A celebration of Citizen Planners and Champions planning a change in their communities

October 4, 2014, 10am
North Park Cinema
1428 Hertel Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Free and open to all!
“Never doubt the ability of a small group of committed citizens to change the world,” anthropologist Margaret Mead so famously said. “In fact, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

This past spring, the UB School of Architecture and Planning and its partners with One Region Forward launched the Citizen Planning School. This innovative, citizen-centered learning program is designed to empower residents from across Erie and Niagara counties to become agents for sustainable change in their local communities. Our Citizen Planners participated in learning sessions with academic experts, planning practitioners, community leaders, and fellow citizens to explore key issues in planning and sustainability and gain skills and tools to get more involved in the planning process.

In this booklet, you will find the work of our “Champions for Change,” an advanced program of the Citizen Planning School that offered detailed training and one-on-one technical support. Our Champions were among the 100+ citizens who participated in the Citizen Planning School. But they took their commitment one step further by spending countless hours working with planners and graduate students at the UB Regional Institute to develop project ideas for practical, positive impact to make sustainability a regional reality.

The projects of our Champions range in scale, focus, and impact but they are practical and do-able, and little by little, step-by-step, they can add up to a big change toward a more sustainable region. The first Citizen Planning School Idea Summit was convened to celebrate these ideas and the people who have committed themselves to making them a reality.

They are part of what we hope will be a broad movement to implement the regional plan for sustainable development created by the One Region Forward effort. Making the change we need to be more sustainable won’t come in one fell swoop. It will be made piece by piece over the long haul by citizens determined to make their communities better.

It will also be made by citizens who learn about the issues and develop the capacity to get good things done. That’s the goal of the Citizen Planning School.

Join me in celebrating the first class of the Citizen Planning School and Champions for Change. We look forward to welcoming our second class in the spring of 2015, supported by a graduate level class at the School of Architecture and Planning.

In the meantime, we hope that you enjoy today’s event and look forward to future collaborations with you.

Warmest Regards,

Robert G. Shibley FAIA, AICP
Professor and Dean
University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning
Director, UB Regional Institute; Campus Architect
Acknowledgements

One Region Forward, in partnership with the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning, held the first ever Citizen Planning School for citizens of Erie and Niagara counties. Free and open to the public, the Citizen Planning School imparts practical knowledge and arms citizens with tools and resources that they can use to implement sustainable change in their neighborhoods and communities. The Citizen Planning School would not have been possible without the contributions of the organizations listed here. Individuals from these organizations donated their time as speakers and panelists to share their experiences and insight with our citizen planners on the long road to turning ideas into action.

Speakers and Panelists

Mike Ball, AICP - Empire State Development
Aaron Bartley, JD - PUSH Buffalo
Mike Clarke - Buffalo’s Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Larry Cook - Oishei Foundation
Darren Cotton - University Heights Tool Library
Kelly Dixon, AICP - Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC)
Franchelle Hart - Open Buffalo
Chris Hawley - Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning
Daniel B. Hess, PhD - University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning
Daniel Howard, AICP - Town of Amherst Planning Department
Jill Jedlicka - Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper
Jason Knight, PhD - Department of Geography and Planning, Buffalo State College
Cara Matteliano - Community Impact at the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
Ryan A. McPherson, JD - University at Buffalo
Megan McNally - The Foundry
Jennifer Mecozzi - PUSH Buffalo
James K. Morrell - Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
Rebecca Newberry - Clean Air Coalition
Lynda H. Schneekloth, ALSA - University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning
Robert Shibley, FAIA, AICP - University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning
Stephanie Simeon - Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Incorporated
Samina Raja, PhD - University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning
Shaketa Redden - VOICE Buffalo
Bernard Lamar Rice - Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County
Rebekah Williams - Massachusetts Avenue Project
Howard Zemsky - Larkin Development Group

Additional Support

Smitha Gopalakrishnan
Chris Ollinick, Cannon Heyman & Weiss, LLP
Anthony Armstrong, Make Communities
Derek Nichols, Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, NY
Jonathan Mc Niece, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Inc.
Kari Bonaro, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Inc.
Cathy Lovejoy Maloney, CCE Niagara County
Jessica Edwards, d!g Buffalo
Buffalo Niagara Partnership
Keep Cincinnati Beautiful
UB Educational Opportunity Center
North Park Theater
Nickel City Graphics

Special thanks to Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus for making the shared space and resources at d!g available to our Champions as they work on their ideas and build partnerships with other civic entrepreneurs.
A more sustainable region can begin with the smallest changes in our neighborhoods and communities...

One Region Forward is a regional sustainability initiative working in Erie and Niagara Counties to find more sustainable ways to build communities, grow our economy, travel, produce food, and meet the challenges of climate change.

Collaboration will be key to creating a more sustainable Buffalo Niagara, and One Region Forward is working to ensure that change happens from the ground up.

The Citizen Planning School is a part of the initiative’s implementation and will help arm citizens with the information, resources, and tools necessary to become agents for change in their communities.

Registration Opens
March 2014

195
Register as Citizen Planners
citizen planners get practical tools and knowledge in planning for sustainable communities.

17
Become Champions
Champions for Change receive additional training to help develop a community-based project.

Learning Sessions
April-June 2014

Citizens learn first hand from those working in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Panel discussions focus on two-way learning. Citizen Planners and Champions network with others who are active in their communities.

Toolkits offer additional resources, funding opportunities, and related planning efforts.

Workshops & Technical Assistance
Summer 2014

Champions receive additional training from staff at UB’s School of Architecture and Planning to turn ideas for their communities into plans of action.

Celebration to highlight how Citizen Planners and Champions are planning changes in their communities.

Class of 2015 Enroll Today!
It is tempting to spring into action after crafting a great idea, but doing so without creating a plan first risks experiencing a disorganized and ineffective implementation process. The projects in this section are developing well-thought and practical plans for action.

Planning is rarely a linear process, and each champion project went through numerous revisions and scope adjustments to align with their goals and capacity to get it done. Therefore, all the projects presented in this booklet are at different stages of development. This collection of projects are varied in focus area and scale, but they share a very important common denominator - they have a passionate Champion to drive it forward. We look forward to seeing where they go in the future.

**IDEA**

Crafting good ideas is rarely effortless. Rather, it involves shaping and reshaping, based on continuously emerging data, case studies, and meetings with stakeholders, among other factors. The projects included in this section are the result of turning a good concept into a viable, exciting, and meaningful idea and are prime to be mapped out via a plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create Community, Eliminate Blight</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Side Rain Garden Project</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing Food Retail into the Central Park Plaza Redevelopment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Waste Western New York</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PLAN**

It is tempting to spring into action after crafting a great idea, but doing so without creating a plan first risks experiencing a disorganized and ineffective implementation process. The projects in this section are developing well-thought and practical plans for action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Neighborhood Micro-grant Program</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Strategic Plan for the 1415 Community Organization, Inc.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rediscover Main Street</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net-zero Renovation for the Niagara Falls Community Center</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh2Go East Side Mobile Market</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of the Michigan St. African American Heritage Corridor</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTION**

These projects are ready to be put into action. They started with great ideas, many of which were cultivated before the Champion program, and received assistance in creating practical road maps for action. Many of these projects are in the early stages of getting implemented and may benefit from additional resources, partnerships and support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Sidewalk Snow Removal Program for the Elmwood Village</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Food Business Incubation for East Side Residents</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Future Blooms: A Community Engagement Campaign</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking the &quot;It Takes A Village Organization&quot; to the Next Level</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War of 1812 Heritage Garden</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike/Pedestrian Wayfinding Signage Pilot for Elmwood Village</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NIAGARA FALLS, NY

Create Community, Eliminate Blight

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

This project is called the TAP$^3$/90 Challenge. Our group, The Memorial Park Neighborhood Block Club (MPNBC), is developing a plan that outlines a number of initiatives aimed at supporting Transparency, Accountability, Performance and Public Participation (TAP$^3$) in local planning processes. The goal of our project is to leverage community-based knowledge in support of planning and code enforcement activities to improve the condition of the Memorial Park Neighborhood in the City of Niagara Falls. One of our key objectives and the challenge we’ve proposed to ourselves, is to have the Common Council adopt some or all of the three initiatives outlined in our plan within 90 days of submission. We envision that these initiatives could complement the upcoming update of the Niagara Falls Comprehensive Plan. The MPNBC has been working for four years to proactively address neighborhood decline through organizing and hosting education and community events. We would like to increase collaboration with the city agencies on planning and enforcement issues.

The plan we are developing outlines three key initiatives:

1. The creation of a neighborhood advisory committee for planning initiatives occurring in the City of Niagara Falls
2. The development of a blight abatement program
3. The strict enforcement of zoning and building codes

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

Our neighborhood is located between Walnut Avenue, Niagara Street, Portage Road and 9th Street, adjacent to the Niagara Falls Tourist area in the City of Niagara Falls, NY. While the neighborhood retains the highest population of homeownership in the Core Neighborhood area, it suffers from blight, outdated zoning, and crime.

The residents of the Memorial Park Neighborhood in the City of Niagara Falls see enormous potential in its historic community. The Memorial Park Neighborhood is uniquely situated to speak to Niagara Falls' historic significance as well as its future vitality. The enhancement and stability of our neighborhood directly supports the success of the neighboring tourist district. Our neighborhood has the potential and desire to become a beautiful urban backdrop that attracts new residents, supports businesses and attracts positive development.

Ruth Otberg-Cooper
Memorial Park Neighborhood Block Club
memorialparkblockclub@yahoo.com

I want to eliminate blight and restore beauty as well as pride to my historic neighborhood. A better working relationship between the residents and public officials in Niagara Falls would make that happen.
BUFFALO, NY

East Side Rain Garden Project

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

I would like to create a rain garden with public space for residents on the East Side of Buffalo. The goal of my project is to attract investment while improving the built environment. This project has three main objectives:

1. Beautify an underused lot to increase neighborhood attractiveness
2. Alleviate sewer overflow by capturing and absorbing urban water run-off
3. Create an attractive public space for residents and visitors

This project would benefit this community by contributing to the beautification of the neighborhood while improving the environment and potentially creating jobs in the future. It will also reduce the strain on Buffalo's aging Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) system, ultimately contributing to the health and function of waterways in the area. There is an urgent need for the City of Buffalo to protect its water in a fiscally responsible manner. CSOs cost cities around the country millions of dollars in fines from the Environmental Protection Agency. This project provides an innovative solution to the problem.

This project will take place in three phases: 1. Design and planning of site; 2. Installation of rain garden; and 3. Installation of public space with seating area.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

The proposed site for this garden is located at the intersection of Best Street, Parade Street and Genesee Street, adjacent to Martin Luther King Jr. Park in the Masten District, directly at the southern border of the Fillmore District on Buffalo’s East Side. This historic district was developed at the end of the 19th and early 20th century and was home to German, Polish, Italian, Russian, and Canadian immigrants. After World War II, this area experienced a demographic shift to mainly African American residents, which is still true today. While the district has seen disinvestment and neighborhood decline in the built environment, it boasts historic housing stock and important institutions such as Canisius College, Buffalo Museum of Science and the Paul Robeson Theatre to name a few.

I’d like to fulfill the potential of East Side neighborhoods by inspiring future investment through a community-based beautification project.

Paul Peréz
perepc26@gmail.com

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

Obtain funding
Recruit a community partner
Find an appropriate site
Develop a site plan

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Partnerships, Access to a Site, Landscape Design Assistance

FUNDING RANGE

$5,000 - $10,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT
BUFFALO, NY

Bringing Food Retail into the Central Park Plaza Redevelopment

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

The purpose of this project is to provide a fresh food market on Fillmore Avenue to fulfill the needs of the neighborhood residents. In order to ensure that the community weighs in on what type of market it wants, the main objectives of this project are to create an outreach strategy and a citizen committee that will solicit community feedback and advocate for this input to be taken into account when the market is being developed.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

The Fillmore-Leroy Area needs a fresh food market. This need was caused by the population exodus from this area and the widely acknowledged failure of the former Central Park Plaza, which once hosted stores where residents could purchase fresh foods and produce. Recently though, with the expectation of more foot-traffic, an increase in population density of the neighborhood, and the current climate of positive change with the redevelopment of the former Plaza, citizens such as Ms. Daria Pratcher and the leadership of the neighborhood group Fillmore-Leroy Area Residents, Inc. (FLARE) have been encouraged to start advocating to bring a fresh food market into the area.

It is essential though that this market be developed with the community’s desires and needs in mind. The neighborhood has seen significant growth in the past two years of families who previously did not live in the Buffalo area. The new residents are primarily of Southeast Asian descent and were either residents of New York City or their native country. Therefore, a typical market would not be suitable for this diverse neighborhood.

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

Research funding sources
Coordinate a public engagement campaign
Recruit public and private partners
Help identify potential sites adjacent to the Central Park Plaza redevelopment site

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Partnerships

FUNDING RANGE

$0 - $5,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

IDEA | PLAN | ACTION

Our neighborhood needs a place where residents can have access to nutritious, affordable food to increase their health and quality of life. Any market that comes into the neighborhood should reflect the needs and desires of the neighborhood’s diverse and vibrant population.
OUR IDEA FOR CHANGE

This project seeks to create a social media campaign in order to fulfill its mission. The campaign will consist of spreading information about the extent of the waste problem in WNY, recommended strategies to combat this problem, and current efforts that are working on this issue, through Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, and blog accounts. Each group member will post information on these accounts weekly. The majority of the content will be specific to WNY, however, valuable content that originates from other communities, such as best practices, will also be posted. Also, the content will be about all types of waste, including but not limited to yard, food, and electronic waste. In addition, the type of information posted could include case studies, spotlights on successful community efforts, best practices, and compelling statistics.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

Western New York (WNY) has a disproportionate amount of waste going to landfills and incinerators compared to other communities throughout the county. In part this is due to the lack of educational and community efforts that work to reduce the amount of material sent to disposal. This is surprising, since the accumulation of waste can lead to a variety of problems, such as pollution, poor public health, higher taxes, and lower quality of life. This project will model its efforts after other communities that have experienced similar waste problems and initiated efforts that promote citizen waste prevention and reduction strategies. Beyond Waste WNY will serve as an education campaign to show how its residents can reduce waste at the source and increase recycling efforts. This campaign will be delivered in a way that reaches the maximum amount of citizens in the most efficient way possible. Follow us @BeyondWasteWNY #BeyondWasteWNY

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

Identify, connect, communicate and engage local partners dedicated to our mission of sustainable waste management.

Create up-to-date and consistent content through our online platform.

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Partnerships, Content for the Web, Writing Support

FUNDING RANGE

$0 - $5,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

IDEA  PLAN  ACTION
BUFFALO, NY

The Neighborhood Micro-grant Program

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE
The purpose of The Neighborhood Fund is to jumpstart solutions to challenges faced by our community, and to creatively engage residents to become more active, involved, and engaged in Buffalo’s future. The Neighborhood Fund will organize the review of applications by a committee of community leaders on a quarterly basis for grants that are each under $1,000. Winners will not only receive funds but also consulting and programming support from the Neighborhood Fund. The only follow up requirement for the winners will be a public presentation about the successes or hardships they faced at our sixth month review event. The purpose of this event is to encourage accountability and also to allow other community members to learn from the experiences of other change agents.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN
Small grassroots initiatives can contribute to the revitalization of communities, yet they are often overlooked by traditional funding sources. This is particularly true in the City of Buffalo. Furthermore, many citizens are unfamiliar or unprepared to complete the complicated grant applications that many foundations require. Also, the resources required to complete these applications might be worth more than the amount of money requested for smaller projects. Thus, an alternative yet sustainable funding structure is needed to fund projects in Buffalo, NY. This structure would provide immediate smaller grants to grassroots community improvement projects through a simpler and more transparent grant application process than traditional application procedures.

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD
Explore different sustainable organizational models
Look for a partner to house the fund during the start-up phase
Explore funding opportunities
Start fundraising and grant writing

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN
Legal Assistance, Strategic Planning Assistance, Funding, Partnerships

FUNDING RANGE
$50,000 - $100,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT
IDEA PLAN ACTION

Aimee Buyea
Sugar City
aimee.buyea@gmail.com

The Neighborhood Fund aims to fund small grassroots initiatives that strengthen communities from the ground up; promoting positive change one step at a time.
A Strategic Plan for the 1415 Community Organization, Inc.

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

The purpose of this project is to create a strategic plan for 1415 Community Organization, Inc. Since 2009, the organization 1415 has run a co-ed youth basketball league, an essay contest, and several events meant to instill pride to the community and teach residents social skills. The services and events that 1415 offers result in the development of community members’ socializing and networking skills, relationships and friendships with people from different backgrounds, and respect for peers and the community. Despite the impressive impact that the organization has had so far, 1415 feels that it needs to engage in strategic planning to maintain the organization’s sustainability. Specifically, the organization is trying to develop strategies to obtain additional funding, volunteers, and event venues in order to offer services more consistently.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

The organization 1415, Inc. serves the areas with the zip codes 14214 and 14215. In fact, the name of the organization is actually a combination of these two zip codes. Currently, it is clear that the youth in our neighborhood lack social skills, and that a self-centered, inflexible mentality predominates. This is evidenced by youth social gatherings that often end with someone being hurt. Another main problem in our neighborhood is a lack of pride in our community and its members. This is indicated by the litter on our sidewalks and streets. In light of these challenges, efforts are needed to increase social skills as well as self and neighborhood pride.

Planning a Change

A community that learns, plays, and builds together, stays together. 1415 Community Organization, Inc. provides at risk youth and low income families with educational and recreational programs to improve social skills and restore pride in our community and its members.

Geraldine Griffin
1415 Community Organization, Inc.
gerrie@14215.org

Zip codes 14214 & 14215
City of Buffalo

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

IDEA   PLAN   ACTION

REFERENCES

One Region Forward
HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

ACTION TO MOVE IT FORWARD

Explore different sustainable organizational models
Prioritize projects based on capacity (human, financial and material)
Explore funding opportunities
Start fundraising and grant writing

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Strategic Planning Assistance, Funding, Partnerships, Volunteers, Grant Writing Assistance, Marketing Assistance

FUNDING RANGE

$5,000 - $10,000
Rediscover Main Street

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

This project will entail placing signs in front of historical landmarks on Main Street in the historic Village of Williamsville, in order to increase the walkability of this street, as well as to communicate the history of the Village more effectively. The Village of Williamsville has been identifying Village landmarks, as well as improving its Main Street through the “Picture Main Street” initiative. This project will involve strengthening and combining both of these efforts by advocating for and installing historical signs on Main Street. This is a strategy to both recognize the Village’s history as well as make Main Street more enticing for pedestrians.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

Main Street in the Village of Williamsville could be made more walkable and attractive for pedestrians. Furthermore, one way to make Main Street more appealing is to highlight the historical significance of certain sites on the street. This could potentially increase the tourism appeal of the Village, stimulate economic development, and promote more environmentally-friendly and healthy modes of transportation. The Village of Williamsville is already conducting efforts to identify Village landmarks, as well as make its Main Street more appealing through the “Picture Main Street” initiative. An initiative to combine and bolster these efforts is needed though.

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

- Continue best practice research
- Learn how to incorporate “new media” into the project
- Explore funding opportunities
- Start fundraising and grant writing

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Funding, Partnerships, Volunteers, Grant Writing Assistance, Graphic Design and Sign Expertise

FUNDING RANGE

$10,000 - $50,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

- IDEA
- PLAN
- ACTION

Mary Ellen Haefner
Preservation Buffalo Niagara
meme35315@gmail.com

It’s time our history was made part of the picture. This project seeks to make Main Street in the historic Village of Williamsville more pedestrian-friendly and appealing by visibly highlighting the history of the Village along the street.
NIAGARA FALLS, NY

Net-zero Renovation for the Niagara Falls Community Center

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE
The purpose of this project is to retrofit and rehabilitate the Niagara Falls Community Center. The center was once a major institution of its neighborhood, providing education (e.g. green certification, GED training, and health education), recreation, and wellness programs to surrounding residents and in particular the African American community. This program proposes a net-zero renovation for the center that uses labor from a job training program that teaches participants “green” job skills. This project would not only create much needed jobs in Niagara Falls, but it would also make the Center energy efficient and decrease its energy costs. Lower energy costs in turn would ensure the long term sustainability of the center. Once the center is renovated and re-opened, a variety of community-based programming will be offered there.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN
The community center is located at the corner of Centre Avenue and 15th Street in Niagara Falls. It will benefit all residents in its neighborhood, and especially the African American community members. There has been a void in the community since the center's closing. It is time to reopen this institution and create a strategy that ensures its long term success.

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD
Find funding to do an engineering study for the net-zero renovation
Develop additional partnerships
Create the workforce training program
Train the first class of “green” construction workers

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN
Funding, Partnerships, Professional Services (accounting, legal, and engineering)

FUNDING RANGE
$200,000 plus

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

Shirley Hamilton
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Niagara Falls Branch
mshamiltonsj@gmail.com

Bringing back the Niagara Falls Community Center through a net-zero renovation will not only create an environmentally and economically sustainable building, but will also create jobs, provide a place to deliver programs that enrich and empower residents, and serve as a prototype for other non-profit and governmental building retrofits.
MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

This project involves establishing a mobile produce market that will provide healthy and fresh food options at various locations around Buffalo’s East Side. The food sold will be sourced mainly from local farmers, vendors, and urban gardens. This project has joined forces with a similar mobile fresh market project initiated by the Community Action Organization in the same area. Thus, Kara will help sustain this developing program by marketing the program and seeking funding for it.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

The East Side of Buffalo currently faces low access to nutritious and affordable fresh food, which leads to a host of other neighborhood problems including poor health and quality of life. In order to address these issues, a method of delivering fruits and vegetables to East Side residents in a way that is predictable, convenient, and takes into consideration that many residents do not own automobiles, is desperately needed. The Fresh2Go East Side Mobile Market meets this criteria.

I want to provide fresh, nutritious, and affordable food to the residents of Buffalo’s East Side in a manner that is convenient, predictable, and takes into account that many of these community members do not have access to cars.

Kara Oliver
Community Action Organization
koliver89@gmail.com

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

Seek funding
Develop a marketing campaign

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Program Funding, Partnerships

FUNDING RANGE

$10,000 - $50,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

Idea
Plan
Action

East Side, City of Buffalo

U.S. Department of Agriculture | https://flic.kr/p/bVAWRK
The Friends of the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor (FMSAAHC) will focus on advocacy, funding, staffing and community engagement to support programming and initiatives within the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor to make it a more desirable place to live, work and visit. FMSAAHC will work in collaboration with the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission (MSAAHCC) and its stakeholders to connect the residents and supporters to the initiatives that are being planned for the corridor, in order to ensure their success and sustainability, and to create new initiatives that enhance the vitality and marketability of the corridor as a tourist destination. Together, residents, corridor supporters, and the Commission can combine efforts to preserve and enhance the area’s landmarks, increase tourism, stimulate economic development and foster neighborhood pride.

Current initiatives include:
- Development of front-yard heritage gardens
- Renovation of the Jesse Clipper Park: Installation of community garden and monument to African American military women
- Staffing and programming support for corridor attractions and events
- Urban design and infrastructure improvements

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN
The Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, which is located on the East Side of Buffalo, was identified as a critical place for the celebration and recognition of Buffalo’s African American heritage locally and within the national context. The Corridor was a key location for activists and thinkers during the Abolitionist period and the Civil Rights Movement. The Corridor was also a historic melting pot for immigrants coming into Buffalo in the 1800s, and in the early 1900s a cultural hot-spot for jazz. Today the Corridor is home to important historic and cultural institutions such as the Nash House Museum, The Colored Musicians Club, The Langston Hughes Institute and the Michigan Street Baptist Church.

I hope to see a vibrant African American Heritage Corridor that has stimulated business development, created employment for residents, preserved the physical spaces where history was made, educates residents and tourists, and vastly instills pride in the accomplishments and achievements of local African Americans.
A Sidewalk Snow Removal Program for the Elmwood Village

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE
The Sidewalk Snow Removal Program will be done in collaboration with the Elmwood Village Association (EVA) and will enlist volunteers from the EVA, surrounding neighborhoods, block clubs, and other stakeholder groups in the Elmwood Village. The first year will focus on the commercial strip running through Elmwood Village (which is the section of Elmwood Avenue that runs from Allen Street to W. Delavan Avenue). Eventually the project will expand to incorporate other residential sidewalks and walkways in the Elmwood Village. Possible implementation methods include the distribution of information (paper and electronic) to residents and merchants, media outreach, meetings with inspectors from the City of Buffalo, and the promotion of reporting tools (e.g. 311 at City Hall). The ultimate goal is to have safe sidewalks throughout the Elmwood Village. Possible future components would extend the project to other neighborhoods in Buffalo and eventually the entire City of Buffalo.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN
Every winter, a substantial number of pedestrians (especially the disabled, transit riders, seniors, and young adults) in the Elmwood Village face injury by falls and/or by automobile accidents when walking on the Village roadways due to snow and ice buildup. An initiative is needed to remove these hazards, in order to increase pedestrian safety, encourage walking rather than driving as the predominant mode of transportation, lower greenhouse gas emissions, improve the environment and increase the quality of life in the Elmwood Village.

The program will generate, promote, and execute activities in Elmwood Village that improve the snow and ice removal activities on the sidewalks of Elmwood Avenue from Allen Street to W. Delavan Avenue.

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD
Explore financial support for season-long snow removal
Cost-estimates for snow removal
Request for Proposal development for snow removal contracts
Seek volunteers to assist with program

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN
Funding, Partnerships, In-kind Service Donations (plowing, shoveling), Volunteers

FUNDING RANGE
$5,000 - $10,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT
Idea

Lynn Magdol
Buffalo Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Board and Elmwood Village Association
lmagdol@gmail.com

I want the sidewalks in my neighborhood to be safe and clear of snow in the winter, for the enjoyment of all residents and visitors.
Small Food Business Incubation for East Side Residents

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

This project proposes a commercial kitchen facility with an educational program to help incubate small food businesses on the East Side of Buffalo. The goal is to transition residents from working at no or low-paying jobs to building and growing their own micro-food enterprises. Growing small-scale businesses in Buffalo will provide employment opportunities within the local community.

This commercial kitchen model will help new startups by eliminating common obstacles to business creation, such as high costs for overhead, insurance, equipment, utilities and other requirements needed to operate a food-related business. Potential users of the kitchen include home-based cooks, caterers, chefs, bakers, food truck operators and food cart owners.

Users will have access to business building sessions to take their enterprises to the next level. The facility could also offer health and nutrition education to the community. This project will improve the health, well-being and quality of life of individuals and families in the East Side, by providing them with information and tools to prepare fresh and nutritious food.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

There is a food movement occurring in this country, and Buffalo’s growth in the food service and hospitality industries is creating many food related opportunities in the city. Taking these opportunities and distributing them throughout the city will have a great impact on East Side residents, in terms of increased jobs, nutrition, health, and quality of life. Due to its high unemployment, low median income, and low food access figures, the East Side of Buffalo is an ideal location for teaching residents how to take advantage of these opportunities in food service. This could be accomplished through the creation of a commercial kitchen where users could hone their cooking and food service skills, practice preparing fresh and nutritious meals and products, and learn skills for operating a small food-related business. Potential sites include: the Broadway Market, churches, and Wellness Centers.

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

- Find a commercial kitchen to deliver programming
- Locate funding to deliver programming and manage the kitchen
- Finalize nutrition and health curriculum with partners

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Funding, Partnerships, In-kind Service Donations

FUNDING RANGE

$50,000 - $100,000

Della Miller
Foodlink716@gmail.com

Food unites families and communities, and can also give people a path to a prosperous future. Everyone eats and anyone can cook. A commercial kitchen geared towards educating new business owners and reducing barriers to entry would help level the playing field for people who just need that small break to get going.
Growing Future Blooms: A Community Engagement Campaign

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

The women of the Junior League of Buffalo (JLB), an organization of volunteers committed to building a better community, is launching a community engagement campaign to promote awareness of its Future Blooms initiative. The purpose of this campaign will be to attract the attention of neighborhood block clubs, community organizations, and property owners interested in partnering with JLB and expanding this high impact, low cost program to their neighborhoods.

Future Blooms is a neighborhood revitalization program that relies on volunteers to paint doors, windows and flower boxes on the barricaded parts of abandoned buildings to make them appear inhabited. After piloting this program in May 2014 on two properties in the Old First Ward Neighborhood, it became apparent that the extent of Buffalo’s abandoned housing crisis exceeds JLB’s response capacity. By strategically focusing our investment in Buffalo’s business corridors with high concentrations of traffic, and growing our network of community partners, we can increase our visibility and maximize our impact.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

The City of Buffalo is littered with abandoned and vacant buildings. These buildings can lead to a host of community problems, including lack of pride and perpetual neighborhood disinvestment. Furthermore, it can take years before someone buys and rehabilitates a property. In order to restore neighborhood pride and encourage reinvestment in communities, sometimes all an unwanted building needs is a new coat of paint. Painting the facades of these structures can remind both residents and potential investors that their neighborhood has potential and is worth investing in.

Future Blooms gives neglected buildings a new lease on life with a fresh coat of paint and a little imagination. By planting seeds of change, JLB hopes to restore community pride and encourage reinvestment in Buffalo’s abandoned properties and forgotten neighborhoods.

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

Finalize marketing materials
Update website
Reach out to potential partners

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Funding, Partnerships, Graphic Design Support

FUNDING RANGE

$0 - $5,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

Kathleen Murphy
Junior League of Buffalo
jlbfutureblooms@gmail.com
Taking the “It Takes A Village Organization” to the Next Level

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

The goal of this project is to create an application for the It Takes a Village Organization (ITAV) to transition into an official 501c3 nonprofit organization. Through the process of creating the framework for organizational growth we hope to identify short-term goals and strategies to reach those goals. The outcome of this project would be materials to help prepare for future funding applications and a completed 501c3 application.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

Since 2010 ITAV has transformed the lives and altered the destinies of hundreds of inner city Buffalo residents, through comprehensive job, emotional, spiritual, and physical counseling, among many other services.

Currently, ITAV provides holistic care services in partnership with the Rapha Family Wellness Center. ITAV supports the unemployed, unskilled, and re-entry candidates by facilitating 12 weeks of self-assessment in the areas of spirituality, education and vocation, active listening, judgment, work ethics, life skills, job readiness, and job searching. After these evaluations are complete, ITAV provides services to its participants according to their needs.

Available services include supportive counseling, job referrals, career placement, hands-on training, restorative justice, GED and higher education referrals, re-entry mentoring and training, nutrition advice, and physical fitness training. This comprehensive set of programs is based off the idea of the “E-Method”, which refers to the needs to engage, embrace, enhance, encourage, enlighten, enrich, energize, ensure, equip, entrust, educate, empower, and employ citizens for them to be completely well and productive. After participants receive counseling ITAV does a one year follow up to evaluate whether the services were effective.

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

Complete the application for 501c3 Status
Update project plan
Reach out to potential partners

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Financial Assistance for Obtaining Legal Help, Program Funding, Facilities, and Partnerships

FUNDING RANGE

$10,000 - $50,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

IDEA PLAN ACTION
WILSON, NY

War of 1812 Heritage Garden

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

This project seeks to develop a War of 1812 Commemorative Heritage Garden for the Town of Wilson in Krueger Park. The goal of this project is to support the development of Krueger Park as a multi-use town amenity. This project has two objectives. The first objective is to create a space for Town and Village residents as well as visitors to learn about the experience of the early settlers of Wilson during the War of 1812. The second objective is to situate the Town and Village of Wilson as well as its heritage within a larger network of Peace Gardens that seeks to advance global cooperation. This project has the potential to encourage healthy activities such as gardening, meditation, and relaxation. In addition, an aim of the project is to increase the use and awareness of the Wilson Historical Society. The project will be implemented in three phases.

**Phase 1** - Create a gateway into Krueger Park that establishes the narrative of Luther Wilson’s role in the War of 1812 and install an accessible walking path with mile markers.

**Phase 2** - Develop additional walking paths and the middle portion of the site.

**Phase 3** - Finalize the installation of site gardens as well as install a walking path leading to an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible restroom facilities.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

The Village of Wilson was incorporated in 1858 and named for one of its earliest prominent citizens, Reuben Wilson. It is located on the shores of Lake Ontario in Niagara County, New York. The Village is situated along the historic Buffalo-Niagara Heritage Trail and has a number of historically significant attractions.

I want to help Wilson rediscover its sense of place in the past as well as the present. I also want to transform an unused park into a jewel that the community uses for recreation, education, tourism, gardening, healthy living, and relaxation.

Jill Rohring
Watch Wilson Grow
jillrohring@ymail.com

Planning a Change

**ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD**

- Form a committee
- Finalize designs and budget
- Complete application for the Peace Garden designation
- Fundraising

**RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN**

- Design Assistance, Donations, Funding, Partnerships

**FUNDING RANGE**

- **Phase 1**: $40,000 - $50,000
- **Phase 2**: $90,000 - $100,000
- **Phase 3**: $80,000 - $90,000
Bike/Ped Wayfinding Signage Pilot for the Elmwood Village

MY IDEA FOR CHANGE

This project entails designing and installing bicycle and pedestrian wayfinding signs in the Elmwood Village along Elmwood Avenue. Such signs would state the distance and time it takes to bike to major destinations in the City of Buffalo.

To complete this project, research will need to be conducted about how signs like these generally look, where they are placed, how far apart they are placed, and how the community provides input on them, among other topics. Once project implementation options are identified, the community will be asked to give their feedback on the project. Specifically, the community will be asked to offer their input on sign design, placement, and spacing, to name a few items that are open to discussion. After the community has provided its input and project plans are solidified, the creation and installation of the signs will begin.

WHERE THE CHANGE WILL HAPPEN

Bicycling around the City of Buffalo, and the Elmwood Village in particular, has numerous benefits including improved health, cost-savings, and decreased environmental pollution. Bicycling in Buffalo is also more convenient and time-effective than much of the population in Buffalo believes. Thus, an effort is needed that encourages cycling by increasing the visibility and awareness of cycling as a convenient and viable transportation option worthy of public resources and respect.

I want to create pedestrian and bicycle wayfinding signage in order to encourage walking and cycling around Buffalo so that it becomes more visible and decreases injuries and accidents. Walking and biking are great ways to get around and see the city.

Ashley Smith
Elmwood Village Association
Ashley@elmwoodvillage.org

Planning a Change

ACTIONS TO MOVE IT FORWARD

- Locate potential funding sources
- Research best locations for sign placement
- Research best practices for sign design
- Collaborate with Bike/Ped Advisory Board and Dept. of Public Works
- Create an implementation timeline
- Assess pilot and reconfigure for expansion

RESOURCES NEEDED TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Partnerships, Sign Fabrication, Sign Placement Assistance

FUNDING RANGE

- $0 - $5,000

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

Elmwood Village, City of Buffalo
Aimee Buyea:
Aimee Buyea is president and co-founder of Sugar City, a volunteer-run arts and culture collective in Buffalo that acts as a music venue, art gallery, and community meeting space. Sugar City started as a grassroots experiment to fill the need for low cost, accessible, and all-ages exhibition space. Now, Sugar City plays a vital role in contributing to the culture of Buffalo’s West Side community and offers various needed programs.

Contact information: aimee.buyea@gmail.com

Geraldine Griffin:
Geraldine is founder and chairperson of 1415 Community Organization Inc., a registered nonprofit focused on providing community events for families, promoting social skills development among youths, and restoring pride to its neighborhood. The organization offers several services and events for the community, including an annual Easter egg hunt, Community “PRIDE” day, and an essay contest.

Contact information: Gerrie@14215.org

Mary Ellen Haefner:
Mary Ellen Haefner has been a member of the Education Committee of Preservation Buffalo Niagara since 2011. Recently she contributed to developing the organization’s 2014 tour schedule as well as its professional development program.

Contact information: dlg1977@verizon.net

Shirley Hamilton:
Shirley Hamilton is a community activist working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) of Niagara Falls to promote economic, social, and environmental justice in the city.

Contact information: mshamiltons@gmail.com

Lynn Magdol:
Lynn Magdol serves on the Board of Citizens for Regional Transit and is the treasurer of the Lancaster-Melbourne block club. She is also on the Buffalo Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Board through which she has been working with City departments on education and reporting programs to improve sidewalk snow removal.

Contact information: lmagdol@gmail.com

Della Miller:
For over 25 years, Della has been involved in various levels of the food and nutrition industry. Starting her career in high school, she has worked in hospital foodservice, founded and managed various community food co-ops and gardens, developed and managed nutrition training and programming for New York State regions I & II, and monitored more than 20 licensed food service facilities in Erie County. She has also served on many health, nutrition and wellness committees.

Contact information: Foodlink716@gmail.com
716-218-0373

Kathleen Murphy:
Kathleen Murphy is involved with the Junior League of Buffalo (JLB), which is an organization of women volunteers committed to building better communities. In particular, Kathleen serves as the program coordinator of Future Blooms, a building beautification program that symbolizes the promise of new life for old structures.

Contact information: jlbfutureblooms@gmail.com

Beverly Newkirk:
Beverly Newkirk is founder and executive director of “It Takes a Village,” a community action organization aimed towards promoting the mental, physical, and spiritual well-being of inner city residents of all ages, and thus empowering them to become productive citizens. In addition, Beverly is involved with community organizations such as the Coalition for Economic Justice and the Partnership for the Public Good.

Contact information: beverlynwkirk58@yahoo.com
Kara Oliver:
Kara Oliver is the program specialist for the National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York (NFJC). She is also a diversity facilitator for Hilbert College’s Office of Multicultural Affairs, where she has developed numerous workshops that focus on race, gender equality, and LGBT issues, among others.
Contact information: k Oliver89@gmail.com

Ruth Otberg-Cooper:
Ruth Otberg-Cooper is a community activist highly involved in the Memorial Park Block Club of Niagara Falls. With other members of this club, she has been advocating against “slumlord” activity in her neighborhood to local government officials, developers, and other stakeholders. Specifically, her group is working on a council challenge that pushes for the replacement of the neighborhood’s antiquated code enforcement system as well as the promotion of homeownership in order to proactively address blight.
Contact information: memorialparkblockclub@yahoo.com

Paul Peréz:
Paul Perez is a young minority male who is interested in transforming politics, government, and not-for-profit management to be more equitable as well as efficient. He is a leader who provides individuals as well as communities with the tools and fundamentals they need to realize their potential. Paul is involved with the Buffalo Urban League of Young Professionals, as well as the City of Buffalo’s Citizen Participation Academy, through which he learns how to navigate city hall and the responsibilities of each department.
Contact information: perepc26@gmail.com

Daria Pratcher:
Daria Pratcher is an attorney and community activist who volunteers as the housing director for her block club, Fillmore-Leroy Area Residents, Inc. (FLARE). Prior to becoming housing director, Daria served on the Board of Directors for FLARE for 11 years. She has a long track record of rehabilitating old and dilapidated houses into sources of pride for her neighborhood.
Contact information: dlpratcher@dlpratcherlawoffice.com

Jill Rohring:
Jill is a community activist who is currently serving on the Village of Wilson Planning Board and is a charter member of Watch Wilson Grow, a community group that partners with both public and private organizations who focus on creating lasting improvements to the area. Since 1997 Watch Wilson Grow has leveraged local funds with grants and in-kind services to produce improvements to the Wilson community valued at over $250,000.
Contact information: Jillrohring@ymail.com

Alison Schweichler:
Alison is a counselor as well as a community activist, for both the Climate Reality Leadership Corporation and Western New York Drilling Defense. Both organizations advocate for sustainable efforts in order to mitigate the effects of climate change. Alison contributes to the work of these organizations through frequently writing letters and op-ed pieces, petitioning, and attending rallies.
Contact information: asch1006@yahoo.com

Ashley Smith:
Ashley works as the communications coordinator for the Elmwood Village Association, whose mission is to work with businesses and residents to improve the quality of life for the community in its entirety. She also recently joined the Buffalo Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Board. Ashley takes pride in her bikeable and walkable neighborhood, and wants to ensure that the EV continues to accommodate car-free lifestyles like her own.
Contact information: ashley@elmwoodvillage.org

Bobbie Thoman:
Bobbie Thoman is a community activist earning her Master’s Degree in Canadian-US Relations at the University at Buffalo in conjunction with Brock University in Ontario. She is also currently a participant of LiveNY, a progressive housing program in Niagara Falls that provides incentives for students and young professionals to move into the city. Bobbie hopes to one day work for a sustainably focused organization that helps revitalize the environment and economy of Western New York.
Contact information: bobbieth@buffalo.edu

Gail V. Wells:
Gail V. Wells is an activist and a leader. Growing up in Harlem during the 1950’s and 60’s, Gail was exposed to many legendary civil rights leaders who taught her about the use of non-violence to inspire social change. Since then, Gail has organized countless cultural and educational activities that have caused social change both in New York City and Buffalo. Her accomplishments include co-founding the University at Buffalo’s Black Student Union, serving on the first Juneteenth Committee, and co-editing Buffalo’s first Black owned magazine, Buffalo After Dark. Gail was also co-owner of Watu Sokoni (also known as “The People’s Market”), and co-founder of the Center for Positive thought (also known as the “Black Dance Workshop”).
Contact information: wellsgv@buffalostate.edu