One Region Forward
Land Use and Development Working Team
Meeting 6: January 27, 2014
DRAFT Strategy Proposal Review

Goals
1. Maintain and create places in city, suburb, village, and countryside that are vibrant, beautiful, efficient, distinctive, have lasting value, and are loved by the people who live there.
2. Foster a pattern of development that makes wise use of resources – land, existing building stock, transportation, utilities and other infrastructure – to save money and energy and promote economic prosperity and quality of life.
3. Protect or restore our waterfronts, connect them to local communities, make them more accessible to the public, and dedicate them to “water dependent” or “water enhanced” uses.
4. Maintain, improve, expand, and increase access to our parks, recreation areas, trails and open spaces and connect them to each other and the places people live and work.
5. Protect and restore natural resources including rural and agricultural land, natural habitat, biodiversity, watersheds, air quality, water bodies and the quantity and quality of our water, as well as the ecological services that natural resources provide.
6. Promote the adaptive reuse of residential, commercial, industrial, and ecclesiastical building stock to preserve embedded energy, neighborhood integrity, and heritage.
7. Manage abandoned industrial and commercial land and neighborhoods in decline to minimize negative impacts now and prepare their resources for timely and appropriate reuse.
8. Create communities that are resilient and adaptable, that can serve the region’s needs even as population, demographics, climate, and other factors fluctuate.
9. Improve public literacy about planning and build public support for regional planning and smart growth policies.

Strategies
Structure and Process of Planning
1. Create a regional planning body.
2. Build support for regional planning.

Development and Redevelopment
3. Manage the cost of public services.
4. Redesign revenue-raising structures to promote land use goals.
5. Establish mechanisms to manage abandoned industrial and commercial land and neighborhoods in decline.
6. Promote a more compact pattern of development.

Natural Resources
7. Protect and restore natural places and farmland.
8. Protect and restore water quality and quantity.
Structure and Process of Planning

Strategy 1: Create a regional body. This regional planning body can lead implementation of a sustainability plan, conduct research, provide technical assistance, promote intergovernmental cooperation, and promote regional planning on an advisory basis. This planning body would respect the home rule traditions of New York State and the autonomy of each county and the municipalities within.

Strategy 2: Build support for regional planning. Support can come through public engagement, reaching more diverse stakeholders, and through the educational and technical assistance of a regional planning body, as well as by making the case for the economic, environmental, and social benefits of regional planning.

Note: These strategies will be addressed further at the joint February working team meeting and the final Land Use and Development Working Team meeting in March.

Development and Redevelopment

Strategy 3: Manage the cost of public services. Provision of infrastructure and public services has an impact on both the overall cost of government – the need for tax revenue – and on the process of land use and development. This includes services such as water, sewer, and transportation, as well as police, fire, parks and education.

Actions
1. Implement the Framework for Regional Growth recommendation to limit the expansion of sewer, water, and transportation infrastructure into undeveloped areas. While some improvements to these services are necessary (eliminating CSOs, for example), the expansion of these services, if not well-planned, can foster outward growth to the detriment of existing communities, and can put a strain on public resources.
   - Potential actors: municipalities, service districts, counties, with support from the regional planning body
   - Timeframe: short-term, continuous

2. Study the potential impact of shared service agreements, public-private partnerships, or consolidation, considering services such as police, fire, parks, and highway maintenance, then implement appropriate solutions. Options should be considered if costs can be reduced, land use goals can be achieved, and quality of service maintained or improved.
   - Potential actors: municipalities, service districts, counties, not-for-profits, with support from the regional planning body
   - Timeframe: short-term

3. Create a regional strategy for controlling the cost of education while ensuring access to high quality education. Enrollments are declining in many public and parochial schools. Some school facilities are new or recently renovated, others are aging, and some are empty. There are great disparities in the quality of education between communities. These issues impact tax rates, public finances and where people chose to live.
• Potential actors: public school districts, charter schools, parochial schools
• Timeframe: mid-term

**Strategy 4: Redesign revenue-raising structures to promote land use goals.** Remove perverse incentives to develop rural land, extend public infrastructure, and subsidize the production of new built space, while promoting revenue raising structures that achieve land use goals.

**Actions**

1. Review current tax/revenue systems to identify perverse incentives and recommend new revenue raising systems.
   • Potential actors: university researchers, counties, municipalities, regional planning body.
   • Timeframe: short-term

2. Create Tax Increment Financing zones to encourage redevelopment.
   • Potential actors: municipalities
   • Timeframe: short-term

3. Encourage Industrial Development Agency policy to reflect and encourage land use goals.
   • Potential actors: IDA leadership, regional planning body
   • Timeframe: short-term

**Strategy 5: Establish mechanism to manage abandoned industrial and commercial land and neighborhoods in decline.** Minimize negative impacts now and prepare their resources for timely and appropriate reuse. Build on the new land bank, find funding for its operations, expand its purview to other jurisdictions, and complete the baseline inventory of vacant properties needed for strategic planning.

**Actions**

1. Expand on previous “shovel ready site” assessments and develop a regional inventory and marketing strategy for vacant, underutilized, and brownfield properties.
   • Potential actors: Counties, BUDC
   • Timeframe: Short-term, continuous

2. Advocate for the continuation of effective incentives, policies, and programs that help redevelop brownfields, adaptively reuse existing buildings, and preserve historic buildings. This includes the Brownfield Clean-up Program, Environmental Restoration Program, Brownfield Opportunity Areas, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, etc.
   • Potential actors: municipalities, BUDC, NYS DEC, historic preservation organizations
   • Timeframe: Short-term, continuous

3. Encourage localities to preserve and properly zone larger-scale vacant and underutilized sites with potential to accommodate R&D, technology, manufacturing and distribution enterprises.
   • Potential actors: Municipalities, counties, regional planning body
   • Timeframe: Short-term, continuous
4. Explore the feasibility of creating a regional “Main Street” organization modeled after successful programs of the National Main Street Center.
   - Potential actors: Municipalities, counties, regional planning body
   - Timeframe: Mid-term

5. Expand the resources and scope of the WNY Land Bank.
   - Potential actors: Counties, municipalities, land bank
   - Timeframe: Short-term

**Strategy 6: Promote a more compact pattern of development.** This type of development would help us protect farmland and watersheds, minimize investment in new infrastructure, foster strong land use-transportation connections, facilitate the regeneration of great urban neighborhoods, promote mixed use development, and reduce energy consumption in transportation and other activities.

**Actions**

1. Develop a land use concept as part of the One Region Forward plan and its implementation.
   - Potential actors: One Region Forward
   - Timeframe: with the plan

2. Advocate for smart growth principals in land use planning.
   - Potential actors: GBNRTC, League of Women’s Voters (LWV), Partners for a Livable Western New York, regional planning body, REDC Smart Growth working group, chambers of commerce
   - Timeframe: short-term, continuous

3. Adopt the Buffalo Green Code.
   - Potential actors: City of Buffalo
   - Timeframe: short-term

4. Adopt form-based codes or other smart growth oriented zoning codes in other municipalities.
   - Potential actors: municipalities
   - Timeframe: mid-term and long-term, continuous

5. Encourage new major government and educational facilities, sports and entertainment venues, and cultural facilities to locate in regional centers and close to existing bus and light rail transit corridors.
   - Potential actors: Municipalities, counties, GBNRTC, NFTA
   - Timeframe: continuous
Natural Resources

Strategy 7: Protect and restore natural places and farmland. This can be advanced by conducting an inventory of farmland, wetlands, forest lands and others worthy of protection, quantifying the environmental services they provide, and providing incentives to ensure their continued survival.

Actions

1. Inventory important natural places and farmland, and bring together the separate inventories into one accessible database. This will help landowners, developers, community organizations, and governments make more informed decisions. Much of the inventory work is complete or being worked on. Regular updates will be needed. Inventories that exist include USFWS wetlands maps, NYS DEC wetlands maps, NYS DEC natural heritage program, Erie County farmland protection plan, Niagara County farmland protection plan, Framework for Regional Growth, and many municipal open space and / or farmland protection plans. Ongoing work includes Riverkeeper’s watershed plan and Land Conservancy’s Niagara Escarpment strategy.
   - Potential actors: USFWS, NYS DEC, counties, municipalities, Riverkeeper, Land Conservancy, regional planning body
   - Timeframe: short-term and mid-term

2. Quantify the economic impact of parks and open spaces. This will help create an argument for investing in existing ones and expanding or protecting new ones. Consider direct implications on recreation-related jobs, tax base, and ecosystem services they provide. Precedents exist. Ongoing local work includes Riverkeeper’s ecosystem service study.
   - Potential actors: Riverkeeper, Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy (BOPC), university researchers.
   - Timeframe: short-term and mid-term

3. Create or update municipal, county-wide, and regional open space and farmland protection plans. Many towns already have open space and farmland protection plans, like Amherst and Aurora. Erie County just completed a farmland protection plan, but Niagara County’s farmland protection plan is in need of an update.
   - Potential actors: Municipalities, counties, open space committees, Land Conservancy
   - Timeframe: short-term, continuous

4. Advocate for and implement voluntary incentive and funding programs that help protect and restore natural areas and farmland. Existing funding programs include the USDA NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program for purchase of development rights on farmland, the Niagara River Greenway / Niagara Power Project Relicensing Settlement for protecting open spaces in the Greenway, and municipal open space preservation programs like Clarence’s Greenprint bond funds to purchase open space and farmland. Advocacy work is needed to make permanent the federal tax incentive for donating conservation easements, expand the NYS Ag and Markets Farmland Protection Program, and enact more open space preservation programs through municipal bonds.
   - Potential actors: Municipalities, counties, NRCS, NYS Ag and Markets, Greenway Commission, land trusts.
   - Timeframe: short-term, continuous
5. Expand the New York State agricultural assessment and forestry assessment programs to allow smaller farms and forestry properties to be eligible for tax relief. These programs allow farmland and forestry land to be assessed for its agricultural or forestry value, not for its market (i.e. non-farm development) value. Eligibility requirements are restrictive and prevent smaller forestry properties and farm operations from receiving the tax benefits.

- Potential actors: NYS DEC, NYS Ag and Markets
- Timeframe: mid-term

Strategy 8: Protect and Restore Water Quality and Quantity. Consider both land and water use and the impacts of development on wildlife habitat and corridors, farmland, and other forms of “natural capital”.

Actions

1. Advocate for watershed scale planning. Support and promote the work of the Erie County Water Quality Committee (ECWQC), Lake Erie Watershed Planning Alliance (LEWPA), NYS DEC great Lakes Action Agenda, and watershed planning at Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper.
   - Potential actors: ECWQC, LEWPA, NYS DEC, Riverkeeper, and the regional planning body.
   - Timeframe: short-term, continuous

2. Study existing land use policies that negatively impact water quality and quantity, and provide alternatives that can be adopted.
   - Potential actors: University researchers, Riverkeeper, regional planning body.
   - Timeframe: mid-term

3. Implement projects that could have the biggest impact on improving water quality and quantity. This could include projects related to eliminating combined sewer overflows, or de-listing AOCs, for example.
   - Potential actors: Riverkeeper, sewer and water districts / authorities, state agencies / authorities.
   - Timeframe: mid-term and long-term

4. Provide incentives for green development and for protecting or restoring green infrastructure.
   - Potential actors: Municipalities, counties, state
   - Timeframe: mid-term and long-term