



# *The Common Council of the City of Buffalo, NY*



April 2, 2007

## ***Action Plan for the City of Buffalo for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008***

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### **MISSION STATEMENT**

**“To improve the quality of life within the City of Buffalo for its taxpayers, businesses, residents and visitors, while transforming and rebuilding the City into a vibrant and growing home-ownership, business, education and entertainment hub within Erie County and the Western New York Region.”**

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# **INDEX**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVES**

- INSTALL SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS
- EXPAND GRAFFITI CLEANUP
- SUPPORT FOR THE BUFFALO SPECIAL POLICE
- ENACT A PAN HANDLING ORDINANCE
- ESTABLISH QUALITY OF LIFE CENTERS
- SUPPORT USE OF MOBILE RESPONSE UNITS
- HIRE MORE POLICE OFFICERS
- HONOR POLICE CONTRACT AND LIFT THE BFSM IMPOSED WAGE FREEZE
- REINSTATE COMMUNITY PROSECUTION UNIT

### **HOUSING INITIATIVES**

- DEVELOP A PRO-ACTIVE HOUSING PLAN
- SUPPORT CREATION OF AN ADDITIONAL HOUSING COURT JUDGE
- CREATE HOMEOWNERSHIP AT THE MARINE DRIVE APARTMENTS AND GENERATE NEW REVENUE FOR THE CITY

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

- UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ZONING AND LICENSING ORDINANCES
- ENACT "SMART CODE" ZONING
- DEVELOP SHOVEL READY SITES
- DEVELOP BUSINESS INCUBATORS
- EXPAND UB AND ECC
- WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT
- CITYWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS
- SUPPORT TRANSPORTATION CHANGES TO SPUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- JOB TRAINING
- DEVELOP AND GROW CULTURAL TOURISM
- ESTABLISH A CASINO FUNDING STRUCTURE

### **IMPROVING CITY OPERATIONS**

- IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT
- CONSOLIDATE / MERGE SUPPORT SERVICES
- IMPROVE AND EXPAND CITY DEBT COLLECTION EFFORTS
- IMPLEMENT PARKS ADVISORY BOARD
- AFFIRMATIVE ACTION CONTRACT MONITORING

### **ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES**

- PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY ON PROPOSED ETHANOL PLANT
- HIRE A PROFESSIONAL FORESTER
- DEVELOP A PLAN TO INCREASE RECYCLING
- BRING CLOSURE TO THE HICKORY WOODS
- FLOOD INSURANCE

### **EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

- MONITORING THE THREE YEAR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT PLAN
- "CONTRACT FOR EXCELLENCE" FUNDING
- ADDRESSING SCHOOL VIOLENCE

## **INTRODUCTION**

Buffalo, it has been said, has "good bones." We boast walkable neighborhoods, radial streets designed by Joseph Ellicott, elegant public buildings, diverse cultures and numerous civic amenities. Our historic park system was created by Frederick Law Olmsted, and many of our buildings were constructed by America's greatest architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, H.H. Richardson and Daniel Burnham. Our infrastructure is vast enough to accommodate a million people.

We are, however, not blind to the depredations which have befallen Buffalo and hundreds of other American cities in more than a half-century of urban decline, a decline which threatens the heart of America's civilization.

A prominent urban critic wrote that today's Buffalo resembled a city carpet-bombed in World War II. Others in the popular media brand some areas of the city as looking like ravaged areas in Beirut or Baghdad.

We may reassure ourselves that these critics were engaging in unfair hyperbole given the many attractive features in Buffalo, but these biting words also underscore that our most challenging task is to revitalize neighborhood's crucified by decades of slum and blight. The City of Buffalo's Department of Strategic Planning reports that as many 10,000 dilapidated structures need to be torn down at a staggering cost of \$170 - million. Many census tracts in the city show that nearly 40% of the people live in heart-breaking poverty.

Perhaps the greatest culprit tearing at the heart of the city has been the all-devouring relentless harm caused by sprawl, that centerless, auto-centric form of growth, which infects every region of the nation. We must vociferously do all in our power to develop a regional ethos, which resists sprawl, while at the same time focus on healing Buffalo's wounds and strengthening her for the future.

Each of the nine Buffalo Council Members has put forth their vision for restoring Buffalo's vitality. This Annual Common Council Report reflects ideas aimed at assisting Buffalo in a myriad of ways, such as passing laws improving peoples' quality of life, or backing economic development projects that will create new jobs or businesses in the city. They have also forwarded their priorities to other levels of government, such as the State of New York or the federal government to gain support for Council initiatives.

The Common Council is working hard to realize its 2007-2008 Action Plan. In 100 years, I believe people will judge the work the Common Council does today to rebuild, protect and preserve Buffalo. And as long as the Council's labors are guided by the understanding that the health of the city is the clearest indicator of the health of a civilization, these efforts will be crowned with success.

***David A. Franczyk  
President of the Common Council  
of the City of Buffalo, NY***

# **PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVES**

## • **INSTALL SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS**

The Common Council has long advocated for the utilization of surveillance cameras as a tool to deter crime and combat criminal activity and supports the placement of surveillance cameras in strategic public locations. Many cities across the country are utilizing surveillance cameras with much success.

The location of camera sites must have the involvement of neighborhood Good Neighbor Planning Alliances and Block Club organizations.

## • **EXPAND GRAFFITI CLEANUP**

Graffiti negatively impacts the quality of life throughout the City of Buffalo. Graffiti defaces and destroys the value of property, is costly to remedy, and if not removed quickly, can spread throughout and overtake an entire neighborhood. Police agencies must be constantly vigilant for offenders and the Courts must ensure that perpetrators receive the strictest punishment including community service, monetary restitution and incarceration if appropriate.

The Common Council supports a proactive approach to graffiti removal and requests that additional funds be utilized to expand these efforts. This Common Council also encourages Police agencies and the Courts to deal with graffiti offenders in a fashion that sends a strong message that graffiti will not be tolerated, and is a crime that will incur harsh consequences.

## • **SUPPORT FOR THE BUFFALO SPECIAL POLICE**

The Buffalo City Charter, in 1927, recognized the Buffalo Special Police Officers. Since that time, this volunteer group of concerned citizens has dedicated their own time and resources to helping keep Buffalo a safe place. Buffalo Special Police Officers pay for their own training and equipment and work at the pleasure and direction of the Buffalo Police Commissioner.

A decrease in the Buffalo Police force, elimination of the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority Police force and an increase in quality of life issues in recent years makes the use of the Special Police especially attractive. Common Council members see a great need for law enforcement personnel who would walk business districts and targeted areas in neighborhoods, recognizing and reporting trouble to the Buffalo Police Department.

In an effort to protect the Special Police Officers, the City of Buffalo and residents, the City Charter stipulates guidelines for the Special Police including close oversight and direction by the Police Commissioner and separate insurance. The Common Council encourages the Commissioner of Police to work closely with the Buffalo Special Police Organization to meet City requirements so that they can soon be working the streets of the City of Buffalo.

- **ENACT A PAN HANDLING ORDINANCE**

Aggressive panhandlers, and panhandling in general, impacts the quality of life for people, deters customers from patronizing businesses and frequenting areas, and hurts businesses and neighborhoods as a whole.

Common Council members are seeking to enact a stronger Ordinance to address the issue of aggressive pan handling. Residents and visitors should be able to travel through the City without being harassed, intimidated or feeling unsafe due to the aggressiveness of panhandlers. Common Council members hope that a stronger Ordinance will assist law enforcement personnel and the Courts in protecting residents against unwanted harassment from panhandlers.

- **ESTABLISH QUALITY OF LIFE CENTERS**

In the early 1990's, the Buffalo Police Department, in conjunction with community groups, initiated neighborhood Community Oriented Police Stations (C.O.P.S.) whose mission was to improve the quality of life for the residents in the community. Because the funding source has changed, this is no longer the primary mission and the C.O.P.S. program, as we knew it, no longer exists. Last year, the Police Department met with the Citizen Preparedness Coordinators, and developed a plan and a model program to institute Quality of Life Centers.

This Common Council strongly supports and encourages the City administration to establish Quality of Life Centers throughout the City to address community issues and to provide educational training in crime prevention, emergency preparedness, neighborhood organizing and problem solving. An additional use of Quality of Life Centers may be their use as satellite offices for housing inspectors. For example, the City of Rochester has housing inspectors working out of six neighborhood offices. The feasibility of having inspectors work out of neighborhood offices in the City of Buffalo needs to be explored further.

- **SUPPORT USE OF MOBILE RESPONSE UNITS**

From August 12 to November 19, 2006, the City utilized a strategy called "Operation Strike Force." Through the efforts of Operation Strike Force 1,848 arrests were made, 1,071 vehicles were impounded, \$173,272 in cash was seized and 69 guns were removed from the streets. Building upon this success, Police Commissioner H. McCarthy Gipson has formed a Mobile Response Unit consisting of a team of 30 officers focused on removing illegal guns, targeting gangs and drug traffickers.

The Council fully supports the formation of a Mobile Response Unit, which will operate throughout the City as a specialized anti-crime fighting initiative.

- **HIRE MORE POLICE OFFICERS**

The Common Council supports and acknowledges the need for more Buffalo Police Officers. Between 2000 and 2005, the Buffalo Police force has decreased by 13%. Based on the University at Buffalo Regional Institute's Policy Brief, titled "*Violent Crime in the City of Good Neighbors,*" when comparing officers and crime levels in Northeast and Midwest cities with 150,000 residents or more, Buffalo was one of only a few cities to have both a higher violent-crime rate and lower police officer levels than the group average.

Under the leadership of Police Commissioner H. McCarthy Gipson, there has been a substantial increase in arrests and additional police officers are needed to assist with an ever-increasing workload. The shortage of police officers has also caused the City to spend significantly more for overtime costs.

- **HONOR POLICE CONTRACT AND LIFT THE BFSA IMPOSED WAGE FREEZE**

During 2003, the Common Council approved the current collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the Police Benevolent Association (PBA), the bargaining unit for City Police officers. The CBA was the product of much work by all parties that saw concessions from union members, savings to the City and decreased costs for taxpayers. The CBA, amongst other things, reduced the size of the police force and implemented the use of one-officer patrol cars. The Council was unanimous in its support for the changes envisioned and its approval of the agreement.

Shortly thereafter, the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority (the BFSA - a state imposed financial control board) determined that the City could not afford the CBA terms relating to wage increases and froze salaries at there then current levels by imposition of a wage freeze. The action has been the subject of much debate (which continues today)

and has led to strained relations between the PBA, the City, the BFSA, public official and taxpayers.

This Common Council urges the members of the City Administration to initiate steps to enable the BFSA to lift the wage freeze.

This Common Council implores the members of the BFSA and leaders at all levels of government to lift the wage freeze for the good of the City workforce, the economy of this region and the continued growth and prosperity of Western New York.

- **REINSTATE COMMUNITY PROSECUTION UNIT**

The Community Prosecution Unit (CPU) was a specialized unit operated through the Erie County District Attorney's Office that focused on quality of life crimes committed by repeat offenders. The CPU was eliminated due to Erie County Budget cuts. The CPU was an excellent tool for addressing minor crimes that impact neighborhoods.

The Common Council has gone on record to join Buffalo Place, Inc. and the Crime Prevention Association of Western New York in requesting state assistance in order to reinstate the Community Prosecution Unit.

## **HOUSING INITIATIVES**

- **DEVELOP A PRO-ACTIVE HOUSING PLAN**

Thousands of properties throughout the City are in need of immediate demolition. Abandoned and neglected properties are a magnet for crime and negatively affect the quality of life for everyone. The Council has made adjustments to the City Capital Budget to increase funding for demolitions and has also advocated for increased State and Federal aid to address the large number of vacant properties awaiting demolition.

While many properties must be demolished for health and safety reasons, many can be rehabbed and turned into affordable homes. The City must develop programs and policies that assist individuals in purchasing and rehabilitating vacant properties. Habitat For Humanity currently has 17 pre-screened families that are waiting for a home and another 30 to 40 families in the process of becoming qualified for a Habitat project.

The Common Council supports the City's efforts to improve its auction process to create opportunities for new homeowners and the efforts of the Anti-Flipping Task Force to address the problem of property flipping in Buffalo.

Housing issues are a critical component for the success of Buffalo. The Common Council encourages the creation of a proactive housing plan that incorporates a systematic approach to demolitions, land banking for future development and the acquisition and rehab of vacant structures to create new homeowners. The Common Council also believes that the City needs to partner more with our many dedicated community organizations to establish new and innovative approaches to housing issues.

- **SUPPORT CREATION OF AN ADDITIONAL HOUSING COURT JUDGE**

Housing issues are quality of life issues that impact neighborhoods across the City of Buffalo. Housing issues also impact a cross section of City Departments such as Police, Fire, Inspections, Citizen Services, Real Estate, and Assessment and Taxation. Thousands of Housing Court cases are filed every year and are of concern to many citizens. Judge Henry Nowak is doing a great job, but the caseload is far too great for one judge to handle individually.

The Common Council has gone on record in support of creating an additional Housing Court Judge position in Buffalo City Court. Legislation has been introduced at the New York State level seeking the creation of an additional part-time housing court Judge position, which the Common Council is in full support of.

- **CREATE HOMEOWNERSHIP AT THE MARINE DRIVE APARTMENTS AND GENERATE NEW REVENUE FOR THE CITY**

To create a vibrant downtown core we must have a mix of homeowners and businesses that support each other. The Marine Drive apartments are located on prime waterfront land with a tax-exempt assessed value of \$11 million. Efforts to privatize the Marine Drive Apartments, which operates as subsidized public housing, must include cooperation with and the assistance of both current and new tenants. The opportunity for homeownership must be expanded to include those who could not previously afford homeownership. Placing Marine Drive on the tax rolls could also generate in excess of \$1 million dollars per year in tax, water, refuse and sewer revenue for the City and substantially more from new or renovated home ownership solutions.

The Common Council supports the development of a plan that will create homeownership at the Marine Drive Apartments and generate new revenue for the City.

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

## **• UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ZONING AND LICENSING ORDINANCES**

While most deli stores operate appropriately, Common Council Members continue to receive a large number of complaints regarding the operation of deli stores. It appears that many deli stores are not in compliance with city ordinances regarding signage and some stores receive a large number of police and neighbor complaints regarding activities in and around their store.

Additionally, City Code Section 122-3 requires all businesses not licensed by the City of Buffalo to provide information to the Commissioner of Permit & Inspections as to their business activity. Providing notice of the operator's name, business conducted along with contact information for the business owner would be of great benefit to City officials. Currently this Ordinance is not being enforced.

The Common Council is requesting that the Administration perform a comprehensive review of zoning and licensing requirements and the related enforcement of City ordinances.

## **• ENACT "SMART CODE" ZONING**

As stated in the City's Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Common Council, development should follow a "Smart Growth Policy" that conserves resources and makes for a lively and vibrant city. The Plan calls for the City to adopt ten basic principles of smart growth:

- Mix land uses;
- Take advantage of compact building design;
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
- Create walkable neighborhoods;
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas;
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities;
- Provide a variety of transportation choices;
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective; and
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

The Common Council supports the adoption of zoning regulations that encourage and mandate the application of "Smart Growth" principles and concepts.

## • **DEVELOP SHOVEL READY SITES**

Communities with land that is ready to develop clearly have a competitive advantage for attracting new development versus those that do not. Buffalo currently lacks shovel ready sites for immediate development. Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan identified the need for a detailed analysis of Brownfield sites and their potential with specific recommendations for short, medium and long-term reinvestment options.

The Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation has set a target of bringing fifty (50) acres of cleaned-up Brownfield land onto the market each year. The success of Lakeside Commerce Park, a prior industrial Brownfield site that was remediated and turned into a shovel ready site, is an example of how a shovel ready site can attract development. Two companies employing 350 workers are now located at Lakeside Commerce Park and the site continues to grow.

This Common Council requests that Mayor Brown continue his efforts to improve the City's potential for attracting new business growth, by adhering to the recently approved City Comprehensive Plan and by committing adequate resources to ensure the development and marketing of Brownfield land. Potential locations for developing shovel ready sites include: Seneca/Babcock, Jefferson-Genesee block (northeast corner to Carlton), Tonawanda Street (between Amherst & Niagara), 59 Memorial Drive, and Porter Ave (602 and 640 Fourth Street).

## • **DEVELOP BUSINESS INCUBATORS**

Eighty percent of businesses in New York State employ ten people or less. Twenty-five years ago, Fortune 500 companies provided 20 percent of private sector jobs; today they provide 10%. The key to today's New Economy is supporting the creation of new small businesses.

The new businesses locating in the growing Niagara Medical Campus are primarily small businesses with tremendous growth potential. The success of "incubators" is evident in that the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation currently operates four business centers totaling approximately 200,000 square feet, housing 32 individual businesses, which employ over 250 individuals. Businesses just starting out need assistance in terms of locations that provide space, which is flexible for growth and affordable in cost.

The Common Council supports the creation of additional Business Incubator programs throughout the City of Buffalo as an important and successful economic development tool.

## • **EXPAND UB AND ECC**

Locating the State University of New York at Buffalo (UB) campus in Amherst was a mistake that has had a huge impact on Buffalo and the surrounding region. Having the energy of thousands of college students located in Buffalo would have had a positive cultural and economic impact upon the City, its residents, businesses and visitors.

Erie Community College has expressed a desire to improve and expand their City Campus by bringing programs offered at the suburban campuses to the City Campus. An ECC proposed \$45 million expansion will not only bring more students and employees downtown, but will provide an economic boost to the City.

UB is seeking to grow by 40 percent over the next 15 years with the addition of 750 faculty and 10,000 students. As part of its planned growth, UB is seeking to increase its presence in Buffalo, specifically at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus.

Institutions of higher learning draw thousands of talented and creative people to Western New York. Educated individuals are a key ingredient for economic success in today's economy. The Common Council fully supports the expansion of UB and ECC.

## • **WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT**

One of Buffalo's greatest assets is its waterfront. Buffalo's strategic position on the Great Lakes contributed to its early rise to prominence. Just as the waterfront was a contributor to our early growth, it can also be a catalyst for our rebirth.

Development of our waterfront must include input by the Common Council and the public at large. The Erie Canal Harbor Corporation is a state entity that does not include voting rights for public officials as part of their decision making process. The NFTA also does not have City officials as voting members of their organization.

The status of Outer Harbor land is in a period of uncertainty. The NFTA, as the overseer of the Outer Harbor, has previously expressed a desire to transfer the Outer Harbor to a private entity and most recently to transfer the land to the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation.

Through the efforts of Congressman Brian Higgins, a dedicated source of funding for waterfront development is now available through the Greenway Commission. The Common Council has gone on record in support of the New York Power Authority Settlement that provides dedicated funds for waterfront redevelopment and is in support of the Greenway Plan to distribute those funds.

The Common Council is ready, willing and able to move the development of our waterfront forward as an active participant and through a process that provides public

participation and input. The Common Council also believes that developing our waterfront must be more than developing our downtown waterfront. Our neighborhoods have tremendous waterfront sites that need to be developed and improved as well. Black Rock/Riverside, the West Side and South Buffalo, all have excellent waterfront sites that need focus and attention brought to them as part of the effort to strengthen our neighborhoods.

## • **CITYWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

Improving streets, sidewalks, water lines, sewer lines, planting trees, etc., creates opportunities for new development. The success of the Hertel Avenue Reconstruction Program is just one example of where infrastructure improvements spurred new economic development activity and related growth.

The Common Council encourages greater emphasis on targeted bricks and mortar improvements as an economic development tool for continuing and inspiring new growth and private sector community investment.

## • **SUPPORT TRANSPORTATION CHANGES TO SPUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Several transportation decisions made in the past need to be corrected as part of Buffalo's economic development efforts:

- Completion of the Peace Bridge with a Northern Plaza and Shared Border Management;
- Skyway Removal to improve waterfront access and redevelopment;
- Relocation of Interstate Route -190 from along the Niagara River to a nearby railroad right-of-way to recapture waterfront access for community use;
- Downgrade Interstate Route-198 from an interstate highway to a parkway with reduced speed limits; and
- Expand *MetroRail* to improve commuter access to and from the suburbs lessening the burden on business district parking resources and improving our environment as well.

## • **JOB TRAINING**

Developing and maintaining a high quality workforce is critical to attracting and retaining businesses in Buffalo and Erie County. Common Council members support the effort by Mayor Byron Brown to secure funding to design and implement a young adult

employment and job-training program. A program that provides needed training and links with private sector employers will be beneficial for both job seekers and employers.

- **DEVELOP AND GROW CULTURAL TOURISM**

Buffalo has a tremendous historical story to tell. Our architecture, proximity to the Erie Canal, and our roots in African American history, present us with significant cultural assets to market. Cultural tourism is a growing industry that we need to grow into and actively participate in. Michigan Avenue has many sites of historic importance that have and will continue to attract visitors to Buffalo. Our tremendous museums, theaters, world-renowned architecture, Erie Canal history and a proposed Downtown Market and Weather Museum, can serve as key cultural and tourist attractions.

A recent study by the Buffalo Niagara Visitors and Convention Bureau determined that the travel and tourism industry has an economic impact of more than \$1 billion in Erie County. The Common Council encourages Mayor Brown to focus on the development and marketing of our many cultural assets as an economic development tool.

- **ESTABLISH A CASINO FUNDING STRUCTURE**

As the Seneca Nation has begun work associated with opening a new casino in downtown Buffalo, we have an excellent opportunity to examine recent casino development in Niagara Falls, NY and to learn from their experience. The need, value and usefulness of the Buffalo project have been much debated, and will no doubt continue to be debated for years to come. While the facility needs to be completed, so does the process by which the local share of casino dollars will be distributed.

The Common Council supports legislation being sought by Mayor Brown to designate Buffalo as the host community and to receive 100% of the local share of casino revenue estimated to be between \$5 million and \$7 million annually and preparation of an agreement that will present in detail, how such funds will be reinvested in the community.

## **IMPROVING CITY OPERATIONS**

- **IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE BRANCHES OF CITY GOVERNMENT**

The Common Council as the legislative policy making body of the City needs to be consulted and given a greater opportunity to provide input on matters such as:

- Federal & State budget requests and legislative initiatives;
- Efficiency Incentive Funding applications to the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority or New York State;
- The City's Long and Short Range Financial and Operational Plans; and
- The Annual Goals and Objectives of Allied City Agencies, such as the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA), the Buffalo Sewer Authority (BSA), the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency (BURA), and the Buffalo Board of Education (BBOE).

The Common Council is interested in being an active and equal partner in addressing problems, formulating solutions and developing strategies for the rebuilding and growing the City.

## • **CONSOLIDATE / MERGE SUPPORT SERVICES**

Government must operate efficiently and reduce costs whenever and wherever possible. As the community debates the pros and cons of a city/county merger, there are many steps that the City can take on its own to improve the delivery of government services and reduce costs. While such savings may be considered small in terms of the overall expenses of the city, these small steps are a necessary start to a more efficient and cost effective city.

The City and its allied agencies such as Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority, Buffalo Sewer Authority, Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency, along with certain City Departments, each have their own MIS, Purchasing and Human Resource functions to name just a few.

The Common Council considers the consolidation of duplicative and redundant operations to improve efficiency and reduce the cost of providing government services a must-do action of the highest priority.

## • **IMPROVE AND EXPAND CITY DEBT COLLECTION EFFORTS**

The City is owed \$12.8 million in outstanding demolition fees and \$904,000 for boarding up vacant properties. In addition to these two examples there are other dollars owed to the City for a variety of fees and services.

Currently billing and collection efforts are scattered piecemeal over several different City departments. A unified collection process must be established to efficiently and effectively collect all funds owed to the City.

- **IMPLEMENT PARKS ADVISORY BOARD**

Parks are an important part of the fabric of life in Buffalo. Frederick Law Olmsted designed parks in the City of Buffalo with the notion that “all common green space must always be accessible to all citizens.” Recently, with assistance from the Mayor, the Common Council was able to assure that youth sports teams will not have additional fees imposed upon them for using the Olmsted Parks. Youth sports programs are very important and as such the Common Council will continue to work vigorously to keep park user fees from increasing or being imposed.

As part of the City/County Parks Agreement, the Common Council enacted a Local Law establishing a Parks Advisory Board. The Common Council encourages the Board to meet regularly and address parks issues such as operation and maintenance, public use, access for youth sports and elderly recreation programs, and reforestation due to the damage caused by the October 2006 storm.

- **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION CONTRACT MONITORING**

It is important that minority and women owned businesses be provided with an opportunity to participate in City contracts. During 2006, the Community Services department monitored approximately 110 contracts totaling \$82 million for compliance with affirmative action requirements and goals.

Community Services currently has two contract monitor positions within their budget. Recently one of the positions became vacant. The Common Council supports the immediate filling of this vacancy to ensure that affirmative action goals and requirements are monitored and met.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES**

- **PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY ON PROPOSED ETHANOL PLANT**

*RiverWright LLC* has proposed building an \$80 million ethanol manufacturing plant on an 18-acre parcel. The proposed plant will annually process 100 million gallons of ethanol, a flammable liquid whose production also emits an odor, in a location adjacent to a residential neighborhood.

In order for this project to go forward zoning variances will have to be addressed, a Coastal Review will have to occur due to the plant's location along the Buffalo River and

an environmental review will be undertaken. The Common Council will proceed with caution in its decision-making regarding this project to ensure that environmental concerns and the concerns of neighborhood residents are fully addressed.

- **HIRE A PROFESSIONAL FORESTER**

Our great abundance of trees is one of our community's most valuable assets. The October Storm was a natural catastrophe that had a tremendous impact on trees throughout the City of Buffalo, causing thousands of trees to be lost and damaged. Prior to the City/County parks merger agreement, the City employed a professional forester. The impact of the October Storm brought to light the importance of having a forester to address tree issues.

The Common Council supports the County hiring of a professional forester to assist with the effort to reforest our City and to oversee and improve our tree management plan. Should the County be unable or unwilling to hire a Professional Forrester, then the City should redirect funds being paid to the County for managing City parks, to the City's hiring of a Professional Forrester.

- **DEVELOP A PLAN TO INCREASE RECYCLING**

Recycling is important from an environmental perspective and from a financial perspective as well. Recycling reduces our reliance on the use of garbage landfills and the cost thereof and generates new revenue for the City. Last year, under the terms of the recycling contract with BFI, the City received \$45,000 in recycling revenue.

Currently the City recycles only 6.6% of its garbage, well below the national average of 35% for municipal solid waste. Increased recycling by residents will result in greater financial benefit to the City and less of a reliance on ratepayer charges to fund operation and disposal costs. As part of their recycling contract, BFI pays the City \$75,000 for marketing and education efforts to encourage residents to recycle.

The Common Council supports and encourages the Administration to expand its marketing initiatives and education plans in an effort to increase recycling, the revenue realized therefrom and to decrease landfill costs borne by city ratepayers.

- **BRING CLOSURE TO HICKORY WOODS**

The environmental issues associated with Hickory Woods must be addressed and completed as soon as possible. The Common Council has authorized the expenditure of funds to assist residents wishing to remediate and/or relocate.

This Common Council continues to monitor this matter in an effort to reach a solution for the many residents who lives have been affected and the hardships that it has created as it has dragged on over the course of many years.

- **FLOOD INSURANCE**

Many residents in the City of Buffalo are required to pay for flood insurance at a cost of \$700 or more per year. The Common Council is exploring ways in which the added expense of flood insurance can be lessened.

## **EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

- **MONITORING THE THREE YEAR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT PLAN**

In February of 2006, School Superintendent James A. Williams unveiled his Three Year Academic Achievement Plan driven by six principles:

- A quality teacher in every classroom;
- A challenging curriculum for all subjects;
- Accountability from the superintendent on down;
- Expanded instructional time;
- Intensive professional development of teachers, administrators and support staff;  
and
- Meaningful family involvement and community collaboration.

The Council is interested in obtaining interim status reports from Superintendent Williams regarding his Three Year Academic Achievement Plan in an effort to monitor the progress of this important initiative.

- **"CONTRACT FOR EXCELLENCE" FUNDING**

Obtaining a quality education is important for the students attending Buffalo Public Schools and important for the future success of Buffalo as a City. Today's new world economy requires a strong educational foundation.

Earlier this year, Gov. Eliot L. Spitzer proposed a state aid increase of \$40.2 million – or 9 percent – for Buffalo schools; however, in return for the increase, Spitzer's spending plan requires the school district to develop "contracts for excellence" demonstrating that

the money will be used for smaller class sizes, more instructional time, teacher training, school restructuring or other measures aimed at better results.

This Common Council supports Gov. Spitzer's plan of additional educational funding and accountability. The Common Council requests that the Board of Education submit its "contract of excellence" to the Common Council for discussion and review.

## • **ADDRESSING SCHOOL VIOLENCE**

Schools need to create safe and supportive learning environments in order to achieve success for all students. Through the end of January 2007, the Board of Education has suspended students accused of fighting or assault, on approximately 1,064 occasions. The safety of students and teachers needs to be the number one priority of the Buffalo Public School District. In many other cities with school districts facing similar problems, solutions have ranged from working with the students to increased security, and in some cases, a police presence.

The Common Council has supported the hiring of a police chief to address the school security issues. The Common Council's Education Committee continues to monitor this important issue and the impact of assistance from other agencies such as an increased presence by the Buffalo Police Department.

**A copy of this Action Plan can be found at the City of Buffalo Homepage  
[www.city-buffalo.com](http://www.city-buffalo.com)**