

BUFFALO URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

## Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park Ecological Services

Buffalo, New York



*From top: Existing park conditions; Lagoon rendering. Images courtesy of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.*

The City of Buffalo had long been interested in transforming a neglected, 90-acre waterfront park located at the junction of the Niagara River and Lake Erie into a dynamic destination. In 2018, a \$100 million grant from the Ralph Wilson Foundation made this transformation possible.

Under the leadership of the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation and a design team helmed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA), the former LaSalle Park is being transformed into a world class, dynamic destination that connects the Greater Buffalo region to the Lake Erie waterfront. The

*Creating a rich ecological edge along an urban waterfront park improves the environment in Buffalo and enables residents and visitors to experience Lake Erie and headwaters of the Niagara River.*

accessible, welcoming, and newly named Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park will include redesigned landscapes with native plantings, lighting, enhanced circulation, and improved access to Lake Erie.

As the team's ecology expert, Biohabitats is helping designers improve the waterfront edge, which currently consists of a traditional bulkhead. MVVA's design creates a lagoon and outcrop features to improve waterfront habitat, accessibility, and connectivity. Biohabitats is assisting the team in developing a functional design framework to ensure that the new edge enhances the ecology of Lake Erie and the Niagara River. Using biomimicry as a design tool, Biohabitats identified functions (and corresponding design elements) both common and unique to each

edge feature. In aggregate, the lagoon and outcrop functions will provide enhanced food chain dynamics, shoreline protection and stability, aquatic, shoreline transition zone, and upland habitats, carbon sequestration, and water quality improvements. It is anticipated that target species critical to the food chain, such as emerald shiner (*Notropis atherinoides*) will benefit from the newly created habitat, as will migratory and resident bird species. By dissipating energy and improving substrate conditions, the new shoreline will promote the re-establishment of submerged aquatic vegetation essential for aquatic organisms and food chain dynamics.

### SERVICES

Assess  
Plan  
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