



**NY Power
Authority** | **Canal
Corporation**

For Immediate Release: November 17, 2023

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**New York Power Authority and New York State Canal Corporation
Initiate Planning and Design of a Collaborative, Multiphase Project to
Enhance the Village of Medina’s Connection to the Erie Canal**

***Project Through the Reimagine the Canals Initiative Seeks to Improve
Connectivity Between Canal Waterway, Erie Canalway Trail, and Downtown
Business District through Safety Upgrades and New Amenities***

Installation of Public Art to Spur Tourism

First, Interactive Sculpture Unveiled Today Along Canal in Lions Park

See [Video](#) and [Photos](#) of Today’s Event

The New York Power Authority (NYPA) and New York State Canal Corporation today announced the beginning of a multiphase effort to enhance the Village of Medina’s connection to the Erie Canal through the *Reimagine the Canals* initiative. In partnership with local municipal and philanthropic leaders, as well as assistance from regional educational, civic, and cultural institutions, NYPA and the Canal Corporation are pursuing plans to improve the connectivity and access to the canal waterfront and adjacent Erie Canalway Trail through the village. In addition, a series of enhancements through safety upgrades along the trail, new boater and trail amenities, and curated public art installations will encourage boaters, trail users, and other visitors to experience and enjoy the Orleans County community’s canalside business district.

“Our efforts in Medina reflect the goals of the *Reimagine the Canals* initiative – we are working collaboratively with local stakeholders to enhance and reenergize the Erie Canal so that it remains a vibrant driver of economic activity for decades to come,” said **New York Power Authority President and CEO Justin E. Driscoll**. “The initial art sculpture unveiled today, and the preliminary ideas being considered to improve the village’s connection to the canal, underscore NYPA and the Canal Corporation’s commitment to

leveraging canal infrastructure as a way to encourage year-round visitation to our historic communities.”

The preliminary scope of the multiphase project includes:

- Rehabilitation of the Erie Canal’s northern concrete “highwall” (aqueduct that carries the Erie Canal over Oak Orchard Creek in the village), including safety improvements and increased viewing access of Medina Falls
- Rehabilitation of the Erie Canalway Trail & Empire State Trail from the Horan Road bridge to the Bates Road bridge, leveraging a \$411,495 Federal TAP Grant
- A substantial \$2.654 million grant secured from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation (RCWJF), through the Rochester Area Community Foundation (RACF), poised to establish a vibrant public waterfront park that seamlessly links the gateways at the Medina Lift Bridge and Horan Road bridge to downtown Medina in an accessible loop designed to unify the community around the Erie Canal. Designed by City Architects of New York City, the initiative places a premium on recreational amenities for boaters and trail users, promoting a dynamic public space and enhancing the quality of life for residents.
- An Art Triennial event representing Western New York with support of local municipal leaders, the RCWJF, NYS Council on the Arts, and institutional partners from Rochester’s Memorial Art Gallery and the Buffalo AKG.

New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said, “For generations, Medina thrived as a canal port exporting sandstone to support construction projects around the world, and now this picturesque canalside village is evolving to rediscover itself as an emerging center for arts and culture in Western New York. By initiating the preliminary design work that will guide future projects that aim to improve and rehabilitate our infrastructure, the Canal Corporation is demonstrating its commitment to Medina, and we are building upon a great foundation already laid by the community.”

State Senator Rob Ortt said, “I am proud to represent an area with such a rich local history. The planned enhancements to the Village of Medina’s exhibition of, and access to the Erie Canal will enable future generations to enjoy and learn not only of the history of the Erie Canal, but also of its importance to the history of our region and the entire state of New York. Once completed, these projects will benefit Medina and surrounding areas with a substantial economic boost for years to come. I’d also like to thank Canal Corporation Director Brian Stratton for his continued commitment to canal communities like Medina.”

Assemblyman Steve Hawley said, "I'm happy to hear the New York Power Authority and New York State Canal Corporation's announcement of an initiative to improve the Village of Medina's access to the Erie Canal. The canal is an integral part of our region, and I will continue to work closely with these organizations to ensure that this waterway is maintained and accessible."

Orleans County Legislature Chair Lynne M. Johnson said, "Communities along the canal like Medina have been working hard to make the Erie Canal more than just an historic marker to our past, but rather the centerpiece of a dynamic future. Today's public art unveiling coupled with other initiatives supported NYPA and the Canal Corporation through *Reimagine the Canals* is an exciting step forward for Medina and the collective efforts to create vibrant cultural tourism."

Village of Medina Mayor Michael Sidari said, "Medina's relationship to the Erie Canal dates back nearly 200 years, and it continues to serve as an anchor for our businesses, recreational outings, and cultural institutions in our community. Today's announcement reminds us of the role the Erie Canal plays in the foundation of our village and highlights the ways in which it will continue to improve and endure in the coming years. I am thrilled to begin the next chapter of our partnership with NYPA and the Canal Corporation and look forward to seeing how our next generation of residents benefit from these investments."

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Director of Parks & Trails Initiative JJ Tighe said, "The new waterfront promenade will enhance the quality of life for Medina residents and neighboring communities by providing a key connection along the Erie Canal and Empire State Trail, while creating a recreational loop that strings together improved park space and other recreational opportunities. These enhancements provide an exciting opportunity to grow and invigorate tourism and the local economy in Medina and will kick off the next 100 years of the Erie Canal as a recreational asset for communities across the State of New York."

Rochester Area Community Foundation President and CEO Simeon Banister said, "We're grateful to enable investments in the arts across our region as a recent study by the Center for an Urban Future: [Upstate's Creative Spark: How the Arts is catalyzing Economic Vitality Across Upstate New York](#) makes the case that the arts are essential for economic revitalization. We are excited about what these investments will mean for Medina, Orleans County and our region as a whole."

For the initial public art installation, NYPA and the Canal Corporation brought together students from the Medina High School art program and graduate students from the

University at Buffalo (UB) School of Architecture and Planning in a collaborative design effort that allowed young individuals within the community to actively engage in defining the key elements of this new public art piece.

Today, thanks to a partnership with the Medina Lions Club, the [Sydney Gross Memorial](#) was unveiled during a public reception at Lions Park along the Erie Canal. The memorial is an interactive sculpture composed of 23 precast concrete modules arranged in clusters that create a furniture setting. The arrangement is designed for recreation, reflection, and relaxation for anyone traveling on the canal or trail or as a local resident enjoying the canalside park. The memorial was inspired by and named for Sydney Gross, a UB School of Architecture and Planning student who passed away after a car accident in July 2009. The memorial is the first work of public art to be installed in Medina.

University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning Professors Joyce Hwang and Christopher Romano said, “Working with NYPA and the Canal Corporation has been an eye-opening and multi-scalar experience for our graduate architecture students. Our team was energized by the opportunity to be part of a dynamic series of design conversations and stakeholder collaborations. These ranged from brainstorming with Joana Pires Pacheco, Capital Planning Manager from *Reimagine the Canals*, about site locations, engaging with Jennifer Scott and local students from Medina High School to discuss public art, working within Medina City Hall with Mayor Mike Sidari on early design ideas, to finally coordinating with the Lions Club on the finer details of the project installation. It was a project that required us to connect with many people and bridge together many state agencies. In the end, the result is a project that has touched many people’s lives with the ambition to touch many more as they stop for a reflective moment along the Erie Canal.”

Medina High School Art Teacher Jen Scott said, “The creativity was palpable in the art room! The graduate students from the Architecture Department at UB were engaging and collaborative while working with the high school students. It was exciting to see ideas flying as well as empowering to see the high school students offering their input. The explanations from Professors Hwang and Romano and oversight from Joana Pires Pacheco from the New York Power Authority helped the high school students understand the scope of the project commemorating Sydney Gross. Remembering and honoring her through this public art installation serves as a landmark that all community members in Medina can enjoy. Whether students visit the installation for photos, boaters on the canal use it as a landmark, or community members picnic and play there, it will be a powerful public space that will be enjoyed for future generations.”

New York State Canal Recreationway Commissioner and Orleans County Resident Ken DeRoller said, “The New York Power Authority and Canal Corporation’s *Reimagine*

the Canals initiative continues to expand opportunities to promote and support outdoor recreation and investment not only here in Orleans County, but also across the entire Canal corridor. As communities put together their Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans, which Medina has successfully done, the possibilities are truly endless as we collectively work to ensure the canal waterway continues to support our local economies.”

Planning and design work will continue throughout 2024 with a formal construction schedule to be determined after all approvals are secured with an aim to have an announcement in conjunction with the Erie Canal’s bicentennial in 2025. In addition, the recurring Art Triennial will launch in 2025.

Through the *Reimagine the Canals* initiative, the New York Power Authority committed \$300 million to revitalize the Erie Canal corridor as a tourism and recreation destination while simultaneously boosting economic development and improving the resiliency of canalside communities.

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About the New York State Canal Corporation

New York’s Canal system includes four historic canals: the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga – Seneca. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. The canals connect hundreds of unique communities across upstate New York.

The New York State Canal Corporation is a subsidiary of the New York Power Authority.

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