

Why a Peace Park?

Because the challenges of living in peace on this planet have never been greater. Because it has never been so important for us to make a prosperous living in a way that is in harmony with the natural world.

Because the people of the cross-border Niagara region need to find new ways to grow our economy, build our communities, and repair and care for our environment, natural and urban.

Because we need to find new ways of working together across borders – not just the border between Canada and the U.S. but all the borders that divide government, communities, and organizations.

Because we need a new way of thinking about ourselves, and a new way of showing ourselves to the world – not just “re-branding” the region for commerce, but fundamentally rethinking what it means to live here.



Who are we?

The International Niagara Peace Park is the product of a collaboration involving representatives from the Canadian Consulate General; the Regional Municipality of Niagara; the City of Buffalo; the City of Niagara Falls, NY; Great Lakes United; the Niagara County Department of Planning; the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation; the University of Waterloo; the Urban Design Project at the University of Buffalo, and others.

The idea for a Peace Park is an extension of the *Rethinking Niagara* conferences co-organized by The Urban Design Project and the Waterfront Regeneration Trust in Ontario.

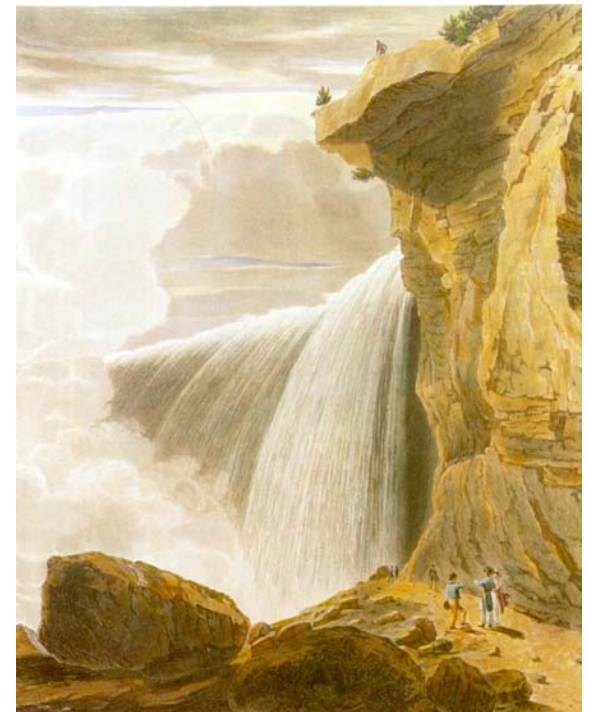
Rethinking Niagara brought together a diverse array of participants from government, business, the arts, environmental advocacy, academia, philanthropy, and community activism to talk about the potential for cross-border cooperation for regional development.

Sponsors of that effort were led by The Canadian Donor Foundation and The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, and included many other governments, businesses, academic institutions, and others.

Our explicit strategy, however, is to continue to forge new partnerships and to expand the circle of collaborators whenever possible. For further information, contact the Urban Design Project at 716-829-3485 ext. 219.



The International Niagara Peace Park



The International Niagara Peace Park will offer a bi-national approach to sustainable community, economic, and environmental development through education, advocacy, and collaboration.

What is the Peace Park?

It will not be a conventional park. We won't mow any lawns. It won't have any new baseball diamonds. Rather, the International Niagara Peace Park is a new name for our region, an idea about its future, and an organization to help make it happen.

When we declare ourselves the International Niagara Peace Park we say to the world that this entire cross-border region is a single place, pursuing a future together, and inviting visitors to share its stories.

All of Erie and Niagara Counties in New York and the Regional Municipality of Niagara in Ontario will be considered part of the Peace Park. It will include all of the natural places in the region that residents treasure and visitors want to see – the Lakes, the River, the Gorge, the Falls itself, and many other sites, natural and human-made.

It will hold all of the stories that we have to tell the world – about the Erie and Welland canals, the birth of hydroelectric power, the flight to freedom on the Underground Railway, and many others.

The Peace Park will be our new address in the world, and a new conception of ourselves. It will be a declaration of principles, too, that economic growth, environmental protection, and community development can – and must – go hand in hand.

Most practically, the Peace Park will be the organization whose sole mission is to organize the constituency and promote the agenda for sustainable development in a great cross-border region.



How will it work?

There are already many in the region working to repair and protect the environment; promote the arts and culture; preserve architectural treasures; develop and interpret heritage stories; and grow the tourism industry.

What is missing is an organization dedicated to drawing the connections between complementary efforts, cross-pollinating partnerships, helping communicate between agencies and across sectors, and advocating for the “big picture” opportunity of sustainable development in a bi-national framework.

So, the International Niagara Peace Park will be a small and catalytic organization, using information and insight to urge the many independent pieces of the ongoing effort into productive alignment.

Doing this will require respecting the prerogatives of autonomous agencies and understanding their respective self-interests while suggesting how they can work with others toward common ends.

The goal is nothing less than to create a model for collaborative action behind an integrated strategy for sustainable development that can transform our region and instruct the world.

Many have a job to do in this effort. The role of the Peace Park is to “connect the dots” among them.

What will it do?

The Peace Park will work to convene the partners, promote communications, and facilitate cooperation to develop and promote an agenda for cross-border regional sustainable development.

Products for the near term (1 to 3 years) will include:

- A prospectus for regional sustainable development through heritage tourism;
- A major conference of scholars to develop the knowledge-base for heritage interpretation; and,
- A publication of conference proceedings to serve as a guide for investments in heritage tourism sites and systems.

Projects for the longer term (the next 10 to 20 years) will involve the Peace Park in a leadership or supporting role as appropriate to:

- Develop and integrate a cross-border system of trails linking natural and heritage sites throughout the region;
- Seek international designation for protected natural environments and habitats;
- Construct an integrated infrastructure for heritage tourism information to help visitors learn what's here and see what they are interested in;
- Promote the preservation, development, and interpretation of key heritage sites and stories.

As a membership organization, the International Niagara Peace Park will work to organize a broad public constituency for these initiatives and carry the agenda for cross-border sustainable development in a way that transcends any single actor or entity.

