



STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING # 20
January 17, 2014, 9:00 – 11:00 AM
Empire State Development – WNY Office
95 Perry Street, Buffalo, NY

In attendance: Ben Bidell (Niagara County Economic Development), Bill Parke (OSP), Hal Morse (GBNRTC), Kelly Dixon (GBNRTC), Brenda Stynes (UBRI), Bart Roberts (UBRI), Bob Shibley (UBRI), Bradshaw Hovey (UBRI), Anthony Armstrong (Make Communities), Tyra Johnson (Daemen College Center for Sustainable Communities and Civic Engagement), Jennifer Gregory (ESD), Mike Riegel (Belmont Housing Resources for WNY), Mike Ball (ESD), Glenn B. Nellis (Erie County Association of Governments / Town of Eden), Supervisor Ross Annable (Niagara County Supervisors Association / Town of Hartland), Ryan McPherson (Western New York Environmental Alliance), Laura Smith (BNP), Larry Cook (The John R. Oishei Foundation), Darren Kempner (NFTA), Laura Quebral (UBRI).

1. Welcome and introductions

Hal Morse welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

2.) Upcoming Events Update

Map Analysis Findings and On the Road Update:

Bart Roberts gave a brief update on the analysis of the citizen mapping activity of the November 2013 Community Congress sessions. The summary is as follows:

Based on where citizens placed their chips, drew their markers, and the principles they used to describe their intent, the following preliminary conclusions are shaping up:

On communities citizens wanted to preserve their character: Citizens preserved villages with strong Main Streets (e.g. East Aurora, Orchard Park, Lewiston, Youngstown, Hamburg and Williamsville). Some highlighted the whole urbanized area.

On natural area preservation: Farmland protection and open space conservation were strong themes in principles and in practice (mapping). 35 percent of maps protected everything outside the urbanized area...the functional equivalent of an urban growth boundary. Controlling sprawl was a prominent principle for almost half the tables

On how people valued downtown areas: Downtowns in Buffalo and Niagara Falls were prioritized. More than 90 percent of maps focused revitalization there. That translates to 64 percent of new jobs and 11 percent of new housing in downtown areas. Lockport, Amherst, and the Tonawandas were seen by some as potential centers of urban growth.

On Village Centers: This was by far the most popular place type as evidenced by how much people traded for these types. People primarily used these to strengthen existing village centers around the region. Also used to revitalize neighborhoods in urban areas like the East Side. A lot of emphasis on



“mixed use,” “density,” and “walkability” in the principles. One quarter of new homes and 14 percent of new jobs based on aggregate chip placement.

On Traditional Neighborhoods: *These were the most popular place type for new residential areas. People placed these a lot in older urban neighborhoods to revitalize vacant land and distressed housing, in inner ring suburbs and villages, as well as in newer suburban areas as well. Three fifths of new housing and 5 percent of new jobs were envisioned in traditional neighborhoods and revitalization of existing areas emphasized in principles wrote about.*

On Single Family Neighborhoods: *Were placed primarily on the edge of the urbanized area, filling in between existing suburban developments. Some were used to revitalize urban areas such as Niagara Falls and neighborhoods on the Buffalo Cheektowaga border. Overall, citizens used SF chips sparingly, trading in 45 percent for denser forms of development – accounting for only 7 percent of new housing.*

On Exurban areas: *Were placed primarily across the rural towns of the Buffalo Niagara region or the edge of the urbanized area. Only 2 percent of new homes at one per acre or more. The least popular place type, with 85 percent of chips traded away for more dense development and many maps with none.*

On Suburban Strip areas: *These were placed almost exclusively within the urbanized area, often near highways and clusters of existing strip retail. Only six percent of new jobs in “suburban strip” developments. Participants preferred urban forms of retail development, trading in nearly three-fifths of SS chips for other place types.*

On Office Industrial areas: *Placed a lot in existing industrial areas or “brownfields” especially...South Buffalo, Lackawanna, Tonawanda and Niagara Falls. Many suburban areas suggesting office development near highway infrastructure. Job creation was a priority with fewer of these chips traded away even if many participants wrote they were not fond of the character of the place type.*

On Transit Investment: *Map principles gave heavy emphasis to “connections” and improvements to transit with many specific places to link. Transit links from Downtown Buffalo drawn by roughly half to UB North Campus, Buffalo airport, and Niagara Falls. Nearly all maps added transit and pedestrian connections and more than four-fifths added 20 miles or more*

On Trails and Bikeways: *Were used to connect waterfronts, parks, rural communities and natural assets. All maps added trails or bikeways: on average 55 miles. Half of tables put trails on Erie and/or Ontario lakefronts.*

On highway investments: *Most tables added no highway infrastructure at all. Some areas where it was placed include at the Buffalo-Fort Erie crossing of the Niagara River, to relieve major road and highway*



bottlenecks (Transit Road, Interstate 90, the “Blue Water Tower”). A few suggested removing highway infrastructure like the Humboldt, Niagara Thruway, Scajaquada, etc.

Discussion following included questions about what are the next steps for analysis and how this information can be shared with decision-makers and others who may benefit from seeing this information.

Workshops on the Road: Bart then gave a brief update about the additional workshops on the road coming up: Six residential homes of Junior League of Buffalo members next week, a February 8th event hosted by the Clarence IDA, a session hosted by the Southtowns Planning and Development Group in March, as well as several others being finalized or under discussion.

Disaster Planning Workshop: Kelly then gave an update on the technical assistance session coming up on February 25th and 26th co-hosted by NADO as part of the capacity building assistance provided by the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The training workshop is primarily for business owners, chamber representatives and economic developers and will be held at the Conference & Event Center, Niagara Falls, NY. Sessions will focus on strengthening the capacity and economic resilience of businesses by providing tools and training to prepare for and minimize disruption from flooding or other unexpected events. Participants will have an opportunity to learn about critical actions they can take before disaster strikes and key steps to take after an extreme event to facilitate the recovery process.

Joint Private Sector Council and Local Government Council event: Laura and Bart briefly discussed the upcoming event and the general theme and agenda of the session. It will give these two groups an update on what the community said at the Congress workshops and enter into a discussion about what implementation could look like. They asked for feedback on location, needed to be decided later today. The options are between One Canalside and the Marriott near the airport.

Several members voiced their support for One Canalside due to its unique stature as one of the region’s newest buildings, and that it represents the re-use culture being promoted by 1RF. Mike Ball suggested parking could be confusing based on his experiences with a recent event there. Supervisor Nellis and Supervisor Annabell both mentioned that the location wouldn’t be a deterrent for representatives from rural areas, and if their peers decided to go, location wouldn’t be the driving factor. Based on the discussion, the group recommended proceeding with One Canalside.

3.) Citizen Planning School

Bob Shibley gave an update of the citizen planning school, set to be launched in spring 2014. He described the program as the first step in the process of creating an accredited certificate program in the School of Architecture and Planning that can bring together students, practitioners and “Citizen Champions” to implement One Region Forward from the grassroots and strengthen the



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broad knowledge and education of sustainability and the 1RF initiative throughout the region. He then turned it over to Bart Roberts to describe the specifics of the program during its initial year.

Overview of Citizen Planning School: The program will feature **four class room sessions** on key informational topics, an **Online Citizen Toolkit** to equip citizens as implementers of One Region Forward, and a **Citizen Champion Program** that will seek to cultivate community-led campaigns to promote local projects aimed at sustainable outcomes. The citizen champion program will involve a project-based activity that will allow students to create campaigns to make changes in their home communities based on the topics discussed in class.

Discussion items included questions about how this program could be educational to private sector sustainability officers, planning board members, etc. The Steering Committee expressed interest in seeing this concept develop and continue beyond the initial year.

4.) Implementation Discussion

Bob opened a facilitated discussion and asked for the steering committee to describe what they think a successful version of implementation would look like for this effort. Below is a summary of the comments and descriptions provided by the steering committee:

How will we know if our implementation process is a success?

- If it is respectful of everything else going on in the region that is consistent with the thrust of the plan – Regional Economic Development Council, Niagara River Greenway, Buffalo Green Code, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, etc. etc.
- If it clearly identifies who does what to implement the plan and that the actors so identified have bought into the plan and the role described for them.
- That everyone – governments, organizations, others – continue to participate in the plan even if everyone doesn't agree on everything in the plan.
- It considers cross-impacts of recommended actions (e.g. the impacts that development might have on the waterfront). It needs to be able to consider multiple subjects (e.g. environment, economy).
- It has the capacity to convene, measure, inform...
- It has accountability with flexibility. There is monitoring, reporting, without necessarily an authority to force action or impose penalty.
- People are required to take responsibility for their actions in relation to the plan.



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- It includes a PDCA cycle – plan/do/check/act.
- The substance of the plan is communicated effectively to a lay public; it's not just understandable to planners and the like.
- It is guided by specific, measurable objectives.
- It is sustainable over time in the sense that the implementation process continues for the long haul.
- That it's respectful of all the different initiatives being undertaken in the region.
- But don't respect things that are contradictory to the aims of the plan. Implementation should also address what not to do.
- If we get to a point where "literacy" about the plan and its issues is so widespread that members of the community in general will ask "is this sustainable" when considering any development initiative.
- It is accessible to the public to learn, monitor, enforce.
- It brings public officials along, too. They need continuing education. And because there is turnover in their ranks, it needs to be repeated.
- If the plan is endorsed by institutions and organizations that are already working on sustainability related issues (Riverkeeper, Empire State Development, City of Buffalo, WNY Environmental Alliance, just to name a few).
- There are strong themes here about communication, collaboration, accountability.
- There is a uniformity of "buy-in" common to the general public as well as organizations.
- Organizations don't just endorse the plan but align their own plans and policies with it. They need to actually do it.
- It avoids too much divergence between the intention of the plan and what subscribers to the plan actually do.
- It leads with the facts to overcome emotions when disagreements arise.
- It uses a compelling vision to gain compliance, not a hammer.
- The data is so compelling that it brings differences together.



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- It features a shared dashboard that provides a common picture of what’s happening that helps ensure compliance.
- People can see the pathway and the progress we are making toward it.
- People share a common understanding of what are the principles of the plan.
- Disagreements can happen without people leaving the process. Conflict doesn’t kill it.
- Power and authority are distributed which makes the process more attractive to participants.
- It helps reduce “delayed discounting” – the process by which we discount the positive or negative effects of any action because the effects are likely far into the future.

2. Adjournment