

CASE STUDY William Street

Celebrating local African American heritage in neighborhood spaces

Located just east of downtown Buffalo, the Willert Park neighborhood has historically been home to important African American businesses and cultural institutions. William Street is a prime corridor for the neighborhood that directly links it to downtown and the Michigan Avenue African American Heritage Corridor.



At the intersection of William Street and Michigan Avenue is Jesse Clipper Square, a pocket park featuring a memorial for African American veterans. A pink granite stone memorializes the sacrifice of Jesse Clipper, the first African American soldier from Buffalo to die in World War I. The memorial also pays tribute to other African Americans who served in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Today, Jesse Clipper Square is being expanded and enhanced with a new layout based on the original 1938 design from John Edmonston Brent (1889-1962), Buffalo's first African American architect who spent the majority of his career working in the city and is well-known for designing Buffalo's Michigan Avenue YMCA, a building that became a cultural center for the African American community in Buffalo.

Community Partnerships

Neighborhood residents and community groups were involved and engaged throughout the William Street project. Buffalo Sewer and its project team members, including engineers and landscape architects, participated with neighborhood residents in walking tours to identify where green infrastructure makes sense in the context of neighborhood conditions. The public also gave feedback in preliminary and final design updates. Public education on the uses and benefits of green infrastructure was a key component of this work.



Keeping the stormwater challenge in check with green infrastructure on William Street

1.3 acres of impervious surfaces removed

64 trees planted

0.66 acres of porous pavement added

These investments on William Street manage the stormwater across 25.2 acres of the City.



284,357
gallons of runoff prevented from entering the sewer system in a typical rainfall event.



Green infrastructure on William Street

The ongoing William Street reconstruction project added several green infrastructure elements along William Street from Michigan to Jefferson Avenue. Porous pavement was installed in the parking lane on the north side of the street, and the median was widened with new trees and plantings featuring rain gardens to manage stormwater runoff from the street. Jesse Clipper Square at the corner of William and Michigan has been expanded and enhanced with a new layout based on the original 1938 design by John Brent, thanks to recent research that has uncovered significant contributions to architectural design and landscape architecture made by Brent in the city. Collectively, these green infrastructure elements promote infiltration of rain and snowmelt into the surrounding soils, provide temporary stormwater storage and improve water quality.



Expanding the roadway median from 15 feet to 38 feet removed 1.3 acres of impervious surfaces and allowed for Jesse Clipper Square to be expanded.



Drainage Area on William Street

The design of green infrastructure for this section of William Street was informed by the topography of the surrounding area. The residential streets that abut the north edge of William slope downward towards the street. Stormwater runs south along these streets and empties into sewer drains along the north edge of William. To reduce these stormwater flows into the sewer system, porous pavement was installed along the north parking lane of William.

