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**Contact:**

Dan Keefe (State Parks) | [dan.keefe@parks.ny.gov](mailto:dan.keefe@parks.ny.gov) | (518) 486-1868

Laura Magee (ESD) | [laura.magee@esd.ny.gov](mailto:laura.magee@esd.ny.gov) | (800) 260-7313 | (716) 846-8239

## **FLREDC and Greentopia Announce Grand Opening of FlourGarden in Downtown Rochester's Historic High Falls District**

*Project Complements "Finger Lakes Forward" – Region's Successful Upstate Revitalization Initiative Blueprint to Grow the Economy and Create New Opportunities*

The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (FLREDC) and Greentopia today announced the grand opening of the FlourGarden at GardenAerial in downtown Rochester's Historic High Falls District. The FlourGarden is both Greentopia's first-ever capital project and the first phase of the larger GardenAerial, a series of public spaces, walkways, gardens and other amenities that will include the first eco-district in New York State. These features will encompass the rim of the gorge at High Falls with the goal of attracting residents and visitors to one of Rochester's most majestic natural resources. The GardenAerial aligns with the FLREDC and Upstate Revitalization Initiative strategic growth plans.

"This eco-district is well on its way to redeveloping our Genesee River Gorge/High Falls area and increasing access to leisure, history and culture in downtown Rochester," said Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chairs, Monroe Community College President Anne Kress and Wegmans Food Markets CEO Danny Wegman. "Projects like the FlourGarden are supported by the FLREDC because they make vital contributions to the region's economic vitality by stimulating commerce and strengthening the region's high quality of life. Congratulations to Greentopia on this important milestone."

"Greentopia has proven that it can go the distance, create, plan, develop and execute a complex capital project," said Greentopia CEO Lewis Stess. "We are confident that this achievement will offer an opportunity for more people, institutions and businesses to join us in repowering the High Falls gorge into a world-class 21<sup>st</sup>-century urban green space that will bring jobs, economic development, tourism, recreation and educational opportunities to the very heart of our city."

Visitors to the FlourGarden will see native, non-invasive, plants that create a calming oasis amid the hardscapes of Browns Race Historic District. Visitors will also enjoy the sounds of falling water and sight of colorful blooms. In addition to the gardens, the project also includes real millstones, slate slabs and smaller stones – echoing both the natural forms of the river gorge and Rochester’s early history as a grain-milling center. Other features include: a waterfall cascade, a promontory built over the gardens, and an engaging waterworks, including seven lighted fountains – all providing visual and auditory pleasures – even when the blooms are out of season.

As part of round two of Andrew M. Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Council initiative, The Friends of the Garden Aerial were awarded \$500,000 from the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation’s Environmental Protection Fund, which assists in the development of parks and recreational facilities or historic preservation projects. The first phase of the FlourGarden also included support from the City of Rochester; Rochester Area Community Foundation; and many private donors including individuals, garden clubs, and corporations.

“Through Governor Cuomo’s Regional Economic Council, New York State Parks has been proud to support the development of such an innovative and sustainable project for the High Falls Heritage Area,” said New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissioner Rose Harvey. “The completed FlourGarden will transform this historic neighborhood by continuing to highlight the area’s natural resources and attracting new visitors and businesses to the community.”

In conjunction with S4 and dot3, Greentopia will also debut a new tourism smartphone technology that will use beacons to create an enhanced visitor’s experience at the FlourGarden and later for the entire GardenAerial project.

Fundraising is ongoing for the GardenAerial, which builds on the successes of projects such as New York City’s High Line Park, Poughkeepsie’s Walkway Over The Hudson State Park, Greenville, N.C.’s Freedom Park, Buffalo’s Canalside and others worldwide, that redevelop forgotten sites into quality-of-life magnets and assets. Eventually, the Garden Aerial will include close-up viewing platforms adjacent to the falls, new park amenities and perhaps even a zip line over the dramatic falls.

### **About Greentopia and GardenAerial**

Greentopia® is leading the way in moving the city and its citizens towards a more sustainable, resilient Rochester. Established as a fully Federal non-profit (501 (c) (3) in 2011, Friends of the GardenAerial, d.b.a. GREENTOPIA®, has worked to preserve and steward the High Falls Heritage Area and Genesee River gorge, through education, promotion, preservation and development of sustainable communities. Greentopia is headquartered at 81 Browns Race, in the Brown’s Race Preservation District in the High Falls Heritage Area, and it is the only nonprofit organization in the Finger Lakes region dedicated solely to green education, advocacy and sustainable development in downtown Rochester, New York.

Greentopia is transforming the gorge at High Falls through the creation of new green infrastructure and through the sensitive and sustainable development of the built environment, both new and existing. The creation of the GardenAerial is the embodiment of these efforts. GardenAerial will completely reposition the High Falls Gorge from the polluted, forgotten and largely abandoned birthplace of Rochester, into a showcase of community pride, sustainability, and resiliency.

### **Accelerating Finger Lakes Forward**

This announcement complements “Finger Lakes Forward,” the region’s comprehensive blueprint to generate robust economic growth and community development. The State has already invested more than \$3.4 billion in the region since 2012 to lay the groundwork for the plan – investing in key industries including photonics, agriculture and food production, and advanced manufacturing. Today, unemployment is down to the lowest levels since before the Great Recession; personal and corporate income taxes are down; and businesses are choosing places like Rochester, Batavia and Canandaigua as a destination to grow and invest in.

Now, the region is accelerating Finger Lakes Forward with a \$500 million State investment through the Upstate Revitalization Initiative, announced by Governor Cuomo in December 2015. The State’s \$500 million investment will incentivize private business to invest well over \$2.5 billion – and the region’s plan, as submitted, projects up to 8,200 new jobs. More information is available [here](#).

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