



**STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING # 9 ~ December 7, 2012, 9:00 – 11:00 AM
UB Regional Institute, 77 Goodell Street, Suite 302**

In attendance: Ben Bidell (Niagara County Economic Development), Bill Parke (OSP), Hal Morse (GBNRTC), Bradshaw Hovey (UDP), Kelly Dixon (GBNRTC), Brenda Stynes (UBRI), Michael Ball (ESD), Laura Quebral (UBRI), Jamie Burney (BNMC), Darren Kempner (NFTA), William Dunn (NFHA), Frank Billittier (NYS DOT), Lawrence Cook (Oishei), Will Keresztes (BPS), Laura Smith (BNP), Anthony Armstrong (LISC)

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC) mentions Tyra Johnson (Blue Sky Design) as an addition to the steering committee and makes a motion that she be included. Motion carries unanimously

2. Report from the Capacity Building Opportunities

- Steering Committee members provide an update on the ReAct conference in Pittsburgh – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grantees talking/learning about each other's programs and HUD capacity building exercises.
- Topics covered include transit oriented development (TOD), vacant properties, COD, scenario planning
- Opportunity to meet with 2010 grantees who were further along and learn from their experiences
- It was mentioned that Obama's multi-organizational cooperative initiatives were changing the way the federal government does business. Compared to other grantees, our situation seems unique (large region/central city).
- Discussed the approach of encouraging civic and community champions to help spread the word
- It was explained that scenario modeling is meant to inform choices. They're not a map they're a story.
- It was mentioned that other 2011 grantees still getting up and running - no one seems way ahead of us
- The region has many planning initiatives going on simultaneously, and the question was brought up if other regions have a similarly fragmented planning process
- Regional Economic Development Councils (REDC), New York State Energy Resource and Development Agency (NYSERDA), HUD, GBNRTC – twin cities are currently working together to create better collaboration between transportation plan and HUD plan

3. Review of feedback from Local Government Councils (LGC) and Private Sector Councils (PSC)



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- It was explained that the LGC is more guarded than PSC. There was no significant pushback - everyone in agreement on most items – most feedback was about adding something additional to the agenda
- Some of the feedback mentioned includes: Infrastructure planning should be thoughtful of new infrastructure that is green and innovative. Agricultural communities (small/industrial) may have different needs. Choices need to be made about housing, such as when to reinvest in existing housing. Trends in households and families are changing and changes in housing should reflect this. Mechanisms should be put in place to insure the plan's effectiveness.
- A question was asked of the team if they wanted more of a regional representation
- A follow up call to Buffalo Niagara Builders Association, Amherst Chamber and other such resources was made, to look for more rural/village business representation.
- On the topic of rural representation, the Town of Hartland is interested in conducting a joint 1RF presentation with town/planning board
- Of interest was whether the topic of schools came up during the neighborhood discussion
- Things like education are less tangible but are more important for quality of life and play a major role in where people want to live
- The infrastructure of school systems was discussed – is the expense and expansion of school infrastructure mirroring the shift of the regional population
- It was stated the topic of schools was not explicitly touched on in the meeting
- Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) encouraged the group to have high expectations of progressive districts like Buffalo and mentioned the link between neighborhood revitalization and schooling is extremely strong – families will stay and invest in a neighborhood when the schools are strong, and others will begin to move in. They mentioned a new appointee to Mayor's team from BPS. Districts that tend to separate themselves from the community – extract a lot of funds from surrounding community – should be subject to high expectations.
- The lack of discussion on infrastructure was noted
- It was then discussed that municipalities that rely on constant growth to expand infrastructure can still grow by increasing density instead of growing outward, although some communities are not designed to encourage density
- The question discussed was whether we want to continue to grow the region the way we are now. We must ask ourselves this as a community – acknowledging the fiscal impacts of continuing the same development pattern and weighing costs/benefits of sprawl and constant growth



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- It was explained that scenario planning/precedents could help determine how to increase density through infill of strip/suburban low density residential and strengthen these neighborhoods
- Showing hard dollars and the economic benefit of diversification of land use presents a stronger case for increased density; diversification = stronger tax base.
- It was mentioned that there are instances in the region of developers who are trying to push higher density projects, that are generally supported by community constituents but are getting stopped by bureaucracy

4. Working group process and organization

- UB Regional Institute (UBRI) asked for feedback on utilizing existing networks/work groups for 1RF working groups. The basic assumption is 5 working groups based on topic areas, But how do the work groups interact? Defining the role of the work group – who, how to populate, how to structure the “chair” or who will be the champion, how often do they meet? As an example, the REDC work groups tended to have less group interaction because of the way groups were organized.
- NYSEDA was mentioned as a good example of an entity taking a more interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to organizing groups
- On the topic of lack of communication between groups, it was noted that many of the WNY sustainable communities encounter the same issues
- Cross reporting and having joint meetings among working groups was suggested
- The topic of subject matter experts vetting content/contributing content was brought up, as well as need to define levels of participation upfront and being conscious of planning fatigue.
- There was discussion over whether the working groups would focus more on subject matter or implementation strategies
- It was explained that an obstacle with tapping into existing groups/networks was the difference in geography. NYSEDA working groups vs. REDC smart growth council
- A suggestion was made to tap organizations like Western New York Environmental Alliance (WNYEA) to utilize all the existing networks we can
- A strong role for consultants in the process was mentioned, though they need not necessarily be a chairperson. The importance of equity was also discussed – should it be reflected across the whole process or does it get its own working group?
- Groups should be determined on a case by case basis. Develop a list of groups that are already meeting.



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- A recommendation was made that the Committee should let work groups explain what works best for them. Come to them with something and make sure you get the right people in the room.
- It was also mentioned that reusing the same groups as other initiatives might not have the right fit, but it's important to leverage existing strengths and some of the groups may just be adopted as-is while some may have to be constructed from the ground up
- Committee Members wondered if the working groups would just be vetting content or actually creating it? REDC Smart Growth group could be used for land use working group.
- Committee Members asked if nominations for working groups would come from the Steering Committee, and wondered when the work groups would start up
- UBRI stated the work groups would start in February after Community Congress.
- It was stated that Steering Committee members will chair working groups as outlined in the plan.

5. January Sustainability Congresses

- Urban Design Project (UDP) stated that the Community Congresses would be the last week of January with one in both counties. Would like to do a Saturday one and an evening during the week. People from either geography can go to either meeting. 29th and 31st for evening and 2nd for Saturday meeting. They will set out to accomplish two things – introduction to 1RF and test regional vision and values. The Congress will be comprised of a presentation, clicker voting, discussion from clickers, and additional discussion. The meeting will address the need to expand dialogue, bring other people into the presentation process, review the agenda, provide overview of the project, data driven rationale, clicker question – opportunity for people to stand up and talk, prompting questions = content analysis.
- The facilitation technique for the Community Congress is discussed, as is the need for a clear and easy to understand definition of sustainability UBRI stressed the need for a data driven discussion
- There is also need for detailed explanation of the 1RF initiative
- There was a mention that recent vacancy housing maps/tax maps are powerful visual representations. This effort gets us beyond that.
- The importance of being prepared to keep those who are interested, engaged was discussed

6. Website and other communications update

- The website is being built – content management system being put in place – and it was announced that the name of the public forum will be “Community Congress.” There will be a



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feedback mechanism for people who can't attend the presentation but still wish to participate. This will be coordinated with the Partnership and promoted through the 1RF mail chimp.

- A social media feedback form, website, newsletter, were passed around so that members of the Steering Committee can help get the word out.
- Avoiding duplication is unnecessary when disseminating information, because the more times interested parties are notified, the better

7. Good of the order

- Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) – adaptive reuse and unified redevelopment policy based on geography and aligned with 1RF initiative

8. Adjournment