as you see for future generations."

Wallace said the working master plan for the park was devised

in 2016 with the goal of making Veteran Memorial Community Park "a showplace and destina-

tion for this community, Niagara County, and the region as a whole."

The project has been funded exclusively through the Niagara Greenway Commission and has an estimated total cost of \$4.5 million. \$3.36 million in Greenway funds were most recently awarded for the final phases of the project, with \$1.277 million coming from funds the town currently has in its host community bank account.

The project was originally slated to begin in 2018. However, after the town switched engineering firms, it was determined that initial estimates were too low. After rectifying the costs, hopes were to begin in 2020, but plans were delayed again due to the pandemic.

"It's been a bit of a long haul for this part of the project. COVID and a couple other things put us behind," Wallace said. "It'll take about a year to complete. So, about this time next year, it should be completed and I do believe it will really put this park on the map."

In related news, Veterans Memorial Community Park is also the site for the town's "Music Mania Mondays" concert series, which kicked off July 3 after being canceled last year. Wallace said attendance for the event was highest in series history.

"I think people are just champing at the bit to get back outside after last year and, as I said, this is a community park and a community venue and were glad we can provide these experiences for our residents," Wallace said.

IN THE NEWS



Memorial names Gray director of marketing, special events & PR

Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center has named Andrea Gray its director of marketing, special events and public relations for the Medical Center Foundation.

Gray is a graduate of the State University of New York at Cortland and The College of Saint Rose, where she earned a bachelor's degree in communications and a master's degree in public communications.

Over the past 10 years, Gray has worked in the fields of communications, copyediting, event planning and public relations. After working as a copyeditor in

New York City, she found her way back home to Western New York and began her career in fundraising and event planning at Community Missions of Niagara Frontier before joining Memorial in 2017 as special events and donor relations coordinator.

Prior to this appointment, Gray served as the director of special events and donor relations, raising over a million dollars for various programs and services of the medical center.

NYPA announces full reopening of Power Vista Visitors Center

The New York Power Authority on Friday announced the full reopening on July 5 of its Power Vista visitors center in Lewiston. Most restrictions in place from the COVID-19 pandemic have been removed; however, those unvaccinated are required to wear masks and practice social distancing, as cited by the New York State Department of Health.

The admission-free visitors center, located at 5777 Lewiston Road, will be open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is part of NYPA's Niagara Power Project, the largest electric-

ity producer in New York.

During the pandemic, the Power Authority added additional safety precautions to the complex, including state-of-the-art indoor air filtration systems and additional cleanings, which will remain in place.

The Power Vista, which was redesigned in 2016, offers an array of multimedia exhibits, including hands-on interactive technologies, large touch screens and a virtual roller-coaster ride relating to the production of electricity, energy efficiency and the area's history. The location also provides unique views from the observation deck 350 feet above the Niagara River Gorge.

Throughout the year, the center also serves as the focal point for many free, special events. Check the visitors center website, www.nypa.gov, for event information.

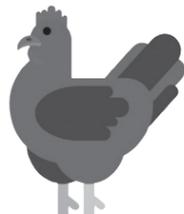
Group tours are encouraged to use the online reservations system or call 286-6661 for further information. Walk-ins are welcome.

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