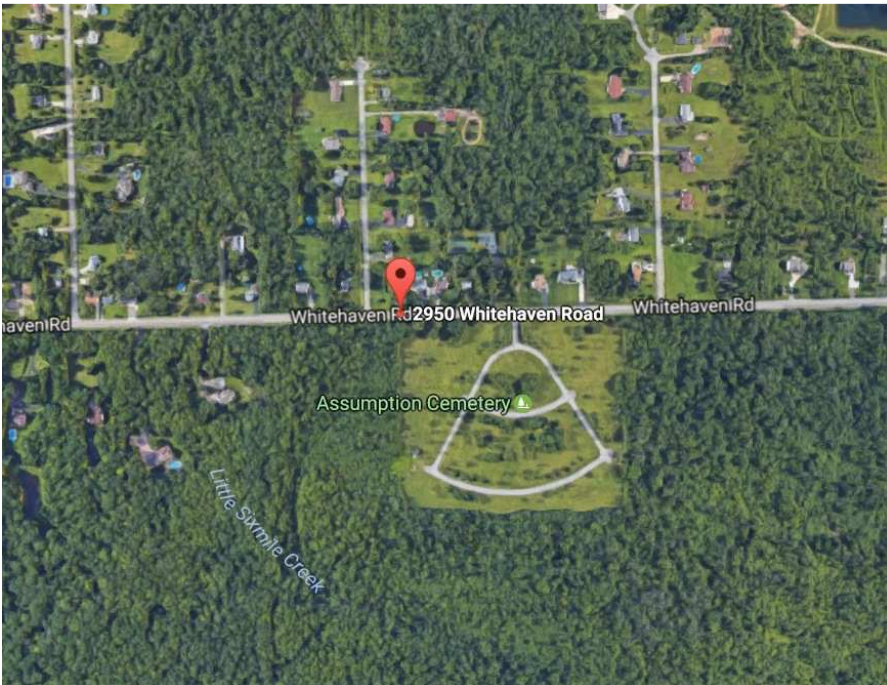


## Land conservancy to buy 140 acres of Grand Island cemetery for forest preserve



A Googlemap earth view shows Assumption Cemetery and its proximity to Six-Mile Creek. (GoogleEarth image)

By [Nancy A. Fischer](#), Published Fri, Apr 7, 2017

The Western New York Land Conservancy plans to purchase approximately 140 acres of the 157-acre Assumption Cemetery on Grand Island to create a forest preserve there, and is seeking funds from the Niagara River Greenway Commission.

The not-for-profit land conservancy has already received letters of support for the proposed [Assumption Forest Preserve](#) from the Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Buffalo, which has agreed to sell the site at 2950 Whitehaven Road, as well as from Grand Island Supervisor Nathan D. McMurray.

Public comments on the project are being sought by the Niagara River Greenway Commission through May 8. The project will be presented to the Niagara River Greenway Commission on May 16.

The \$699,458 cost for the project includes the acquisition price, planning, construction and long-term operations and maintenance. According to the grant application, some of these costs have already been accounted for in the form of a \$280,000 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the purchase of the property. Additional funding will be sought from the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation, the North American Wetlands Conservation and local donations.

The conservancy is seeking to protect the property from development. The site includes 4,000 feet of Little Sixmile Creek, a tributary of the Niagara River.

Without preservation, development of the residentially zoned property is possible, especially on non-wetland parts of the property. But development could result in the loss of habitat and wetlands, which provides an ecosystem for species of birds, amphibians, and other wildlife and also helps to maintain water quality in the

Niagara River and reduce flooding in adjacent neighborhoods, according to an application for grand funding by the conservancy.

Carmen A. Colao, director of Catholic Cemeteries wrote a letter supporting the project, noting that 17 acres of the property are used as a cemetery. "The proposed sale protects the land as a conservation property and will help ensure that the cemetery is forever located in a peaceful and tranquil setting, surrounded by a vast and inspiring forest," wrote Colao.

McMurray wrote that the town "strongly supports" the purchase and said the land could provide low-impact outdoor recreation, while keeping it natural "makes us better stewards of this resource."

The Assumption Forest Preserve project will be considered by the Niagara River Greenway Commission at 3 p.m. May 16 at its offices in Deveaux Woods State Park in Niagara Falls, at 3160 Deveaux Woods Drive. Comments can be sent to the commission office or be sent to the Executive Director Jeanne A. Leccese at [Jeanne.Leccese@park.ny.gov](mailto:Jeanne.Leccese@park.ny.gov).