Regional Vision & Values

Where Do We Want To Go?

Local Government Council Meeting #1
November 13, 2012, 8:00am – 9:30am
Hearthstone Manor

This Meeting

This summary provides an overview of the first meeting of the One Region Forward Local Government Council, where participants were introduced to the project and asked where we want to go as a region.

The Local Government Council

To capture the input and perspective of our municipal and county government leaders, every town supervisor, city or village mayor and the county legislators of both counties were invited to participate in the One Region Forward Local Government Council. This group has been formed to ensure local municipal and county leadership have a clear seat at the table in guiding the One Region Forward initiative.

One Region Forward

One Region Forward is supported by a broad-based collaborative effort of local elected officials, businesses, community groups, and citizens at-large – all working together to move our region towards a more prosperous and sustainable future.

Who Participated?

23 in attendance
Representatives from 20 local municipalities:

3 Village Mayors, 10 town Supervisors, 1 County Legislator, 1 County Commissioner, 2 planning staff, and 6 other representatives for an elected official/municipality. 78% of our attendees represented Erie County and 22% represented Niagara County.

In Attendance:

- Dennis Powers (Town of Elma – Supervisor)
- Robert Welch (City of North Tonawanda - Executive Assistant)
- Thomas Moses (Village of Hamburg – Mayor)
- Ralph Miranda (City of Lackawanna - Economic Development)
- Ross Annable (Town of Hartland - Supervisor)
- Fred Heinle (Town of Alden - Alden Chamber of Commerce)
- Maria Whyte (Erie County Department of Environment & Planning - Erie County Commissioner)
- Karla Thomas (Erie County Legislature District 2 - Legislative Assistant)
• Mary Cooke (Town of Grand Island – Supervisor)
• Edward Rath (Erie County Legislature District 6 - Erie County Legislator)
• Dave Cummings (Town of Newstead – Supervisor)
• Glenn Nellis (Town of Eden – Supervisor)
• Lynda Juul (Village of Williamsville – Administrator)
• Steven Walters (Town of Hamburg – Supervisor)
• John Wilson (Village of Orchard Park – Mayor)
• Jennifer Bieber (Town of Royalton – Supervisor)
• Sandy Brant (Town of Evans - Planning Department)
• Brendan Mehaffy (City of Buffalo – Office of Strategic Planning)
• Mary Holtz (Town of Cheektowaga – Supervisor)
• Bill Krebs (Village of Springville – Mayor)
• Wright Ellis (Town of Cambria – Supervisor)
• Barry Weinstein (Town of Amherst – Supervisor)
• John Bailey (Town of Orchard Park - Town Attorney)

How did our participants describe the community they represent?
What Did They Say?

Our audience was presented a series of “regional value statements” culled from an analysis of 160+ neighborhood-based, municipal, county-level, and regional plans. Organized around ten themes, these interrelated statements were presented to the audience. To gauge whether or not each statement reflects where we want to go as a region, each participant was provided an electronic device that allowed her/him to evaluate the ten statements.

This is what the Local Government Council told us:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Economic Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Vision/Value Statement:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a more competitive and prosperous 21st century regional economy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:

- We need to add and emphasize diversification of the economy.
- Role of agriculture deserves more attention in this theme. It’s that important.
- We should add something about construction trades (like plumbers and electricians) as part of a description of our good workforce and how it isn’t as well-used as it could be.
- Missing a mention of the skills gap and training needs. Especially for trades.
- We’re competing with each other within the region for investment and jobs. How do you round off the rough edges?
- For village centers, economic development means revitalization and connecting attraction of people and housing to village centers. These centers play an important role in Erie County. (ex. Springville)
- We need to put greater emphasis on the arts and culture as a part of our economy.
- Should there be a mention about Canada and our location on an international boundary?
Theme: 
Smart Growth

Regional Vision/Value Statement:
Build on existing infrastructure and invest in developed areas to lower costs, improve efficiency and enhance quality of life.

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:
- Extend infrastructure? We’re trying to redevelop the county home but it’s outside the area served by Village of Alden infrastructure. Redeveloping in rural areas can’t be just about the village centers.
- Infrastructure needs to be maintained, but also replaced. Is that considered to be part of “Maintained?”

Theme: 
Transportation

Regional Vision/Value Statement:
Provide broader transportation options to improve access to jobs and services and promote energy efficiency and safety.

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:
- What does energy efficiency mean? (Thinking about the idea that a runner has a bigger carbon footprint than we might realize). Who gets to decide? How much is too much? Grand Island has some places that are walkable and some places where you need a car – and no amount of investment will be able to change that.
- What does efficiency refer to? Carbon reduction and energy efficiency or system efficiency?
- We need a stronger focus on transportation or rural areas. We have vans for the elderly and others who cannot drive but we don’t have any buses.
- The statement is missing any mention of the role of transportation in promoting commerce.
- We don’t have buses but “we’re okay with that.” Senior housing has special transportation. But otherwise we know we will have to drive to get around.
- Transit services are being cut. How do we think about servicing rural and suburban areas?
- Is the GBNRT Niagara Frontier Urban Area Freight Transportation Study included in the plan list?
- Needs to be rewritten to include an emphasis to commerce and transportation of goods.

Theme:
Housing and Neighborhoods

Regional Vision/Value Statement:
 Preserve our housing stock and foster neighborhoods that are great places – safe, well-served and distinctive.

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:
- Keep in mind that people make choices about where to live very much based on their assessment of the quality of schools there.
- How do we differentiate between village, neighborhoods and towns? What are geographic scales and boundaries that we are talking about? Some may consider the whole town a “village.”
- Education deserves its own place on this map. The quality of schools is important to our neighborhoods but also economy, etc.

Theme:
Agriculture and Food

Regional Vision/Value Statement:
 Protect farmland, support farmers, connect farms to local markets and ensure access to healthy food.

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:
- We need to talk about food safety, food hubs, logistics, all the things that support food access.
- Agritourism is something that the Southtowns are already working on.
- Transfer of development rights is a concept from years ago. Let’s talk about purchase of development rights – and say that the state should be doing more of it.
- Education is missing. For those who are moving into agriculture districts, consumers and those looking to buy local.

**Theme:** Energy and Climate

**Regional Vision/Value Statement:**
*Use less energy, generate green energy, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

**Discussion/Feedback from Audience:**
- It would be more useful to talk about sustainability more broadly.
- Combine with economic development initiatives.
- Don’t forget about wind energy.
- Statement does not reflect our existing “green” energy source of hydropower and the potential for more use here.
- Why energy and climate together? Energy can stand alone. Adding climate to the end of the phrase is unfair to energy.
- Agree with switching focus to energy only, not linked to climate change.

**Theme:** Protect Natural Resources

**Regional Vision/Value Statement:**
*Protect our water and other natural resources to promote a healthy ecology, economy and community.*

**Discussion/Feedback from Audience:**
- “Great Lakes” needs way more emphasis. We need to protect our water rights.
- Restoration is as important as preservation.
- And the river and the falls plus the whole watershed.
- Consider using the word “sustain.” These are finite resources.

### Theme: Culture and Heritage

**Regional Vision/Value Statement:**

**Protect and develop culture, heritage, and waterfront resources for economy and quality of life**

### Discussion/Feedback from Audience:

- Let's include signage.
- Tie in and connect culture and heritage with agritourism.
- Don't make all arts and culture victim to issues of waterfronhs. They're important for quality of life as much as economy. Elevate arts and culture in the discussion.
- Add protect/develop and promote.
- Scenic byways are also important.

### Theme: Parks and Recreation

**Regional Vision/Value Statement:**

**Maintain, improve, and connect our parks, recreation, and open space.**

### Discussion/Feedback from Audience:

- Promote healthy living through parks and recreation.
- What about waterfront development?
- The waterfront goes here as a theme, too.
- What about private recreation uses? (ex. Ski slopes)
- Let's say we should “enhance” rather than “improve” our parks, etc. It's a stronger term.
- Prefer the use of “provide for” parks language instead of maintain. Maintain sounds like we are
keeping the status quo.

- Say we should “develop” parks and recreational assets mean we want to add more – like the Niagara Greenway.
- Differentiate between regional and local opportunities. Regional = connect.

---

**Theme:** Planning Together

**Regional Vision/Value Statement:**
Foster collaboration, coordination, and strong implementation, and plan with an engaged public

---

**Discussion/Feedback from Audience:**

- We are the ambassadors of the work we do collaboratively. Let’s be careful of the language we use (e.g. “population loss” draws attention away from the positive story we want to tell”.
- Let’s talk about “Lake Belt” instead of “Rust Belt.” It’s a matter of how we choose to identify ourselves.
- What does strong implementation mean? Either we do it or we don’t.