

Tier 1 Grantee Project Descriptions

**— TONAWANDA COMMUNITY —
ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS PROGRAM**



Citizen Coalition for Wildlife and Environment

“Plant for Nature! Ecological Gardening for Community Health and Native Plant Giveaway”

Grant Amount: \$11,900

Location: Buffalo, City of Tonawanda, Grand Island, Kenmore, North Tonawanda, Town of Tonawanda

Project Description

Recent scientific research has demonstrated that ecosystems that are healthy and biodiverse are crucial to public health. Although awareness is rising that mature and healthy ecosystems are a necessity, we are witnessing unprecedented loss of species and habitat. In New York State, only approximately 550 square miles of old growth forest remains – or .01 percent of the state land mass. It is no surprise that 37 percent of NY State’s native plants, vertebrate animals, and ecosystems are in jeopardy of extinction, and 7 percent may have already been lost.

The grant will allow the Citizen Coalition for Wildlife and Environment to host a one-day event that will educate and provide tools to community members for achieving immediate and tangible improvements to our surrounding environment. It will emphasize actions that contribute to healthier ecological systems – such as planting native trees, bushes, flowers, and grasses – which will improve our social and public health.

The event will include a plant giveaway to allow participants to transform their yards promoting biodiversity and ecological balance. In addition, local environmental organizations will host tables at the event and share resources to help citizens become better stewards of their surrounding environment. By working together, we can empower the community to foster ecological health.



Citizen Science Community Resources, Inc.

“Community Victory Garden”

Grant Amount: \$24,908

Location: Buffalo, City of Tonawanda, Grand Island, Kenmore, North Tonawanda, Town of Tonawanda

Project Description

A core group of dedicated residents are working together to shed the community’s industrial past and create a far-reaching environment that signifies a healthy, hopeful future. Citizen Science Community Resources (CSCR) will use this grant to create a plan to develop Tonawanda’s first public, interactive Victory Garden. The community has long requested a place where folks can heal, come together, and connect with nature. The creation of the interactive garden and its programs will improve Tonawanda’s environment, provide educational programs, recreation, therapeutic opportunities, and the beautification of a neglected site.

Gardens are growing in popularity and are being promoted as a means to win the environmental war against climate change, to improve mental health (and recover from COVID and related psychological problems) and to combat food insecurity. Gardening provides exercise, a much-needed outdoor escape, and creates healthier communities. The Victory Garden will breathe new life of greenery and hope into the earth, and the hearts and minds of those looking to create a brighter future. Because the Victory Garden will be developed along the Tonawanda bike path, thousands of people will benefit each year.

CSCR will work with Joy Kuebler Landscape Architect on Concept Design Services to design the Victory Garden in the project’s first phase. This will help determine exactly what is required to bring this project to bid and construction and will help oversee that construction. Once the design is completed, the project will require additional funding for construction. Construction would be scheduled to begin in March 2023.



City of Tonawanda Public Library

“City of Tonawanda Public Library
Community Reading Garden”

Grant Amount: \$20,000

Location: City of Tonawanda

Project Description

The purpose of this proposal is to design and build a Community Reading Garden to support life-long learning and a love of nature, while positively impacting the local environment. A Community Reading Garden would serve as a natural way for children and those of all ages to learn about science by connecting personal experience with knowledge. There are many discernable environmental benefits the garden would have including planting native flora to support local insect and bird populations. The garden will also provide food and shelter for wildlife, among other benefits, such as pollination, thus strengthening the local ecosystem. One additional component of the project would be the implementation of rainwater collection to recycle water for plant growth.

The grant will allow numerous actions and activities to take place. The City of Tonawanda Library will form a committee comprised of staff, trustees, city officials, and community members to share their ideas and visions for the Community Reading Garden. This committee’s plan will then be used to work with a landscape architect to finalize the garden’s design and plans. Once finalized, the library will seek bids to build the garden. During development and once completed, the library will utilize its staff in the development of programs to offer the community, as well as new community partnerships to provide additional educational opportunities. The library will utilize its staff to maintain the garden, so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.

The City of Tonawanda Public Library has secured a \$10,000 match for this project.



Erie County Department of Environment and Planning

“Senior Focused E-Waste Collection”

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Location: Kenmore, Town of Tonawanda and the City of Tonawanda

Project Description

Erie County Department of Environment & Planning Division of Environmental Compliance has partnered with Erie County Senior Services, Tonawanda Senior Citizens Center, and Ken-Ton Meals on Wheels to develop this project to enhance the removal and proper recycling of accumulated electronic equipment (E-waste) from the homes of older adults and people with disabilities. E-waste is prohibited from being put in curbside recycling programs.

New York State residents are required to recycle many electronic waste items, such as computers, computer peripherals, televisions, small scale servers, and small electronic equipment, etc., in an environmentally responsible manner. These items are not allowed in landfills. The carrying and transport of these items to collection sites are barriers to many older adults and people with disabilities in our communities, therefore E-waste accumulates in their homes. This project is designed to overcome these barriers by assisting with the removal of these items that would historically end up in landfills. The target audience for these services are the 19,700 residents in the project area that are above the age of 65 and the 9,681 residents who are under the age of 65 and disabled.

Proper recycling of E-waste also has environmental benefits. For every ton of E-waste collected and recycled, 1.44 tons of greenhouse gas emissions are avoided, mainly from not having to mine and process the raw materials. Valuable metals like copper, palladium, silver, and gold are reused instead of having to mine for more metals, further depleting natural resources.



Erie County Department of Environment and Planning

“Subsidized Community Rain Barrel/
Compost Bin Sale”

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Location: Buffalo, City of Tonawanda,
Grand Island, Kenmore, North Tonawanda,
Town of Tonawanda

Project Description

Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, as lead agency for the WNY Stormwater Coalition, provides technical guidance to 40 municipalities to assist them with New York State stormwater permit compliance as well as community-based environmental programs. One long-standing initiative is an annual rain barrel and compost bin sale. For the sale, Erie County staff work with a contractor to set up a website for the purchases and to schedule dates for customer pick up. This grant will provide a 50 percent subsidy to offset the cost of purchasing a rain barrel or compost bin by residents in the Tonawanda community. The subsidy will benefit a potential minimum of 338 people (if all customers purchase both items) and a maximum of 676 (if all customers purchase one item).

For the user of a rain barrel, they will learn the value of stormwater reuse and water conservation as well as the value of using rainwater on their plants. Plants will thrive, tap water will be conserved, and the need for or use of chemical fertilizers will be reduced. For the compost bin owner, solid waste will be reduced by the volume of organic matter they will divert from household trash to their compost bin. Once the compost is useable, it will enhance soil fertility in their garden and plants will flourish and chemical fertilization will be reduced. The community will benefit far into the future as the successes of these individual practices compound.

The Erie County Department of Environmental Planning has secured a \$7,000 match for this project.



Kenmore Village Improvement Society

“Treasure Our Trees and Save the Bees”

Grant Amount: \$10,000

Location: Kenmore

Project Description

This project will develop a campaign to encourage residents to “Treasure the Trees.” The Kenmore Village Improvement Society (KVIS) will provide ways for residents to get to know their trees and even name them! A comprehensive map showing the locations of all of the Village’s trees, their type and given name will be developed. A care guide, online interactive games, and mailings will also be provided to every resident. The project will complement and reinforce the tree maintenance information provided to residents by the Kenmore Department of Public Works. This project will also expand the existing KVIS “Save the Bees WNY” project, encouraging more people to become Bee Ambassadors while helping to ensure a brighter future for pollinators.

The Village is in the top 100 most-dense census-designated areas of the United States. As a result, space is at a premium. The number of impervious surfaces (roofs, streets, etc.) versus areas where water can infiltrate the ground is substantial. Street trees and gardens are important as part of a “green” solution to stormwater management in the Village. Tree roots can absorb excess water before it reaches storm drains.

This project addresses environmental and health issues that impact Kenmore by teaching residents about the importance of trees and habitat. It highlights ways to maintain trees and gardens in a way that maximizes environmental and health benefits. It also places value on trees and gardens, and offers fun and exciting ways for those who participate in the process to be recognized.



Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District

“Tree Planting and Beautification at
Thomas Edison Elementary School”

Grant Amount: \$6,359

Location: Kenmore and Town of
Tonawanda

Project Description

This project will address a community need for reducing environmental impacts near Thomas Edison Elementary School through the planting of 28 trees that fit the profile of KenTon’s urban forest. As noted in the Town of Tonawanda’s Comprehensive Plan, it is crucial to “support the preservation of environmental resources” and “maintain and enhance the vitality of neighborhoods and neighborhood centers” by adding new green space to the community, where it is possible and feasible. The tree planting project funded by this grant will create several discernable environmental benefits for the KenTon community on a year-over-year basis. Trees and the soil under them also act as natural filters for water pollution. Their leaves, trunks, roots, and associated soil remove polluted particulate matter from the water before it reaches storm sewers and absorbs nutrients created by human activity, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, which otherwise pollute streams and lakes.

Other benefits from trees include providing shade and cooling to mitigate heat and its effects on concrete, and intercepting rainfall to naturally manage stormwater runoff. These benefits will improve environmental and public health in the Tonawanda community, slow the impact of climate change, and create more cost efficiencies for the municipalities of Kenmore and Tonawanda, which can be passed on to residents.

Thomas Edison PTA has secured a \$498 match for this project.



Project Pride of North Tonawanda

“Manhattan Street Rain Garden Improvements”

Grant Amount: \$12,440

Location: North Tonawanda

Project Description

The City of North Tonawanda in partnership with Project Pride of North Tonawanda is committed to continuing to promote an environmentally-friendly and sustainable downtown. Downtown North Tonawanda prides itself on sustainable practices, which is evident through many green infrastructure projects within the corridor located on Main, Manhattan, and Webster streets.

In 2010, the Manhattan Street Green Infrastructure Project was completed, which included permeable pavement and the installation of seven rain gardens. This project set the precedent and was one of the first completed green infrastructure projects in Western New York. Over the past decade, due to lack of coordinated maintenance, the quality of plants in the existing rain garden have deteriorated and are in dire need of replacement for the garden to function properly.

With this grant, Project Pride of North Tonawanda will purchase and install rain garden plants consistent with the original landscaping plan, ensuring proper plant material and planting locations for the highest efficiency of the garden. This project will create a discernable environmental benefit for the Tonawanda community by reducing storm water run-off and filtering out any pollutants before it is released back into our waterways. Long term, this project will conserve water, protect our local waterways, improve water quality, and reduce flooding and erosion. This will create a healthy and sustainable environment for future generations.



Thomas Edison PTA

“Thomas Edison Parent-Teacher Association Community Garden”

Grant Amount: \$25,000

Location: North Tonawanda

Project Description

Extensive research on community gardens suggests that community gardens enhance people’s well-being, both mentally and physically. CONNECTIONS—Community, Classroom and Climate is an all-inclusive project that would enhance an already existing community garden at Thomas Edison Elementary School that encourages the Tonawanda community to become stewards of the environment.

CONNECTIONS will ensure that all people regardless of race, age, gender, or ability have access to all components of the Thomas Edison Parent-Teacher Association Community Garden. CONNECTIONS would build upon the farm-to-school program and yearly interdisciplinary educational programs to ensure access to all residents. Currently, seating that allows for a larger group, like a classroom, to enjoy the garden for extended periods of time is not available. Additionally, there is not a picnic area available for the community. The grant will be used to create a larger seating and picnic area at the garden. Additionally, although there is a wide variety of native plants and flowers in the garden, the grant will enhance the garden by planting maple trees. These trees could be used for shade, habitat for animals and birds, and eventually be used for maple syrup.

The current garden is not ADA-compliant and does not allow for wheelchair access. The grant will further allow the garden beds to be raised to allow for greater access by everyone. It will also allow for the installation of rain barrels to provide a sustainable water source to the garden and serve as an educational tool for students and the community. The CONNECTIONS proposal would have a life-long, generational effect on the Tonawanda community.



Town of Tonawanda Public Library

“Rain Garden and Welcoming Outdoor Public Space at Kenilworth Library”

Grant Amount: \$9,000

Location: Town of Tonawanda

Project Description

The Kenilworth Library is located in the heart of Tonawanda and is easily accessible by bus, bike, foot, or car. The branch welcomes nearly 50,000 community members each year and is a vibrant public square that encourages life-long learning beyond its four walls. The Library provides free access to materials, use of computers, and wifi (accessible 24/7 outside the library building). The Library also hosts over 140 free programs each year.

Utilizing the existing greenspace footprint outside of the bricked library, the Kenilworth Library will use the grant to build a professionally-designed rain garden with rain barrels. The publicly accessible space would have upgraded landscaping around the building, new native trees, comfortable and welcoming outdoor seating, in addition to bike racks and signage. The library will offer free public education programs on the environment and climate, along with other community interest topics such as the benefits of a rain garden, organic gardening, and ways to create habitats for birds and butterflies.

The Kenilworth Library will collaborate with the Stanley G. Falk School, located across the street, to use the new space to encourage student engagement and enrichment, plus provide year-round hands-on learning and volunteer opportunities. The Library intends to provide many educational opportunities for the 7th-12th grade students at the Stanley G. Falk School at the space, such as assisting with preparing the soil, measuring the soil, taking part in annual plantings, and seasonal maintenance.

Kenilworth Library has secured a \$5,000 match for this project.