Regional Vision & Values
Where Do We Want To Go?

Private Sector Council Meeting #1
November 14, 2012
Buffalo Niagara Partnership

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

The Private Sector Council
To capture the input and perspective of representatives from our business and development community, the leadership and staff of each local chamber of commerce throughout Erie and Niagara Counties as well as members of the development advisory council of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership were invited to participate in the One Region Forward Private Sector Council.¹ This group has been formed to ensure representatives from our region’s diverse private sector 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?
19 in attendance
Representatives from 17 organizations or businesses:

5 Local Chamber Representatives, 4 Small Business Owners, 6 Representatives from a Large Regional Employer, and 4 Others
63% of our attendees represented Erie County, 5% represented Niagara County, and 32% represented a geography that spans both counties.

In Attendance:

- Ms. Julia Bender (Sharvan Graphics)
- Ms. Sarah Bishop (Buffalo First!)

¹ In instances when geographies or key constituencies were not represented by local chambers of commerce or the Buffalo Niagara Partnership’s Development Advisory Committee, the One Region Forward Steering Committee sought out and invited organizations that fill in gaps of representation.
How did our participants describe the community they represent or typically do most of their business?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our region’s cities or urban areas</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>“First Ring” suburbs</td>
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<td>“Outer Ring” suburbs</td>
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<td>Villages</td>
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<td>Rural communities</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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How did our participants describe the community they represent or typically do most of their business?
What Did They Say?

Our audience was presented a series of “regional value statements” culled from an analysis of 160+ neighborhood-based, municipal, regional and county plans. Organized around ten themes, these interrelated statements were described to the audience. Each participant was provided an electronic device that captures her/his evaluation of whether the statement reflects where we want to go as a region.

This is what the Local Government Council told us, and the feedback they provided:

Theme: Economic Development

Regional Vision/Value Statement: Create a more competitive and prosperous 21st century regional economy

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:

- Community development and sustainability are critical to economic development.
- The term competitiveness can be overly broad, does that make it open to interpretation?
- When we think about economic development, we need to be thinking smart and encourage inclusivity for all including robust minority participation

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:

- What about transit-oriented-development and walkability/walkable communities?
- Locally, especially in rural areas, we may have a need to extend infrastructure
- The term “collaborative” could be incorporated into the discussion.
- Avoiding duplicative development
- We need to think about not just the clean-up of existing brownfields, but also the prevention of creating new brownfields.
- While new infrastructure is generally not welcome, we should be open to new infrastructure when it is innovative and cutting edge.
- Greenspace – both urban parks and rural open space – are important to our conception of smart growth
- When we work to manage growth, we need to be sure that we aren’t creating too much regulation that chokes growth. We need to be thinking about streamlining the development process.

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:

- Transportation is important to tourism
- We need to figure out how to maximize our existing infrastructure. The Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus is an example where there is high access, but relatively low transit ridership.
- Regulatory requirements of New York State can be confusing and lack clarity. We need to streamline the transportation process.
  - This should come first
- We need to think about cost-effectiveness in how we grow infrastructure.
- There needs to be increased communication and collaboration across agencies and stakeholders involved in transportation decisions
- Transportation also impacts lifestyle activities, and we should be accounting for those as well.
- We need to adapt, innovate, and be on the cutting edge of new transportation modes, especially those that are appropriate for our region.
- Time tables for public transportation should not be one size fits all
- Our transportation system needs to be more responsive to student users, particularly to tie to urban centers.
We need to be thinking about incorporating existing public transportation access into how we provide incentives to businesses and development.

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:

- We need to be offering more housing type choices, especially in our urban centers.
- The statement seems to have more of an urban slant.
- Does not speak to where new development occurs.
- When we talk about housing, we need to think of it in more of a balanced fashion – even in the 2nd and 3rd ring suburbs, there is a need for multi-family housing.
- Preserving green space is critical to both neighborhoods and housing.
- When we deal with demolition, we also need to pair that with revitalization strategies.
- Some housing has a useful life that expires, especially as demographic and family size changes.
- We have to reconcile upgrade costs with operating costs.

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:

- Methods to support aggregation and logistics support to farmers, such as the “Food Hub” concept need to be acknowledged.
- There’s a difference between the industry of farming – large farms that produce goods to

No graphic data available for this question. By a raise of hands a majority of participants agreed that this statement was right on the mark or mostly on the mark.
distribute to large businesses - and small farmers who help attract agritourism. These two types of farmers have different issues and different needs.

- There’s a strong link to sustainability and economic development to agriculture.
- Use farmland as an economic development tool, such as the food related industries Batavia has attracted.

Theme:
Energy and Climate

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

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:

- Leverage our existing infrastructure – hydroelectric energy from NF yet our region has some of the most expensive energy prices in the country
- We need to leverage the opportunities for green energy to drive economic opportunity.
- Infrastructure for green energy still costs money and has a lifespan like other types of energy infrastructure.
- Natural gas is a clean, cheap, local fuel.
- We need to be investing in smart grid technology to make our use of energy more efficient.
- Policy issues need to be considered – options like “Feed-in-Tarrif” pricing.
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:
- We should be considering not just the protection of natural resources, but using them to our best advantage.
- Leverage what we have responsibly
- Improve/repair what we already have

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:
- While waterfront issues may be different than other cultural assets, it impacts everything going on in our region.
- How can we better leverage the recreation opportunities in our communities for economic development?
- There continues to be a disconnect between saving historic buildings and finding economically viable re-uses of older structures.
- When we talk about our cultural assets, we should focus on enhancing, not just developing. We have many assets that require investment to realize their full potential.
- Culture, heritage, and our waterfront is very much shared with our Canadian partners. Maybe this is an area where we stress that bi-national connection.
Theme: Parks and Recreation

Regional Vision/Value Statement:
Maintain, improve, and connect our parks, recreation, and open space.

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:
- Olmsted Parks should be imagined as more of an economic development opportunity than they already are.
- Niagara Falls is perhaps our greatest regional asset, yet it is notably missing.
- Consideration of new greenspace
- Rails-to-trails, particularly for connecting rural areas with other parts of our region, are a strategy we need to continue to pursue.

Theme: Planning Together

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

Discussion/Feedback from Audience:
- While it is important to move forward with community support and inclusivity in decision-making, we can’t let small groups have veto power over the progress of our region
- We need to do more, and talk about things less.
- Planning like One Region Forward needs to have more teeth than it currently does.