



City of Buffalo, NY Common Council

Action Plan for 2010-2011



Mission Statement of the Common Council

“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 homeownership, business, education and entertainment hub within Erie County and the Western New York Region.”

Common Council 2010-2011 Action Plan City of Buffalo, NY

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Introduction
By
Common Council President David A. Franczyk

The Buffalo Common Council annually releases its Legislative Action Plan which includes ideas, suggestions and legislative initiatives representing each of the nine Council Member's priorities to improve the City of Buffalo. This year's Council President Introduction focuses on the rise of urban agriculture in the City of Buffalo.

URBAN AGRICULTURE IN BUFFALO: NEW USES FOR VACANT LAND

Cities, such as Buffalo, have historically been seen as engines of industrial and economic growth, the very antithesis of agrarian life people left behind. Significant numbers of Americans tilled soil for their livelihood well into the twentieth century, but by that time, cities had nevertheless firmly established their hegemony over the rural milieu. Prior to the rise of post World War II suburbia, Buffalonians would motor to nearby suburbs like Lancaster, Clarence, Eden, etc. to buy locally grown fruits and vegetables from family farms predating the suburban cul-de-sacs. Buffalo was a place of factories, businesses, shops, houses, schools, churches, government buildings and people living in great density, with little room for anything else.

Earlier in its history, Buffalo was replete with farmland. But much time has passed since the Jewett Family deeded its 400 acre farm to what is now Delaware Park, and the Tift Family gave up its farm in South Buffalo. Perhaps the closest historic parallel to the current urban agriculture projects in Buffalo were the victory gardens cultivated by many Buffalonians in tiny backyard postage stamp-sized lots during the Second World War.

And yet, as Buffalo's primacy as manufacturing powerhouse has long faded, might not agriculture play a role in shaping the City's future? This scenario is indeed manifesting itself in neighborhoods throughout the City as citizens involve themselves in finding productive new uses for abandoned land based on farming. Larger post-industrial cities with lots of vacant land like Detroit have been engaged in urban agriculture for years, and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy has printed a report entitled, *Farming Inside Cities: Entrepreneurial Agriculture in the United States*.

As obesity skyrockets due to an overabundance of agri-business sourced processed food, junk food, as well as a sedentary lifestyle, citizens in Buffalo and throughout the country are becoming "localvores," or producers and consumers of homegrown, organic or indigenous foods. These foods are nutritious, healthy, tasty, and teach people to grow it at home, or in the neighborhood as a community project. This exciting food revolution is blooming through the efforts of many groups, such as GrassRoots Gardens Buffalo, the West Side's Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) Acquaponics Project, the Community Action Organization (CAO) hoop house at the Stevens Family Wilson Street farm, the Curtiss Street Urban Farm Foundation and many others.

Community oriented urban agriculture allows adults and children alike to engage in healthy physical activity resulting in an end product of fruits and vegetables that not only supplement the availability of cheap wholesome food, but could lead to micro-level neighborhood business by supplying food to area markets and restaurants. The world-famous Broadway Market hosted a Roof Top Garden Workshop providing 16 to 25 square foot garden containers for growing, as well as information on composting, seed starting, and fertilizer. Participants were given the opportunity to sell their harvest at the landmark's new Sunday Farmer's Market. The CAO is also exploring an agricultural overlay district in the wider Market neighborhood.

A byproduct of a smaller city is the availability of a greater number of unused vacant lots which in most cases contained buildings which were demolished. One strategy the Common Council embraces is the use of some of these lots (tested for safe soil, or using raised crop beds) for urban farming.

The Common Council is expected to approve a gardening lease program with Grass Roots Gardens Buffalo, and recently the Common Council passed a local law allowing the limited raising of chickens in people's backyards. The Common Council is also expected to support a City agriculture overlay district as it updates its zoning codes.

Thomas Jefferson feared the rise of large impersonal cities separating the farmer-citizen from the soil, while his rival from New York State, Alexander Hamilton, eschewed rural life for a dynamic nation of teeming cities as engines of commerce. Interestingly, Buffalo may be able to accommodate both ideas by retaining those city-like qualities envisioned by Hamilton, while embracing elements of Jefferson's agrarian community.

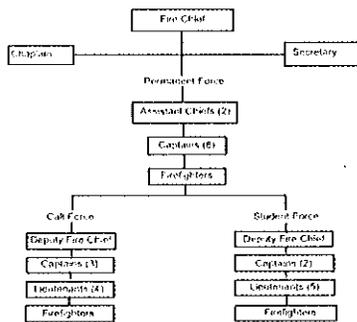
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INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN CITY OPERATIONS

CREATE UP-TO-DATE CITY DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

An organizational chart is an effective means of communicating the staffing and hierarchy of operating units within an organization. Organizational charts define responsibilities, dependencies and relationships and can provide a useful framework for ensuring efficiency, transparency and accountability among the various units that make up an organization. When prepared properly, organizational charts provide a clear, concise and easy to understand visual illustration of complex departmental structures and interrelationships, rather than leaving a reader to draw their own conclusions based upon lists containing employee names and job titles which were compiled primarily to communicate contact information.

The Council maintains that the preparation of organizational charts for all City Departments would provide employees, supervisors, elected officials and taxpayers with a better understanding of the various responsibilities, dependencies and relationships that exist both



A sample organizational chart

within, and between, the City's operating units. These charts would be especially useful for training new staff members, particularly if they were distributed as part of training packets that also contained fact sheets and employee directories for each department. The use of organizational charts would also enable supervisors and elected officials to better manage departments by enhancing their ability to make time-sensitive staffing and resource allocation decisions, and provide a

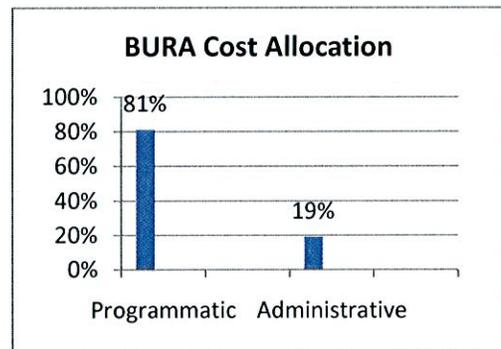
framework for managing change and communicating operational information across City departments.

The Council intends to create legislation that will mandate the preparation, and periodic updating, of organizational charts for all City Departments and operating units. This legislation will also require that such information be made available in electronic format on the City website to facilitate easy access by employees and the general public. The time, energy and resources required to create and periodically update these organizational charts will certainly be minimal in light of the important information which they will convey.

REDUCE THE BURA ADMINISTRATIVE COST CAP

As recently as 2008, a United States Census Bureau American Community Survey ranked Buffalo, New York as the third poorest large city in the United States. This startling statistic illustrates the tremendous challenges facing the City, and underscores the need for Buffalo to efficiently administer its anti-poverty funding. The Community Development Block Grant (“CDBG”) Program is perhaps the most important federal program available for funding local anti-poverty, affordable housing, infrastructure improvement, and related community development initiatives. The CDBG program is administered by the United States Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”), which distinguishes the way these funds are used by local recipients into two major funding components: administrative costs and programmatic costs.

The City of Buffalo utilizes the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency (“BURA”) to administer its allocation of CDBG funds. Through June 30, 2010, BURA was incurring operating and administrative costs up to the maximum 20% cap allowable under HUD regulations, with the remaining 80% of the City’s CDBG funding being spent on programmatic initiatives. Many cities have been able to cap the amount of their CDBG funding which is devoted to administrative cost to 15% or less, thereby allowing them to devote 85% or more of their funding allocation to programmatic initiatives.

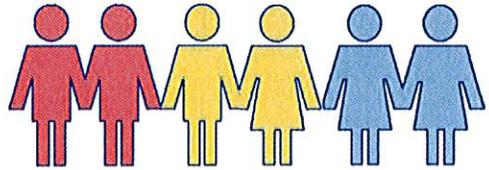


The Common Council has taken action to reduce BURA’s administrative funding allocation from 20% to 19% in conjunction with the CDBG program for fiscal year 2010-11. The Council urges the City’s Administration to pursue additional reductions in the percentage of CDBG grant funding allocated to BURA for administrative costs, and is proposing that a goal be set of reducing administrative costs by approximately 1% annually. By maximizing administrative efficiency in the handling of CDBG funds to reduce administrative costs over the next several years, the City should be able to increase the amount of CDBG funding that can be allocated to important programmatic initiatives which alleviate poverty and blight.

EXTEND HEALTHCARE BENEFITS FOR DOMESTIC PARTNERS

On March 30th 2010, the City of Buffalo Common Council passed, and the Mayor subsequently approved, legislation to recognize the domestic partnerships of City employees provided that the individuals involved are of the same sex, have provided acceptable proof that they have cohabitated together for the preceding six months and are financially interdependent, and have duly registered their relationship with the City Clerk.

Pursuant to this ground-breaking legislation, the City of Buffalo has begun extending medical and dental healthcare coverage to the domestic partners of City employees who have satisfied the City's domestic partnership registration requirements. The City's Human Resource Department now enrolls the registered same-sex domestic partners of City employees into the City's medical and dental insurance plans, provided that they have complied with applicable requirements imposed by their insurer and health and dental providers.



The passage of this legislation is evidence of the tremendous progress that has been made by the City to ensure equality amongst its employees. However, many members of the Common Council and the community at large feel that more needs to be done, and have called upon the City to extend the benefits offered to same-sex domestic partners of City employees, to opposite-sex domestic partners as well. Many public and private sector employers already provide this benefit to their employees, and advocates of expanded coverage claim that the added cost to the City of doing so would be negligible, while employee productivity and morale would be positively impacted.

The Common Council supports efforts to ensure equality in employee benefits through the development of legislation to extend health benefits to the opposite-sex domestic partners of City employees which are currently being offered to spouses of married employees and registered same-sex domestic partners. In taking this step, the City of Buffalo would be joining a growing number of progressive private and public employers that truly embrace equality in the workplace.

INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS

CREATE A CITYWIDE CITYCORPS PROGRAM

CityCorps is a service organization which coordinates and empowers community volunteers who wish to be agents of change in their neighborhoods. Co-sponsored by Western New York AmeriCorps, Inc., and Council Members David A. Franczyk and Michael P. Kearns, in only its pilot year, CityCorps has already proven to be a successful catalyst for neighborhood change and developed a service model for connecting community volunteers with local service organizations and direct volunteer opportunities.



Since its establishment one year ago, CityCorps has coordinated the collective efforts of numerous volunteers and diverse organizations such as the Fillmore and South District Common Council offices, the South Buffalo Neighborhood Accountability Board, the Cazenovia Resource Center, the Friends of the Broadway Market, Broadway-Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services, WNY AmeriCorps VISTA members, and several block clubs located within the Fillmore and South Common Council Districts. In their pilot year, CityCorps successfully organized over 1,300 volunteer hours, raised over \$20,000 in cash and in-kind donations, and leveraged over \$60,000 in total resources for the South and Fillmore Council Districts. This support made the following neighborhood enhancement projects possible:

- The conversion of vacant lots into a community garden on Miller Ave. in the Fillmore District;
- Community service events involving neighborhood clean-ups, public space improvements, and painting projects in the South and Fillmore Districts;
- Community service projects aimed at improving the Broadway Market in the Fillmore District;
- Two Re-Tree WNY plantings in South Buffalo which resulted in the planting of 28 new trees;
- Construction of a wheelchair ramp to improve access for the disabled in the South District;
- Creation of a community events calendar for use by social and cultural organizations in the Fillmore District; and

- The saving of the oldest remaining home in South Buffalo, 49 Buffum St., from demolition and ensuring its future rehabilitation.

Guided by the mission of enhancing quality of life within our neighborhoods through volunteer-based improvements to homes and public spaces, and providing assistance to residents in need, CityCorps intends to build upon their success of the past year by expanding their service model. To accomplish this, CityCorps will be expanding its full-time staff to three in November 2010 after functioning in their first year with only one full-time member. The existing full-time staff member will act as Director of the CityCorps program, while the two new full-time members will focus their efforts on expanding community service initiatives. By adding two more full-time staff members, CityCorps should be able to greatly enhance their ability to positively impact Buffalo neighborhoods in future years.

While each Common Council district has its own specific needs, quality of life is an issue that is important to all City residents and quality of life improvements are universal in their application. In recognition of this, the Common Council supports CityCorps' addition of two full-time staff members and the expansion of the organization's service area into all nine Common Council Districts. Accordingly, the Council requests that the City's Administration allocate sufficient funding and resources to enable CityCorps to expand upon their recent successes in the Fillmore and South Districts by becoming a force for community betterment citywide.

PREVENT ARCHITECTURAL PLUNDER

The material world of things and places that surround us has evolved over many years. Since being designed in the early 1800's as a gateway to Western New York, Buffalo has experienced significant changes in its population and economy. As a continually evolving and vibrant metropolitan area, Buffalo is fortunate to have retained much of its rich and varied architectural heritage while maintaining a truly unique sense of place. While not all of the changes that the City has undergone have been for the positive, the success of other cities in overcoming adversity suggests that, by learning from our past mistakes and making prudent decisions, Buffalo can not only survive, but indeed continue to thrive for years to come.

One of the greatest threats facing Buffalo today is undoubtedly the plunder of its architectural assets. A recent example of this is the decision to dismantle Saint Gerard's Roman

Catholic Church on Bailey and East Delavan Avenues in the Lovejoy Council District and to reassemble the structure in Georgia. St. Gerard's was constructed over 100 years ago by immigrant craftsmen and represents an irreplaceable part of Buffalo's cultural and architectural legacy. If removed, Buffalo will not only be losing a building and suffering damage to its historic urban fabric, but will suffer the loss of a tangible and important link to those who built this city and helped make it great.



St. Gerard's

The dismantling of a building that has outlived its originally intended purpose may initially seem like an “easy fix,” but ultimately this strategy is misguided and sells our city short.

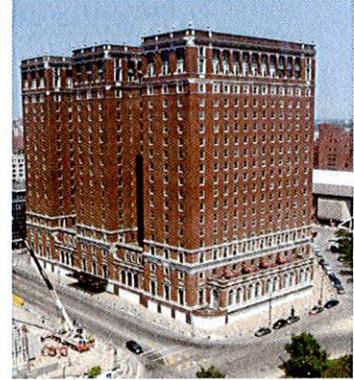
Unfortunately, the sale and dismantling of St. Gerard's is only the most recent example of the plunder of Buffalo's architectural heritage. Years ago, the Bank of Buffalo building was dismantled to be rebuilt elsewhere, but the new construction that was planned for the site never materialized and all that remains of the site is a surface parking lot. Similarly, today the building blocks of the Bank remain, but whether it will be rebuilt, and if so when and where, remains a mystery.

Buffalo is not the first city, nor will it be the last, to fall victim to architectural plunder; the Parthenon in the historic City of Athens was notoriously stripped of its statues in the 19th century for display in a British Museum. Years later the Greek Government took steps to ensure the return of priceless sculptures, and many cities have realized the value of enacting laws to prevent plunder of their historical assets. As elected officials, we owe a similar duty, to both those who came before us and those who will inherit this great city, to protect Buffalo's architectural assets.

History has shown us that the dismantling and demolition of historical assets, at best, offer short-term solutions to long-term problems. The Common Council recognizes this and is committed to working with the City's Preservation Board, Code Enforcement, and Planning Officials to enact laws and institute proactive policies for protecting Buffalo's historically significant structures and encourage their adaptive reuse.

ENCOURAGE ARTISTIC SOLUTIONS FOR VACANT STRUCTURES

One of the most important buildings awaiting redevelopment in the City of Buffalo today is the Statler Building, located on Delaware Avenue at Niagara Square. Opened during the 1920's as the Hotel Statler, at one time its 1,100 rooms made the Statler the largest hotel between New York City and Chicago, and its architectural beauty and artistic details made it one of the most opulent. Over the years however, poor business decisions, underutilization, failed rehabilitation opportunities and neglect have landed the building in bankruptcy court, and some have argued that a negative assessed value should be assigned to the property. In February of 2010, the building's last remaining



The Statler Building

tenants were evicted and work crews set about boarding up one of Buffalo's premier downtown landmarks. As a result of these factors and the need for extensive and costly renovations, many in the local development community consider rehabilitation of the building in the near future to be an insurmountable financial challenge.

Unfortunately, the Statler Building is only one of numerous City landmarks and historically significant structures that currently sit vacant or abandoned. When homes, buildings and lots are vacated or abandoned by their owners, the City of Buffalo is left in the position of having to care for these sites, despite lacking adequate financial resources to do so. While it is disappointing when historic buildings must be boarded-up or "moth-balled," it is necessary for the City to protect these vulnerable structures from vandals and the elements in order to preserve their potential for re-use. Such stop-gap measures do not prolong the life of a building indefinitely, but they can extend it long enough for creative financing or an interested developer to be identified.

The Common Council supports the formation of strong partnerships with the private sector and community groups to deal with abandoned and vacant structures and lots. Through collaboration, it may be possible to transform what have become symbols of failure into training and employment opportunities for young people and local craftsman. Numerous cities have had



Murals on a vacant home

success partnering with local residents and artists to establish mural arts programs and artwork installations for vacant buildings, and this strategy shows promise in Buffalo as well. In addition to making structures more aesthetically pleasing, community art mural projects can empower residents and artists, turn eye-sores into points of neighborhood pride, and demonstrate to potential investors that a community remains vibrant.

The Council is actively soliciting new ideas and support from the private sector, community groups, residents and the local business community to develop strategies for dealing with Buffalo's vacant structures. There is much that we can learn from similarly situated cities in this regard, and for this reason the Council encourages the City's Administration and the Buffalo Arts Commission to secure sufficient funding and community support to launch a citywide neighborhood mural arts program based upon models that have been employed with success in other communities.

SUPPORT CARPOOLING AND CARSHARING

Many residents have come to realize that widespread reliance on the automobile has negatively impacted our environment by increasing carbon emissions and quickening the exhaustion of non-renewable natural resources. Reliance upon automobiles has also contributed to America's population becoming more sedentary and exhibiting higher rates of obesity, as well as a growing national dependence upon foreign petroleum products.

In recognition of these issues, the City of Buffalo has taken steps to promote alternative transportation options such as bicycling, walking and mass transit through "complete streets" legislation and development of a "smart-growth" zoning code. The establishment of a Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Board, the creation of bicycle lanes on area roadways, and the installation of bicycle-racks in local business districts evidence the City's commitment to promoting alternative transportation. Despite these efforts, the large number of Buffalonians that continue to rely upon personal automobiles for their daily transportation needs demonstrates the need for the City to embrace additional strategies such as carpooling and carsharing.



Buffalo's new bike racks

Carpooling is a convenient way for people who are traveling to the same destination to reduce their travel expenses by commuting together in the same vehicle. By carpooling together, participants can share travel expenses that they would otherwise be responsible for on their own and passengers can avoid costly wear-and-tear on their own vehicles. Promoting carpooling would likely reduce air pollution and our city's "carbon footprint" and reduce fossil fuel consumption by decreasing single-occupant automobile usage. Strategies that other communities have used with success to support carpooling include promoting "park and ride" locations, creating message boards and websites to link interested passengers and drivers, and even establishing "High Occupancy Vehicle" ("HOV") incentives whereby only vehicles with two or more passengers are allowed access to high-speed traffic lanes.

Carsharing programs are designed to target those people who require occasional access to a motor vehicle, but lack the desire or means to own and maintain an automobile of their own. Studies estimate that, on average, for every car that is shared, 8-10 vehicles are taken off of the road and that vehicle ownership costs will average approximately \$8,000 per year. Carsharing can be an attractive option for those who live in areas where parking is difficult to find or is expensive, but may not be as affordable as carpooling for those desiring to commute to a full-time job on a regular basis. Unlike carpooling, carsharing allows a user to have exclusive use of a vehicle for a designated period of time, thereby avoiding the need to coordinate schedules and destinations with other passengers.

The Common Council is committed to establishing programs aimed at incentivizing participation in carpooling and carsharing programs, particularly amongst municipal employees, and is currently examining strategies for doing so that have been employed elsewhere. At a minimum, the Council advocates for the creation of a citywide message board, to be hosted or linked on the City's website, which would enable individuals interested in carpooling to connect with one another and discuss travel arrangements. Educating Buffalo residents on the individual and community benefits of carpooling and carsharing programs, as are currently being utilized by cities such as Austin, Boulder, Chicago, Ithaca, Philadelphia and Cleveland, would also be an important step to ensuring these alternative transportation options take root locally.



INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

IMPLEMENT PERFORMANCE BASED LEASES FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

In recent years, both in Buffalo and nationwide, there has been a dramatic increase in interest in establishing community gardens. There are many reasons for the growth of community gardens including the emergence of the “locavore” food movement which stresses the use of fresh, local produce and meats; a need for additional healthy, non-processed food options in urban areas traditionally underserved by supermarkets, and the desire to transform vacant lots into green-space pending urban renewal.

In some cases however, the desire of neighborhood residents to establish community gardens can conflict with the City’s vision for developing vacant sites. To preserve its ability to control future development of vacant lots, the City has opted to lease rather than sell such land for community garden use, and retained the option to reclaim such property upon 30 days notice. These lease agreements work well for the City’s Administration, but can discourage prospective community gardeners from investing their time, money and emotions into a site that might be taken away from them with minimal notice.



Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo, an independent 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization, has been a leader in our city’s local community gardening movement. Grassroots Gardens offers their expertise and assistance to individuals and organizations that are seeking to establish gardens and acts as a liaison on their behalf to identify suitable vacant land owned by the City. By working closely with City officials, Grassroots Gardens has been successful in many instances in executing garden leases, obtaining insurance for indemnity purposes, and providing related logistical, legal and financial support to interested gardeners.

In order to balance the City’s desire to keep its future land use and development options open, with the desire of neighborhood residents to quickly return idle lands to productive use as community garden green space, in 2008 the Common Council established a Community Garden Task Force (CGTF). The community input obtained through this collaboration has led to the development of a proposed model lease which would streamline the City’s process for creating new community gardens. It is envisioned that these model leases would be for a fixed length of

time and performance-based to allow the City the flexibility to recapture sites, while ensuring predictability for gardeners, based upon the timetable for anticipated redevelopment, the type of property/lot in question, and such factors as the level of volunteer involvement, environmental sustainability and the site's aesthetic appearance. The CGTF has also suggested that all leases contain restrictions on lease termination during the local growing season between April 1st and November 30th.

The Council supports urban agriculture and maintains that the process by which land is made available for use as community gardens must be open and transparent. To ensure this, the City should be advertizing the availability of land for such purposes to the public. The Council intends to continue its work with Grassroots Gardens and the Community Garden Task Force to support community gardens and is optimistic that a model lease will be finalized and available for use later this year.

MANUFACTURE AND INSTALL WIND TURBINES IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO

Communities around our state, our country and the world are beginning to explore the benefits of wind turbine technology as a way of reducing dependency on foreign oil, generating clean renewable energy, and positioning their local economies to be leaders in green energy technology and manufacturing. In some cases, exploration has led to installation, and many cities across the nation now lay claim to having taken steps to reduce their carbon footprint as a result of initiating green energy alternatives such as wind turbine technology.

The market for wind energy is very likely to grow exponentially in coming years as communities and their leaders realize the immediate value and future potential of utilizing wind



energy to supplement their municipal energy needs. The City of Buffalo has a huge advantage in this regard as a result of its ability to capture consistently strong winds coming off of Lake Erie; its proximity to an international border crossing and the burgeoning wind energy industry in Southern Ontario; the presence of an existing infrastructure that features numerous shovel ready sites, rail lines, highways, navigable waterways and ports; and having a skilled work force and strong manufacturing base.

For these reasons, the Common Council maintains that the City of Buffalo should be proactive in exploring the possibility of wind power locally. The Council intends to request of the Commissioner of the Department of Public Works, that he direct the utilities division to allocate appropriate time and resources to study local applications for wind power technology, the cost and feasibility of installing and maintaining the required infrastructure to produce this power, and the potential savings to be derived from such applications, and to report back to the Council with his findings and recommendations.

ACQUIRE LAND FOR JOB CREATION

The City of Buffalo was once home to the largest steel-making operation in the world, was a major railroad hub, housed the largest grain-milling center in the country, and was the eighth largest city in the United States. Over the years however, the City has experienced considerable economic decline and poverty is at an all-time high. These economic difficulties are evidenced by high levels of unemployment, closed businesses and the reduction of homes and buildings to vacant structures and overgrown lots. Compounding these problems, abandoned and distressed properties frequently attract violence and illegal drug activity, which further negatively impacts the quality of life of neighborhood residents.



The Common Council recognizes that it is critical for the City to attract new businesses in order to reduce unemployment, and maintains that the strategic reuse and rehabilitation of its deteriorated structures and vacant land is an important part of the City's continued economic revival. The Council will be exploring opportunities for the City to acquire underutilized land within our neighborhoods that can be used to create shovel-ready, business friendly sites such as the successful Lakeside Commerce Park. Through judiciously utilizing available development dollars, it is possible to foster a more business-friendly environment within the City of Buffalo while concurrently increasing the quality of life for City residents. New business development is an important component of job growth, and strategic acquisition and inventorying of vacant and unimproved land in the City is a promising tool for spurring economic development and economic recovery.

EXPAND THE METRO RAIL LIGHT RAIL RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM

The Buffalo Metro Rail, which began operation in 1985, is a light-rail rapid transit (“LRRT”) system operated by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (“NFTA”). When



The Buffalo Metro Rail



designs for a local LRRT were being drawn up in 1970’s, planners envisioned that the Metro Rail would both serve as a public transportation alternative within the City of Buffalo and a connecting link to the suburbs. For a variety of reasons however, the original vision of constructing a Metro Rail system as a regional transportation network failed to come to fruition. Today, the system consists of a single 6.4 mile line within the City of Buffalo that connects the HSBC Arena in the downtown business corridor to the South Campus of the State University of New York at Buffalo (“SUNY Buffalo”) in the northeast corner of the City. Unfortunately, the current LRRT system fails to provide residents and visitors with an uninterrupted connection between the City, its suburbs and surrounding areas.

The Citizens Regional Transit Corporation (“CRTC”), a local group dedicated to advancing rapid transit programs and policies, has been a vocal advocate for the need to improve and expand the Metro Rail system throughout Western New York. The CRTC has proposed that several new Metro Rail lines be created including an Airport Corridor, which would stretch from Downtown Buffalo to the airport in Cheektowaga; an Amherst Corridor, which would link the North and South SUNY at Buffalo Campuses and provide connections to a number of local hospitals, colleges and businesses; a Southtowns Corridor, which would run from the HSBC Arena through South Buffalo and Lackawanna to the Town of Hamburg; and a Tonawandas Corridor, which would run northwest from the Metro Rail’s LaSalle station on Main street through the City of Tonawanda to Niagara Falls, NY.

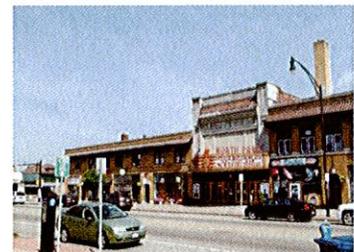
Expansion of LRRT service to additional destinations within the City of Buffalo and its suburbs, while initially costly to build, would provide area residents and visitors with an affordable, efficient and accessible means of commuting between local residential and commercial areas, attractions and amenities that currently cannot be accessed using the Main St

Metro Rail line. From an environmental standpoint, expanding Metro Rail service would likely increase ridership, alleviate traffic congestion and reduce harmful carbon emissions. By seizing the opportunity, Buffalo could position itself as a national leader in “next-generation” green mass transit, particularly if state of the art electric powered trains were used which could run on hydro-power generated from Niagara Falls. Perhaps the greatest potential impact of Metro Rail expansion however, is the boost that it could provide to our local economy. In the short-term, building new LRRT lines and stations would create construction jobs as well as new positions to manage, operate and service an expanded system.

The Common Council is committed to partnering with the Federal Government; the State of New York; Erie and Niagara Counties; our neighboring cities, villages and towns; and community groups such as the CRTC, to identify planning and funding opportunities for transforming the Metro Rail into the truly regional LRRT system that it was designed to be. With the increased federal and state emphasis on green industries and rail transportation projects in recent years, it is important for the City of Buffalo to work collaboratively with our regional partners to leverage LRRT expansion as a powerful environmental and economic tool for our city and region.

CREATE PARKING BENEFIT DISTRICTS

Many businesses have argued that charging for on-street parking discourages customers from patronizing their establishments and penalizes business owners for their success. These same business owners have also been quick to criticize the City of Buffalo for not reinvesting enough of this money back into the neighborhoods where the revenue was generated. The Council, as it explores the creation and use of Parking Benefit Districts, is also concerned with the related issues of traffic congestion and promoting more environmentally friendly travel options.



Hertel Avenue

In communities where Parking Benefit Districts are employed, on-street parking within specifically defined commercial areas is metered using pay stations or with traditional parking meters and revenue collected in excess of expenses for maintenance and enforcement is set aside to fund improvements within that district. These dedicating parking revenues are then used to fund local

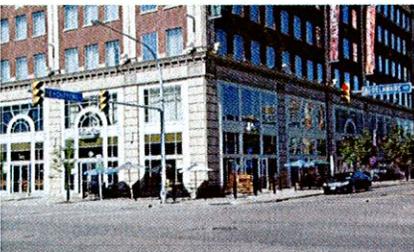
improvements, provide a means for municipalities to discourage vehicle congestion and promote green initiatives such as walking, cycling and mass-transit in busy commercial areas. In addition to collection fees, parking meters and pay stations could also be utilized to provide information on alternative routes and environmentally friendly transportation options.

The Council intends to conduct a careful study of parking patterns within different commercial areas to determine the potential successfulness of utilizing a Parking Benefit District, establishing parking regulations which are appropriate for the area and effectively promoting alternative means and routes of travel to alleviate parking congestion, improve overall traffic flow and generate sufficient revenue to fund district improvements. The Council also intends to establish a program that would require the fee structure for each district to be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure that the goals of the program are being advanced.



Elmwood Avenue

Although certain legal impediments would need to be overcome in order to establish Parking Benefit Districts within the City of Buffalo, the Common Council supports exploring



Delaware Avenue at Chippewa Street

such a policy as a means of alleviating transportation and parking issues and funding improvements in busy commercial areas. Further, the Common Council encourages the City's Administration to pursue creation of a Parking Benefit Districts pilot program along the neighborhood commercial strips located on Chippewa Street and Elmwood and Hertel Avenues. The Council will additionally advocate for a portion of the parking meter revenue generated along each of these pilot Parking Benefit Districts to be devoted to funding public amenities and improvements such as sidewalk cleaning, landscaping and streetscape improvements such as facade work, bicycle lanes, bicycle racks, crosswalks and curbs. It is envisioned that such improvements will lead to increased businesses traffic and utilization of environmentally friendly transportation while decreasing parking congestion.

For more information regarding the Common Council Action Plan for 2010-2011, please contact your District Common Council Member using the information shown below or the Common Council Legislative Staff Office which is located in Room 1413 City Hall or by telephone at 851-5105.

A copy of the 2010-2011 Action Plan is also available online at the City of Buffalo homepage, www.city-buffalo.com.

BUFFALO COMMON COUNCIL

David A. Franczyk
Council President
Fillmore District
1315 City Hall
851-4138

Michael J. LoCurto
Delaware District
1405 City Hall
851-5155

Joseph Golombek, Jr.
North District
1502 City Hall
851-5116

David A. Rivera
President Pro Tempore
Niagara District
1504 City Hall
851-5125

Curtis Haynes, Jr.
Ellicott District
1408 City Hall
851-4980

Michael P. Kearns
South District
1401 City Hall
851-5169

Richard A. Fontana
Majority Leader
Lovejoy District
1414 City Hall
851-5151

Demone A. Smith
Masten District
1316-A City Hall
851-5145

Bonnie E. Russell
University District
1508 City Hall
851-5165