Niagara River Greenway Commission
Project Consultation & Review Submission

Niagara Reservation State Park
Visitors Center Programming Study

November, 2019

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY.
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ERIK KULLESEID
Commissioner

MARK V. MISTRETTA
Director, Western District

Project Location

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

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PROJECT POINT OF CONTACT

Name: **Carl Flora** Title: **Senior Architect**

Organization/Firm: **NYSOPRHP – Niagara Region**

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E-Mail Address: **carl.flora@parks.ny.gov**

Project Registration Number_____

Niagara River Greenway Commission
Consultation and Review Form

Type of Review Required: **___X___Mandatory Consultation**

_____Voluntary Review and/or Endorsement

PROJECT SPONSOR INFORMATION

Name: **New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation**

Mailing Address: **P.O. Box 1132, Niagara Falls**

State: **NY** Zip Code: **14303-0132**

Federal Id# **14-740026K** Charities Registration #_____

PROJECT TYPE

Check all that apply: _____ Environmental **___X__** Cultural/Heritage **____** Land or Water Public Access

__X___ Cultural **____**Trail **__X__** Educational/Interpretive

_____Waterfront or Land Based Development _____ Signage

___X__ Recreational _____ Other

Project Name: **Niagara Reservation State Park – Visitors Center Programming Study**

Location: **Niagara Reservation State Park**

Site Address: **332 Prospect Street, Niagara Falls**

State: **NY** Zip Code: **14303-0132**

Minor Civil Division(s): **New York State Parkland**

County: **Niagara**

Project Proponent Property Interest (own, lease, easement or other): **Own**

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Project Narrative

Niagara Reservation State Park Visitors Center Programming Study

1. **Project Description**

The existing Visitors Center at Niagara Falls State Park serves approximately 2-3 million patrons a year, typically being their first experience after arriving at the park. The spaces within the facility are inadequately serving the needs of the visitors, and pedestrian circulation is counterintuitive and not aligned with the sheer volume of patrons passing through the facility. This can lead to a disappointing experience for many patrons. The facility was last updated in the mid-1980s, and as such is very dated and not commensurate with the quality of the rest of the flagship state park. An intervention of some type is necessary, the scope of which will be determined by an initial programming study.
Through its term contract with T.Y. Lin International, NYS Parks will be engaging a nationally recognized and highly qualified architecture firm to closely examine the existing facility, taking inventory of what is and isn't working through observation, interviews and public outreach. Using this information, this firm will develop a programming study which will include three possible design alternatives inclusive of site plans, building floor plans and renderings. The design team will also include an exhibit design specialist who will provide guidance on how interpretive elements should be integrated into the new facility. Once a preferred alternative is selected by parks, the design team will further develop that option including more detailed drawings and renderings, as well as a more comprehensive cost estimate. This design will then serve as the basis for subsequent design phases, which are not included in this submission.
The programming study will focus not just on the existing building, but the immediate site as well including the entrance, exit and plaza areas, and interface of the facility with the approach area from Prospect Street and to the Maid of the Mist ticketing.

2. **Consistency with Key Principles, Goals and Criteria for the Niagara Greenway**

- Excellence/Sustainability/Accessibility – The programming study will serve not just as a starting point, but as a roadmap for the subsequent design phases of the facility. NYS Parks is committed to delivering a facility which will act as a gateway to Niagara Falls, elevating the patron experience. Additionally, it is envisioned that the facility will act as a hub, with interpretive elements which will begin to touch elements within the Niagara Greenway and direct visitors on where to learn and experience more. In this manner, it will serve as a starting point for the patron experience

- Improve Access – The visitors center is often the first experience for patrons visiting the falls, and currently laid out in a manner counterintuitive to patron circulation, leading to a disappointing and often frustrating experience. The programming study will focus on patron

circulation and crowd management at the heavily touristed site, as well as wayfinding with the new facility as a focal point, to improve patron access to the falls and the park as a whole.

- Celebrate History and Heritage – The programming study design team will include a firm focused solely on exhibit design, and the proposed facility will ultimately include substantial interpretive elements which will begin to tell the story of Niagara Falls, and integrate with other interpretive elements throughout the park

- Focus Area - The project is located very close to the Niagara River, well within the Greenway focus area

- Implementable – The proposal for the study has been received, and is ready to be submitted for approval.

3. **Exhibits**

1. Photos of existing facility, including during peak tourist days
2. Proposed scope of services from TY Lin

4. **Project Budget**

(a) Capital Costs

Design	$ 311,827.31

Note – Parks will be leveraging multiple funding sources for the subsequent design and construction costs.

5. **Planning Documents / Support**

This project has been scoped, and a proposal has been developed to complete the study. It is anticipated the study will commence late 2019 and conclude in spring 2020

6. **Environmental Setting / Existing Conditions**

The programming study will focus on an intervention contained within the footprint of the existing visitors center.

7. **SEQR Compliance**

SEQR will not be filed at this phase, however an evaluation of the preferred alternative and how it will fit into a SEQR review will be performed in anticipation of subsequent design phases

Exhibit 1 – Existing Conditions

Niagara Adventure
Theater
DISCOVERY PASS

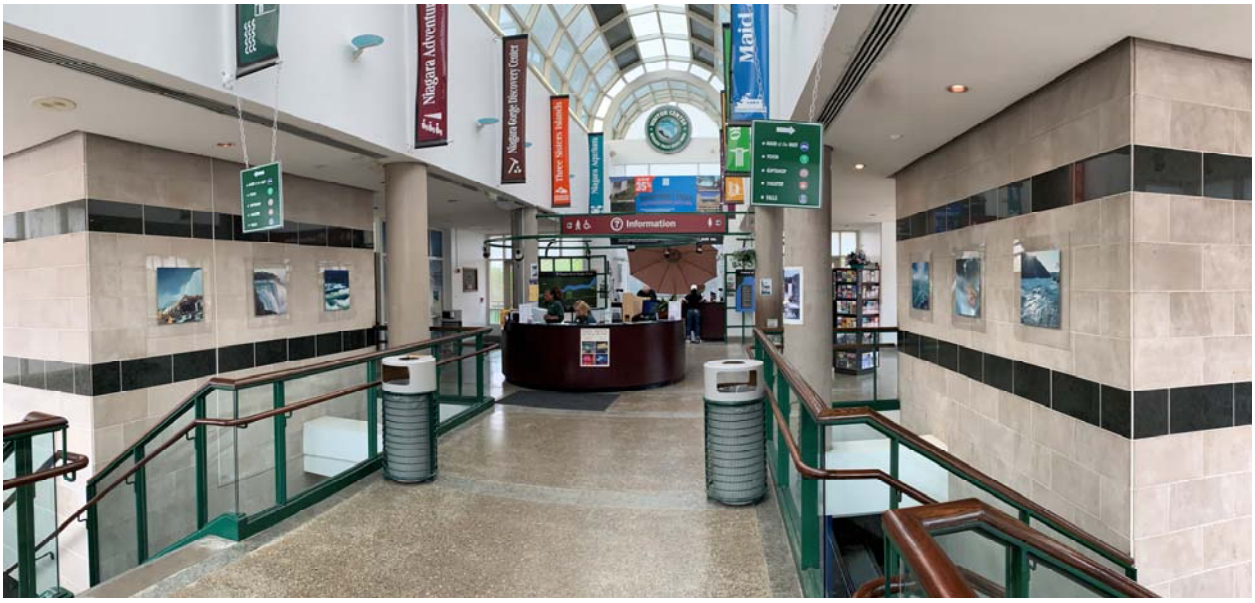
Niagara Adventure
Niagara Gorge Discovery Center
Three Sisters Islands
Maid
Information

Exhibit 2 – Consultant Scope of Work

Visitor Center Programming
Niagara Falls State Park

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Background

This Work Order addresses the Programming and Conceptual Design Phases of the Visitor Center (VC).

GWWO Architects was selected to join the TYLI team as the specialty design firm to lead the programming analysis and conceptual design work, under the leadership of TYLI and with support from the remainder of the term contract team (landscape architecture, survey, estimators, etc.).

NYS Park's wish is to have the selected firm examine the existing facility with a 'fresh set of eyes' to complete a top-to-bottom look at the programming and function of a refurbished and re-branded visitor center.

> **Project Limits:** The Visitor Center including the entrance, exit and plaza areas, and the interface with the approach area from Prospect Street to the Maid of the Mist ticketing.

Under a separate work order, pre-programming reconnaissance and observations at the Visitor Center to gather information on the movements, use and efficiency (or lack thereof) of the various functions and services at the VC was completed. The data collected and complied will be used during the Programming phase.

A six-month schedule is anticipated.

Scope of Basic Services - Work will include:

1. Programming Phase:
    a. Additional field Reconnaissance with and without Parks staff
    b. 2-3 day Kick-off /Programming meeting
        i. Interviews with NYS Parks staff (Park Managers, Parks head of concessions contracts, Public outreach staff, operations, groundskeepers, VC staff, etc.)
        ii. Interviews with current concessionaires
        iii. Public participation with the local municipalities and involved agencies.
        iv. Interpretive plan analysis
    c. Visitor survey to a controlled local/regional audience – focused and controlled by GWWO with Parks input
    d. DELIVERABLES: Interpretive Plan Analysis Document, Programming Document
2. Considerations:
    a. The Administration Building will be considered for potential re-use in conjunction with reprogrammed VC
    b. Current footprint – minimize impacts to surrounding area

Visitor Center Programming
Niagara Falls State Park

c. Views/viewsheds

d. Orientation

e. Interpretations and exhibits

f. Concessions

g. General Operations

h. Service & access for supplies/deliveries

i. Accessibility

3. Building Condition Assessment

   a. VC: as needed, and in part based on recent energy/MEP upgrades.

   b. Admin Building: as needed, based on recent improvements and upgrades.

   c. A modified Baseline Property Condition Assessment of the above referenced property in accordance with *ASTM E-2018-08 Standard Guide for Property Condition Assessment: Baseline Property Condition Assessment Process*. This scope of work was developed in consideration of the following:

      i. The purpose of a property condition assessment is to determine the condition and serviceability of building systems and equipment along with their expected useful life.

   d. The condition assessment will be aligned with the programming goals outlined by TYLI. We anticipate that the data collected by the assessment team will be needed to determine the capacity of systems and equipment to serve the future use of the facility.

   e. DELIVERABLE: Building Conditions Assessment Report

4. Conceptual Design:

   a. 2-3 day design charette with NYS Parks core group.

   b. Development of design alternatives for review and evaluation by Parks core group.

   c. DELIVERABLE: Conceptual site plans, building floor plans, sections, diagrams, and three-dimensional representation – 3 alternatives.

   d. DELIVERABLE: Estimates of Probable Construction Cost for 3 alternatives

5. SEQR/SHPO evaluations process to be led by NYS Parks with support from the design team

6. “Final” Design:

   a. Development of preferred alternative

   b. Public Meeting: 1 on-site meeting to report on the process and present the selected alternative at approximately 90% complete

Visitor Center Programming
Niagara Falls State Park

c. DELIVERABLE: Visualization for use in presentations by Parks. This includes rendered "still" views and one "walk through" animation.

d. DELIVERABLE: Estimate of probable construction cost

Assumptions

1. Meetings
    a. 1 meeting in Albany with State Executive Staff (timing TBD)
    b. 1 meeting in Niagara Falls with State Executive Staff (timing TBD)
    c. 4 trips for site reconnaissance
    d. 1 project kick-off meeting at start of Programming Phase (2-3 days)
    e. 1 charrette/review meeting at the start of the Conceptual Design Phase (2-3 days)
    f. 1 review meeting at the end of the Conceptual Design Phase (1 day)
    g. 1 review meeting at the end of Final Design (1 day)
    h. 1 Public Meeting at approximately 90% Conceptual Design
2. NYS Parks to provide the design team with all available documents related to the work
3. NYS Parks to provide CADD drawings of project area
4. For Meetings, NYS Parks to generate list of invitees, provide outreach/invitations to stakeholders and the public, arrange meeting locations, and assist with organizing interview timeslots.

END