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Intitatives for a Smart Economy 2.0

Mark Poloncarz

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Intitatives for a Smart Economy 2.0

Abstract

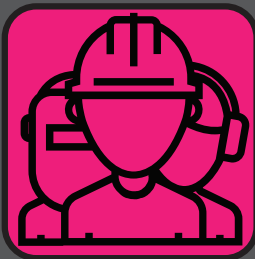
Just like its predecessor, I4SE 2.0 is organized in a manner that focuses on those sectors of the local economy identified by WNYREDC as growth sectors. It identifies initiatives within those sectors where Erie County can make a meaningful contribution. These sectors include: advanced manufacturing, smart growth implementation, workforce development, agriculture, bi-national logistics, energy, and tourism. The report also identifies specific initiatives that Erie County will undertake in other important areas, beyond the WNYREDC growth sectors, that contribute to a thriving and inclusive local economy. These include quality of life initiatives, as well as those focused on the “blue” economy and enhancement of the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (“ECIDA”).

Keywords

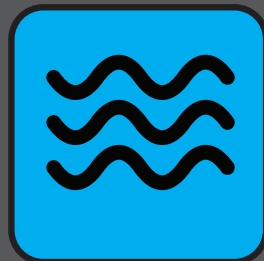
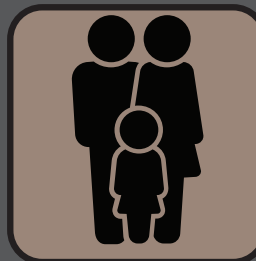
data, demographics, history, government, economic development, buffalo



INITIATIVES FOR A



SMART ECONOMY 2.0



Focus on Inclusion | June 2017

Mark C. Poloncarz
Erie County Executive

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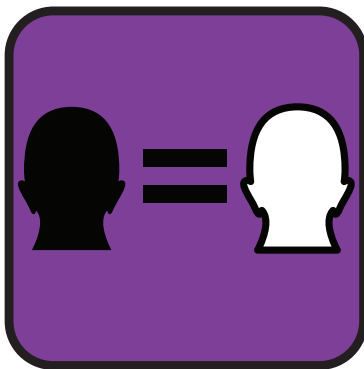
INTRODUCTION



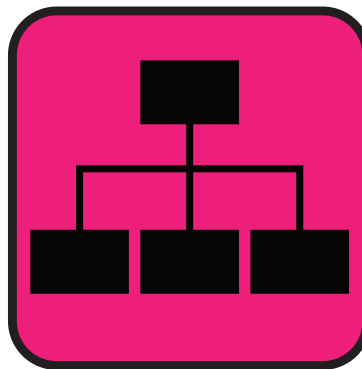
BACKGROUND



PURPOSE



**RACIAL
EQUITY**



ORGANIZATION



Section 1.1 BACKGROUND

In June 2013, Erie County, under the direction of County Executive Mark Poloncarz, released an economic development plan entitled, *Initiatives for a Smart Economy* (“I4SE 1.0”). The plan identified 64 initiatives that Erie County would undertake to support economic growth in the region. These initiatives were deliberately aligned with other state and federal economic development efforts. They also focused on specific growth sectors that were previously identified by the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council (“WNYREDC”) in its 2011 document entitled, *A Strategy for Prosperity* in Western New York.

Since 2013, Erie County has been hard at work implementing the 64 I4SE 1.0 initiatives. Of the 64 initiatives, 32 have been fully implemented and 28 are underway. The overall success of I4SE 1.0 is attributable to the hard work and dedication of many Erie County employees and to the strong alliances Erie County has built with local private, non-profit, philanthropic, and religious partners.

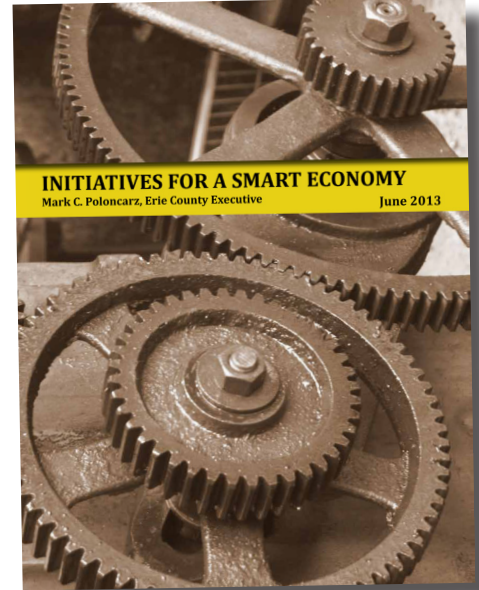
Changes since 2013:

Though only a few years have passed, much has changed in Buffalo and Erie County since the release of I4SE 1.0. For starters, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics reported an unemployment rate of just 4.9% in December of 2016. This is compared to 7.6% in June 2013 when I4SE 1.0 was first published and 9.3% in January 2012 when Mark Poloncarz first took office as County Executive. SolarCity at Riverbend, made possible by a \$750 million New York State investment as part of the Buffalo Billion, will soon open. One Region Forward’s award-winning regional plan for sustainable development entitled, *A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara*, was adopted by Erie County in 2015 and is being implemented. The plan outlines the tax dollars

to be saved if smart growth principles are used in transportation, infrastructure planning, and housing. Steady

focus on downtown development has resulted in the opening of numerous new retail establishments, the evolution of Canalside as a year-round destination, and, according to the City of Buffalo’s Office of Strategic Planning, 1,000 more housing units downtown since 2013 (with another 900 on the way). Finally, after sitting vacant for several years, Seneca One Tower has a new owner with extensive plans for renovating the property. The tallest building in the Buffalo skyline will once again come to life.

Additionally, Say Yes to Education, a robust partnership with the bold promise of ensuring that each child in the Buffalo Public School system has the opportunity and support to go to college, is already moving the needle forward on local educational achievement and graduation outcomes. Supplementing Say Yes to Education is Employ Buffalo Niagara—a new workforce development coalition originally supported by a learning grant from the United States Department of Commerce and convened by the Buffalo Niagara Partnership (“BNP”). Employ Buffalo Niagara is committed to projecting and understanding the jobs that will come online in the near term and ensuring people have the necessary job training to access these jobs. Furthermore, many refugees and immigrants have continued to choose Buffalo as their new home, reviving a culture of entrepreneurialism, enriching the cultural diversity of the community, and contributing to growth in the city’s population for the first time in decades.





All this local change has happened in the context of important changes at the state and federal levels. New York State and Governor Andrew Cuomo are fulfilling the promises of the Buffalo Billion investment and have launched “Buffalo Billion 2” to ensure state resources are strategically used to keep up the momentum. Similarly, in 2014 Governor Cuomo launched the Reforming the Energy Vision (“REV”) initiative. As cited in Governor Cuomo’s 2016 State of the State book, REV is “a multifaceted regulatory approach designed to spur private investment in clean energy, build a thriving clean tech economy, strengthen our communities, and provide universal access to clean, affordable power for all New Yorkers”. REV has been a national effort, bringing together utilities, private sector finance, local governments and community level stakeholders to make REV a reality. REV-specific reforms and investments provide ample opportunities to cultivate energy-related economic development in the region.

At the federal level, President Donald Trump and his administration have promised big changes on infrastructure spending, health care, trade, and immigration. While the consequences of the Trump Administration policies are still unknown, they could potentially have an effect locally.

Nevertheless, Serious Problems Persist:

Despite all the positive changes in investment, growth, and opportunity since the release of I4SE 1.0, some things have not changed much at all. In a region with growing opportunity, Erie County still sees a tremendous opportunity divide. The *Racial Equity Dividend: Buffalo’s Great Opportunity*, a report issued in November 2016 by the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable, heralds a call to action to close the opportunity divide that exists in income, education, criminal justice, neighborhoods, and quality of life for some of the region’s residents. The report cites the following statistics:

- **Income and Wealth Opportunity:** Fifty percent of all children of color under the age of six are still liv-

ing in poverty in Erie and Niagara counties whereas the same is true for only 13% of white children. By closing the wage and employment gap in the Buffalo region, incomes could grow by a projected \$3.5 billion per year, allowing more households the ability to pay for childcare, secure reliable transportation, pay for and invest in their homes, and build savings.

- **Education and Job Readiness Opportunity:** While 87% of white students are graduating from public high schools within four years of enrolling, the same is true for only 61% of youth of color. When the racial equity gap is closed at the high school level, approximately 1,000 more young adults in the Buffalo-Niagara region will obtain a high school diploma on time every year, better equipping them for college and career.
- **Criminal Justice Opportunity:** People of color make up only 22% of the region’s population above the age of 16 but account for 49% of all arrests. Criminal records are detrimental to a person’s ability to find employment. By closing the racial gap in arrest rates, more than 50,000 teens and adults will avoid having a criminal record over the next 10 years, greatly reducing their barriers to employment.
- **Neighborhoods and Quality of Life Opportunity:** While there are 3.5 banks per 10,000 residents in predominantly white neighborhoods, there are only 1.8 banks per 10,000 residents in neighborhoods of color. When neighborhoods experience similar investment levels, housing values in neighborhoods of color will increase by 88%, on average. Aggregated, this represents an increase in wealth of \$1.7 billion for the region. Home ownership is a key source of wealth accumulations for Americans and a growing number of homeowners will stabilize communities and contribute to wealth building throughout the region. When we close racial gaps in homeownership, more than 35,000 additional families would purchase their own home, which is roughly equivalent to the number of all of the owner-occupied homes in the town of Amherst.



Rural Communities Face Unique Challenges and Problems Persist in the Labor Market:

It would be a mistake to consider the opportunity divide as an exclusively urban problem. It also exists for people living in the rural areas of Erie County. For example, according to the Rural Outreach Center, 62% of people living in poverty in Erie County live outside the City of Buffalo. The New York State Department of Health reports between 23.7% and 28.5% of individuals below the age of 65 living in the Towns of Brant, North Collins, Collins, and the Cattaraugus Reservation are on Medicaid. Fewer and more dispersed resources, along with poor access to transportation and employment, make addressing the reality of rural poverty all that more challenging.

Many issues are still facing the labor market as well. A recent labor market assessment conducted by Invest Buffalo Niagara and the University at Buffalo Research

Institute (“UBRI”) finds, despite adding 25,000 jobs to the region since 2009, 42% of the population is out of the labor force and over 130,000 workers are underemployed. Furthermore, the region will be facing a major labor shortage in the next ten years when over 137,000 jobs will be impacted by retiring workers. Manufacturing is expected to be one of the hardest hit industries.

Although tremendous change and increased economic vitality in the region has propelled us forward, clearly more work needs to be done to ensure all citizens of the region benefit from the progress. There is no better time than now to ensure “all boats rise with the tide.” ■



Section 1.2

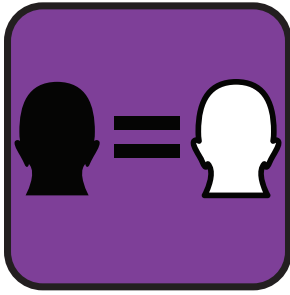
PURPOSE

The rapid pace of regional growth in the last four years, coupled with the persistent presence of poverty and opportunity gaps that still limit Erie County’s true potential, necessitate a comprehensive review and update of I4SE 1.0. Now, the time is right to launch *Initiatives for a Smart Economy 2.0: Focus on Inclusion* (“I4SE 2.0”).

This updated economic development strategy shares the goal of its predecessor—to identify those sectors of the regional economy Erie County can most influence and to further identify, in the form of individual initiatives, what specifically Erie County will do to propel

those sectors forward. In addition, the purpose of I4SE 2.0 is to further identify some initiatives that specifically create shared opportunities for all Erie County residents—urban and rural and of every race and color—so everyone can benefit from the resurgence in the region.

The goal of inclusivity is a major topic in the private, philanthropic, and religious sectors, as well as at multiple levels of government. Thus, it must be a central theme in any truly successful economic development strategy. ■



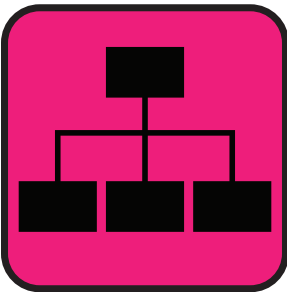
Section 1.3

USE OF RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT ANALYSIS

One important way to ensure the efforts outlined in this document create shared opportunities for all Erie County residents is to make use of the *Racial Equity Impact Analysis* in decision-making. Members of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable, which includes a representative from Erie County, were given the opportunity to train key leaders in their institutions on the use of the *Racial Equity Impact Analysis*. This tool, developed by the Race Matters Institute of JustPartners, Inc., consists of five simple questions and is used to identify how to alter existing and proposed policies and practices in order to achieve greater results for all groups. Where applicable, Erie County will use the *Racial Equity Impact Analysis* to guide implementation of the I4SE 2.0 initiatives. ■

RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT ANALYSIS

1. *Are all racial/ethnic groups who are affected by the policy/practice/decision at the table?*
2. *How will the proposed policy/practice/decision affect each group?*
3. *How will the proposed policy/practice/decision be perceived by each group?*
4. *Does the policy/practice/decision worsen or ignore existing disparities?*
5. *Based on the above responses, what revisions are needed in the policy/practice/decision under discussion?*



Section 1.4

REPORT ORGANIZATION

Just like its predecessor, I4SE 2.0 is organized in a manner that focuses on those sectors of the local economy identified by WNYREDC as growth sectors. It identifies initiatives within those sectors where Erie County can make a meaningful contribution. These sectors include: advanced manufacturing, smart growth implementation, workforce development, agriculture, bi-national logistics, energy, and tourism.

The report also identifies specific initiatives that Erie County will undertake in other important areas, be-

yond the WNYREDC growth sectors, that contribute to a thriving and inclusive local economy. These include quality of life initiatives, as well as those focused on the “blue” economy and enhancement of the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (“ECIDA”).

Before the specific initiatives of I4SE 2.0 are presented, two important summaries are provided—first, a brief progress report on key initiatives from I4SE 1.0 and second, a summary of key initiatives detailed in this I4SE 2.0 document. ■

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**PROGRESS ON
INITIATIVES FOR A
SMART ECONOMY 1.0**

2.0 PROGRESS ON INITIAL REPORT

The I4SE 1.0 document contains several initiatives that deserve special attention. The following section highlights recent progress on these initiatives, which include major new programs, capital projects, and policy directives that Erie County has advanced. The appendix contains a link to the full progress report on all 64 initiatives from I4SE 1.0.

LAND DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT: Bethlehem Steel Site in Lackawanna

Since the release of I4SE 1.0, there has been significant progress on the redevelopment of the former Bethlehem Steel site. The Buffalo and Erie County Industrial Land Development Corporation (“B&ECILDC”), in conjunction with Erie County, is in the process of purchasing approximately 150 acres of land on the site. The goal is to create an industrial business park by making infrastructure improvements while marketing it to private businesses in search of prime industrial land. Erie County has already moved forward on improvements to the land. In March of 2016, a three party agreement was signed between Erie County, Tecumseh Redevelopment and G&W Railroad to move the rail tracks along Route 5. This will allow for construction of a public road extension from Dona Street to an existing manufacturer on the site, Welded Tube. The rail relocation project is currently under design, and bidding documents are being prepared. The redevelopment of the former Bethlehem Steel site is critical to the transformation of the region and will bring strong economic investment along with the creation of middle-class jobs to Erie County. It remains a top priority in I4SE 2.0.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: New ECC North Campus Building

The ECC Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (“STEM”) building project is one of the larg-

est and most important projects in the Erie County portfolio. Currently, the project is 50% complete with a target completion date of late 2017. Once complete, the STEM building will provide critically important academic space for the strategic expansion of existing ECC programs already located on the North Campus. These programs align with regional workforce needs in sectors of the economy with strong growth opportunities.

SMART GROWTH: Smart Growth Fund

Since the release of I4SE 1.0, Erie County successfully created a Smart Growth Fund within the federally funded CDBG program. The initiative provided approximately \$1,000,000 to local governments over the past three years. After careful consideration of several applications, three initial projects were chosen that best embodied smart growth principles. These included two projects in the Village of Springville aimed at improving walkability, sustainability, and the overall aesthetic and vibrancy of a portion of its central business district. The other project was in the City of Tonawanda and consisted of constructing a unique and critical linkage factor within both its Main Street central business district and waterfront revitalization area. Building off the success of this initiative, Erie County is in the process of creating a new fund to further smart growth principles. It is anticipated that additional projects will be forthcoming in other communities. More details on the new fund are described later in this document.

BLUE ECONOMY: Rush Creek Interceptor Project

This initiative reduced pollutants entering local waterways, replaced aging facilities that would have required future upgrades, decreased electrical loads and their associated carbon footprint, and addressed duplication of services in the region. After years of planning and en-

gineering work, in 2016, the Erie County Division of Sewerage Management (“DSM”) completed the Rush Creek Interceptor project. This \$16 million, two-phase initiative in Erie County Sewer District (“ECSD”) No. 3 consisted of upgrades at the Southtowns Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility (“AWTF”) to improve influent pumping and peak flow management, along with construction of a new interceptor sewer and force main to convey flows from the area tributary to the Blasdell Wastewater Treatment Plant (“WWTP”) to the Southtowns AWTF. This project eliminated three existing overflows, eliminated the Blasdell WWTP, and eliminated three pumping stations – all of which ECSD No. 3 took over from other municipalities in the 2000s.

ECIDA: ECIDA Enhancement

The ECIDA accomplished many of the initiatives outlined in I4SE 1.0, and in addition, approved and implemented other policies that furthered the mission

laid out in the document. The ECIDA established Pay Equity and Recapture Policies to ensure that companies receiving tax incentives are providing equal pay for equal work regardless of gender and are being held accountable for the job commitments they give to the community as part of their incentive deals. The ECIDA has also hired a new CEO, implemented a local labor policy, created an economic development one-stop shop and established a “but-for” test in its application that was later adopted by a new state Industrial Development Agency (“IDA”) law. The ECIDA also successfully implemented several changes to state IDA law, including a revision to the existing adaptive reuse policy regarding projects that contain a high amount of retail. These changes to the ECIDA have helped ensure that projects being incentivized by the agency are those that strengthen Erie County’s economic base by bringing outside investment and good jobs to the area. ■

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SUMMARY OF KEY INITIATIVES

The following includes a comprehensive list of 71 initiatives Erie County will undertake to influence key sectors of the regional economy. The sectors include primarily those areas identified by WNYREDC as having the most growth potential in the region. This document, however, also includes a number of initiatives in sectors unique to Erie County. The following pages contain a summary of the key initiatives in this I4SE 2.0 document.

3.0

SUMMARY OF KEY INITIATIVES

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING: *Redevelopment of the Former Bethlehem Steel Site*

The redevelopment of the Bethlehem Steel site as a modern industrial park prepared to support thousands of jobs in advanced manufacturing represents a legacy project for Erie County. Erie County is committed to helping the site reach its full economic potential as it remains a prime piece of industrial land and one of the few undeveloped industrial sites with the ability to ship products and materials via rail, road and water. The site, primarily in the City of Lackawanna, occupies one of the poorest census districts in Erie County. Focusing redevelopment on this site will uplift this area of the City and provide immediate local job opportunities. Four projects at the site are currently a priority: (i) the relocation of remaining rail tracks along Route 5; (ii) the acquisition of 150 acres to create a business park; (iii) the construction of a public road to open land for redevelopment; and (iv) the continuation of the Shoreline Trail along Route 5. More information can be found on page 17.

INFRASTRUCTURE: *Lackawanna Wastewater Treatment Plant (“WWTP”)*

The Lackawanna WWTP upgrades will enact a vision for future water quality protection and support smart growth in the City of Lackawanna. Erie County Sewer District No. 6 owns, operates, and maintains the Lackawanna WWTP which services the City of Lackawanna and very small portions of the City of Buffalo and Towns of Hamburg and West Seneca. DSM must upgrade the system to meet regulatory requirements and address future growth in the service area. These upgrades include new facilities to decrease ammonia discharges, disinfection upgrades, improvements to ad-

dress capacity (either in the collection system or at the WWTP), and addressing components needed to be rehabilitated or replaced to maintain the facility. All told, approximately \$50 million of capital improvements are proposed. The services provided by ECSD No. 6 support area businesses and growth in the service area. Improvements to the Lackawanna WWTP assist to maintain and enhance local water quality and the associated “blue economy” and will result in jobs for local workers and include apprenticeship and MWBE requirements as applicable. Construction projects in Western New York build capacity for many of the workforce development initiatives in this I4SE 2.0 document. More information can be found on page 23.

SMART GROWTH: *County Funding for Municipal Comprehensive Plan Updates*

Erie County’s Department of Environment and Planning (“DEP”) will assist municipalities with comprehensive plan updates that are consistent with One Region Forward principles. Comprehensive plans provide a framework for creating livable, healthy communities as well as resilient economies, social equity, and strong regional ties. The updates will be funded by federal Community Development Block Grant (“CDBG”) dollars and will assist thirteen local governments with updates to their comprehensive plans. Each comprehensive plan will contain recommendations and implementation plans for the development, preservation, and enhancement of residential, commercial, and industrial neighborhoods as well as public facilities and infrastructure. More information can be found on page 27.

WORKFORCE: *First Source Executive Order and Program*

One of the main areas of focus for the Poloncarz administration has been ensuring that all residents of Erie County are positively impacted by the economic renaissance Western New York is currently experiencing. In order to ensure economic opportunities are truly available for all Erie County residents, County Executive Mark Poloncarz will issue a First Source executive order to foster construction employment opportunities for qualified local residents who are also disadvantaged workers living in high poverty areas. The order will apply to those construction projects located within the geographic boundaries of Erie County, which are funded in whole or in part by Erie County. This type of program is often referred to as First Source hiring. Similar policies have been implemented throughout the United States with great success at bringing more local and disadvantaged workers into the workforce. First Source hiring is one essential way the Poloncarz administration will contribute to building a more inclusive economy. More information can be found on page 29.

AGRICULTURE: *Agribusiness Park*

This initiative seeks to develop an agribusiness-focused industrial park at the former Angola Airport. The Erie County Agribusiness Park will offer local and regional employment opportunities to help alleviate rural poverty that exists in southern Erie County. This project seeks to create a 152 acre agriculture-oriented industrial park in the Southtowns of Erie County for the purpose of attracting private sector investment in food processing and manufacturing. Many of the jobs created at the site will be production and distribution jobs which pay a livable wage and align with the skills of residents in this low to moderate income community. The Agribusiness Park will also provide a market for farmers' agricultural products, potentially providing additional farm jobs. Many rural communities in Erie County struggle with poverty and economic hardship. This initiative ensures Erie County is building an inclusive economy by creating opportunities in a rural area of the community, which is an often under-supported

sector of the regional economy. More information can be found on page 34.

ENERGY: *Erie County Low Income Program for Sustainable Energy ("ECLIPSE")*

Erie County will create a community scale energy program among energy-insecure households to spur local energy-related economic development and address the Home Energy Affordability Gap ("HEAG"), i.e. the difference between an affordable energy bill and an actual energy bill. As of April 2016, the cumulative HEAG in Erie County stood at \$69 million dollars. This represents an incredible drain on the local economy and is a driver of chronic economic vulnerability among households across Erie County as they struggle to meet their basic needs. Reducing trade-offs associated with energy insecurity, such as the "heat-or-eat" scenario, will promote healthier, more prosperous communities and continue the commitment to building a more inclusive economy. ECLIPSE, funded through a New York State Energy Research and Development Authority ("NYSERDA") grant, will mitigate this dynamic by creating an interdepartmental team to identify and implement ways to streamline current programs and utilize existing energy bulk purchasing programs to benefit low income residents, with an emphasis on those who receive assistance through Erie County. More information can be found on page 40.

TOURISM: *Increased Bed Tax for Cultural Organizations and Tourism*

Visit Buffalo Niagara ("VBN"), working with a group of Western New York hoteliers, has proposed to raise the bed tax from 1.00% to 1.50%. This would create additional revenue for VBN to better grow Erie County's tourism industry. The proposal includes sharing 40% of the additional revenue with arts and cultural organizations in Erie County. A 1% raise in the bed tax would result in approximately \$1.2 million annually for VBN and \$800,000 for cultural organizations. More information can be found on page 43.

ECIDA ENHANCEMENT: *Update to Uniform Tax Exemption Policy (“UTEP”) and Tiered Incentive Scoring Program*

The UTEP, which governs the ECIDA and other local IDA incentive policies and eligibility criteria, was last comprehensively updated in 2010. Since 2010, New York State has passed several new reform measures, the ECIDA has adopted several additional reforms, and the region has advanced WNYREDC, One Region Forward, and I4SE strategies. The UTEP provides the framework for determining incentive levels and eligibility to help target incentives that best promote growth and investment in Erie County. The UTEP should promote regional goals and ensure that public sector incentives are providing benefits for all residents of Erie County. The UTEP needs to be reviewed and amended to ensure alignment with regional strategies and best practices in economic development. Once complete, the Tiered Incentive Scoring Program should be revised to ensure projects are being evaluated and scored in alignment with regional goals and the agency is able to best incentivize the projects that return the greatest benefit to the community. More information can be found on page 51.

QUALITY OF LIFE: *Erie County Parks Master Plan*

An update to the Erie County Parks Master Plan will assist with strategic infrastructure improvements in Erie County parks and forests. Implementation of the plan is an important element of protecting the community’s overall quality of life. Improvements to Erie County parks may include bicyclist maintenance kiosks, electrical upgrades to campsites at Sprague Brook Park, installation of a Life Trail multi-generational recreation area at Como Lake Park, shelter upgrades and improvements as well as a 550-foot shoreline restoration project at Ellicott Creek Park (with assistance from Buffalo Niagara RiverKeeper). The Erie County Parks Department also strives to increase its cooperation, partnerships, and shared service arrangements with local municipalities in which its parks are located. More information can be found on page 53.

BLUE ECONOMY: *South Park Lake Restoration*

South Park Lake is located in the historic 155-acre South Park, which was designed by renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Over time, the lake has become eutrophic due to the overload of nutrients and pollution from stormwater runoff. It is currently one quarter of its original size and does not support any aquatic animal life. South Park Lake was once a local fishing resource for the surrounding neighborhoods in South Buffalo and Lackawanna. The lake needs to be dredged and restored to support aquatic animal life and to aesthetically complement the golf course, the nearby historic botanical gardens, and the rest of the Olmsted Park system. In addition, a study of the hydraulic and drainage conditions in the vicinity of the park and lake need to be studied in order to address the reduction and elimination of the sources of pollutants impacting the lake. There are also downstream connections to Lake Erie that may be enhanced to help future water quality and sustainability. Work to restore South Park Lake not only improves the lake, but also creates jobs and economic opportunity in the “blue economy”. More information can be found on page 57. ■

4.0

FURTHERING THE WNYREDC AGENDA



**ADVANCED
MANUFACTURING**



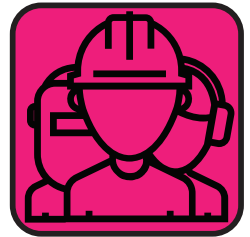
**BROWNFIELDS
AND VACANT
PROPERTY
REDEVELOPMENT**



**INFRASTRUCTURE
AND
TRANSPORTATION**



**MUNICIPAL
SMART GROWTH**



**INCLUSIVE
AND
PREPARED
WORKFORCE**



AGRICULTURE



**BI-NATIONAL
LOGISTICS AND
INTERNATIONAL
TRADE**



ENERGY



TOURISM



Section 4.1

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

The world of manufacturing continues to change. Global trade, increased automation, and the need for a highly skilled workforce are all part of its changing landscape.

Despite changes, advanced manufacturing is alive and well in Western New York and the sector remains a target industry for WNYREDC. According to WNYREDC's 2014 *Strategy for Prosperity Progress Report*, "the state invested nearly \$380 million in advanced manufacturing leveraging private investment of \$2.1 billion, retaining 5,600 jobs and creating more than 2,500 new jobs."

As discussed in two documents – the 2017 Invest Buffalo Niagara and UBRI report entitled, *Who's Our Economy?*, and WNYREDC's 2014 *Strategy for Prosperity Progress Report* – advanced manufacturing represents 11.1% of the regional economy with a total of 72,548 jobs spread across more than 1,700 firms. Advanced manufacturing is growing in the region despite the decline it is experiencing across the United States. The combination of hundreds of millions of dollars in recent state and private sector investment has resulted in the retention of 5,600 advanced manufacturing jobs and the creation of an additional 2,500. Furthermore, advanced manufacturing wages are almost \$15,000 above the regional annual average.

Among New York State's chief investments has been the Buffalo High-Tech Manufacturing Innovation Hub at RiverBend, which includes the new SolarCity factory. This facility, which has given new life to a once-fallow brownfield, is situated on approximately 88 acres in South Buffalo that was once home to the Republic Steel manufacturing facility. It is expected to employ more than 1,250 workers when it becomes fully operational.

GOAL: Erie County will grow the local economy by developing high-tech, 21st century manufacturing facilities thereby creating high-paying advanced manufacturing jobs.

Erie County has similarly been engaging principles of smart growth to support the development of advanced manufacturing in the regional economy. County investments at the Spaulding Fibre site in the City of Tonawanda and the Polymer site in the Town of Tonawanda demonstrate this commitment. But no one site is more demonstrative of this commitment to smart growth and its strategic role in supporting the growth of advanced manufacturing than that of the former Bethlehem Steel site.

The former Bethlehem Steel site once employed thousands of people and has the potential to do so again. Erie County will convert 150 acres of former industrial land into an industrial park, complete with all the utilities a modern manufacturer requires. The site is blessed with three distinct forms of transportation—railway, highway, and shipping—and extremely lucrative New York State brownfield tax credits. It is zoned for light and heavy manufacturing and is ideally positioned on the United States-Canadian border. Welded Tube of Canada has already located to the site and benefits from its strategic advantages.

The redevelopment of the Bethlehem Steel site represents a legacy project for Erie County and is more fully described below. ■



4.1.1 Bethlehem Steel Redevelopment

Erie County will **redevelop the former Bethlehem Steel site, which is critical to the transformation of our region.** Erie County is committed to helping the site reach its full economic potential. It is a prime piece of industrial land and one of the few undeveloped industrial sites with the ability to ship products and materials via rail, road and water. The site, primarily in the City of Lackawanna, is located in one of the poorest census tracts in Erie County. Redevelopment will uplift this area of the City as well as provide immediate job opportunities. The redevelopment consists of four priority projects: (i) the relocation of remaining rail tracks along Route 5; (ii) the acquisition of 150 acres to create a business park; (iii) the construction of a public road to open land for redevelopment; and (iv) the continuation of the Shoreline Trail along Route 5. ■

Acquisition of 150 Acres to Create a New Business Park

Lead: Erie County Executive Office
Potential Partners: DEP, ECIDA, B&ECILDC, NYSDEC, City of Lackawanna, Tecumseh Redevelopment
Resources: \$2.8 million United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (“HUD”), Urban Development Action Grant (“UDAG”) federal funds through ECIDA
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2017 (ongoing)

Construction of a Public Road for Redevelopment of Property

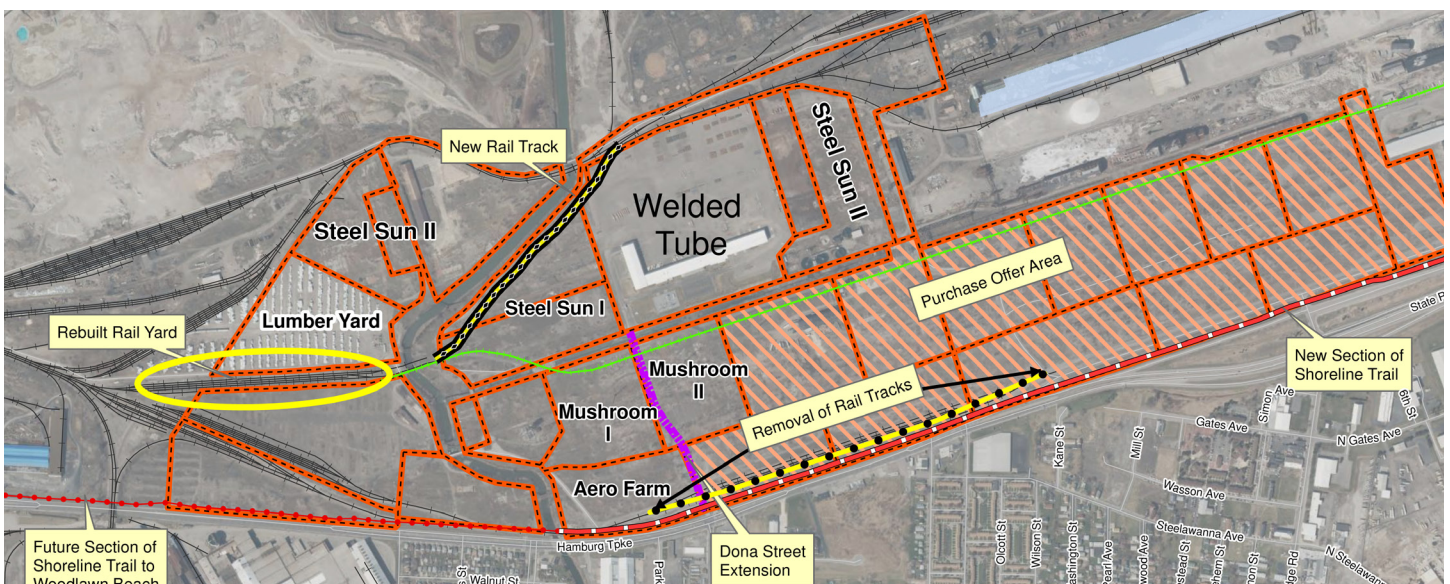
Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: DEP, ECIDA, NYSDOT, City of Lackawanna, Tecumseh Redevelopment, G&W Railroad
Resources: \$1.9 million (Erie County bond funds)
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018

Relocation of Rail Tracks

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: Erie County Department of Public Works (“DPW”), New York State Department of Transportation (“NYSDOT”), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (“NYSDEC”), ECIDA, Tecumseh Redevelopment, G&W Railroad
Resources: \$4.5 million (Erie County bond funds); \$325,000 (NYSDOT Multi-modal Transportation Program grant)
Target Completion Date: 1st Quarter, 2018 (ongoing)

Continuation of the Shoreline Trail

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: NYSDOT, NYSDEC, City of Lackawanna, Tecumseh Redevelopment
Resources: \$980,000 (NYSDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (“TAP”) grant); \$250,000 (Erie County bond funds)
Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018



Aerial view of Bethlehem Steel site improvements (Source: Erie County)



4.1.2 Net Zero Energy Manufacturing Building

Erie County and ECIDA will construct a Net Zero Energy (“NZE”) manufacturing building. The NZE facility will help spur revitalization and redevelopment on the Bethlehem Steel site. The project consists of constructing a 101,100 gross square foot flex-manufacturing building on the Bethlehem Steel site. The showcase facility will contain approximately 50,840 square feet of leasable flex-manufacturing space, 25,400 square feet of leasable commercial office space, and 5,475 square feet of shared and support space. The building will be powered by solar, geothermal and wind energy to produce as much energy as it consumes on an annual basis. It will be a demonstration facility showcasing advances in renewable energy construction. ■

Lead: ECIDA

Potential Partners: DEP, City of Lackawanna

Resources: ECIDA funds, New York State Economic Development Council (“NYSEDC”) grant, federal grant, other grants

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018

Advanced Manufacturing Conclusion

Erie County understands support for advanced manufacturing – a dominant sector, with high growth and high wages – is a worthwhile investment. High-quality job growth has the potential to create sustained economic activity for all socioeconomic groups in the region. By preparing shovel-ready sites, already zoned for manufacturing with ready access to multi-modal forms of transportation and lucrative New York State brownfield tax credits, Erie County is helping to ensure the growth of this sector for the next generation of Western New Yorkers. When combined with other state and local workforce development efforts that ensure people most in need of jobs have access to job training in advanced manufacturing, these advanced manufacturing initiatives are instrumental in building an inclusive economy that works for everyone. ■



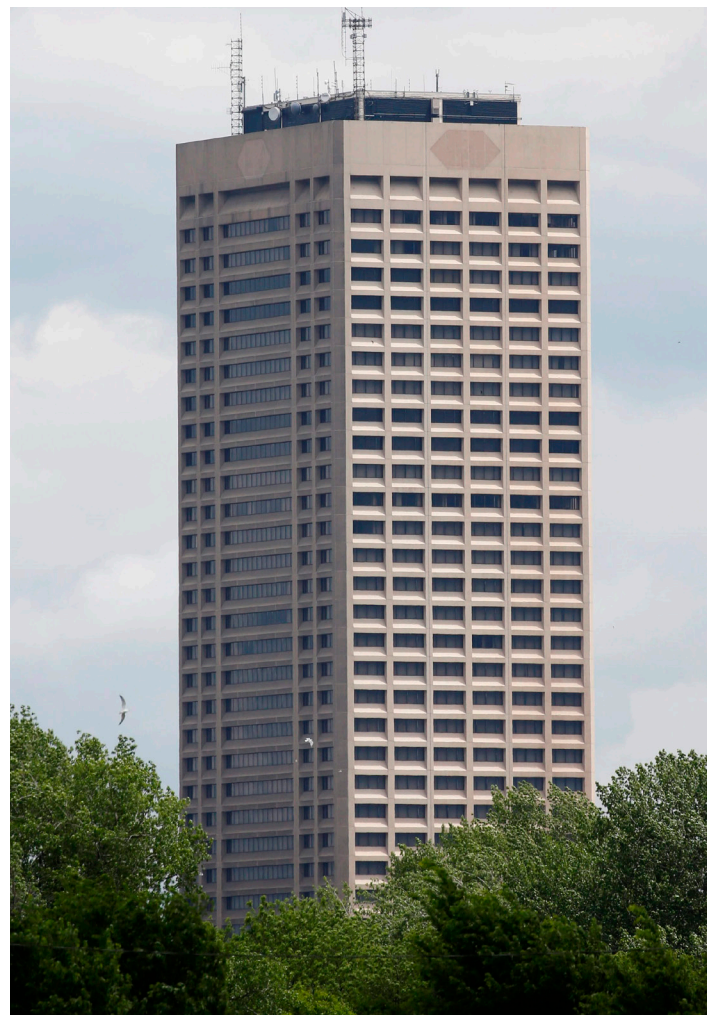
Section 4.2

BROWNFIELDS AND VACANT PROPERTY REDEVELOPMENT

Erie County has a strong manufacturing legacy, with a number of large facilities still producing steel, automobiles and auto parts, tires, chemicals, and all manner of other manufactured items. Today, however, a part of this legacy is marked in the landscape as vacant, abandoned, and often hazardous brownfield sites. Meanwhile, the need for rapid response to companies wanting to locate new facilities, combined with more stringent engineering standards and state and federal environmental reviews, means that business park sites must be pre-designed, pre-permitted, and constructed to allow firms to begin construction with a minimum delay. As such, shovel ready sites must replace vacant, abandoned, and often hazardous structures, which are not acceptable in the 21st century landscape and cannot serve the needs of the business community.

Erie County has made significant progress through successful public-private partnerships in remediating the remaining brownfields in the built environment. Exciting examples include the 200 acres remediated in the City of Buffalo to become the Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park and the 47 acres remediated in the City of Tonawanda to become the Spaulding Commerce Park. In each case, many millions of dollars were raised through local and state governmental sources as well as private sector grants, resulting in shovel ready land now available for development. Erie County must continue its role as catalyst for the initiation and implementation of additional projects that remediate the remaining brownfields and result in increased opportunities for physical development. ■

GOAL: Erie County will re-create a built environment that can grow in a sustainable manner and has available sites and buildings to allow growth in all sectors.



The redeveloped Seneca One Tower will act as a downtown anchor with a mix of commercial, residential, and retail space.



4.2.1 Shovel Ready Program and Fund

Erie County will create a Shovel Ready Program and Fund within the B&ECILDC. The development of “shovel ready sites” requires funding to purchase and develop the sites and an organization that can hold, maintain and market sites for new prospective companies. The Shovel Ready Program and Fund will provide that vehicle. Property acquired by Erie County or the ECIDA will be placed in the program and any revenues from land sales will be retained for future site purchase and development. ■

Lead: DEP, ECIDA, and B&ECILDC
Potential Partners: Empire State Development (“ESD”), Erie County Legislature
Resources: \$10 million+ over a 3 year period
Target Completion Date: Ongoing

4.2.2 4111 River Road

Erie County will execute a contract transferring 4111 River Road, a former INS Scrap Yard property, to the B&ECILDC. This brownfield redevelopment project will provide equity, health, and economic opportunities to an underserved community. Project goals include: (i) executing contracts with National Grid and the Town of Tonawanda CDBG program for funding to remediate and make the site shovel ready; (ii) removing scrap tires and concrete from the site; (iii) demolishing existing buildings and removing any remaining debris from the site; (iv) re-grading the site for future re-use; (v) investigating cost and ability to topsoil and seed the site; and (vi) retaining 10-12 acres for a potential composting facility and placing the balance of the site on the market. Future development should include elements and amenities that promote walkability and mixed uses. ■

Lead: DEP, ECIDA
Potential Partners: Erie County Legislature, ECIDA, Town of Tonawanda, National Grid
Resources: \$140,000
Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018

4.2.3 Cherry Farm Site

Erie County will pursue public acquisition of 4290 River Road in the Town of Tonawanda, or more commonly known as the “Cherry Farm site”, with the ultimate action of creating a new public waterfront park. The Cherry Farm site has been viewed as an attractive addition to Erie County’s public waterfront landscape for many years. The 70-acre site is a capped and closed landfill in the Town of Tonawanda that presents stunning views of the Niagara River and Grand Island. It is currently owned by the potentially responsible parties (“PRP”) to the landfilling activity, primarily National Grid and Honeywell. This site has no formal access for the public although it is environmentally capped in a safe and sustainable manner. The primary issue that keeps it from becoming a public open space along the Niagara River is the cost of maintenance for a “pump and treat” system that complies with NYSDEC requirements.

The Tonawanda Brownfield Opportunity Area Program is seeking to develop a model for a trust into which the PRPs would provide funding for operation of the “pump and treat” system and any other environmental work that would need to be done for a “to be determined” period of not less than 10 years. This would allow Erie County to take title and create a public riverfront access point for Erie County residents. ■

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: Town of Tonawanda, NYSDEC, Greenway Commission, Erie County Legislature, National Grid, Honeywell
Resources: \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 for park development
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2020

4.2.4 Redevelopment of Seneca One Tower

Erie County and the ECIDA will continue to work with partners to redevelop Seneca One Tower into a prominent downtown mixed-use structure. The glaring omission to the revitalization of downtown Buffalo has been the dormant Seneca One Tower, formerly known as Marine Midland Tower and HSBC Tower. For several years the largest structure in Buffalo has



been vacant, leaving many questions as to what to do with the property. Erie County is dedicated to seeing the property redeveloped into a mixed-use structure in accordance with One Region Forward and WNYREDC strategies. Seneca One Tower will act as the anchor of downtown with a mix of commercial, residential and retail space, keeping the building active 24 hours a day. The goal of Erie County is also to see that the residential space utilized in the building allows for an affordable housing component so that residents of all income levels can share in the rebirth of downtown. In late 2016, Douglas Development purchased Seneca One Tower and is currently in the early stages of a redevelopment plan for the property. Erie County and the ECIDA will continue to work with Douglas Development to ensure that the property reaches its full potential and potentially provide assistance through incentives within the IDA's programs and parameters. ■

Brownfields and Vacant Property Redevelopment Conclusion

The implementation of initiatives relating to brownfields and vacant property redevelopment will allow Erie County to have sufficient shovel ready, pre-permitted sites for years to come. These sites will be strategically located to meet the needs of new and expanding businesses and make the greatest use of existing infrastructure. Additionally, the clearance of decrepit buildings and remediation of brownfield sites will lift up communities that have been underinvested to places that offer economic and quality of life benefits for all. Strategic redevelopment will shift perception and attitude away from the Rust Belt image and toward one of modern, clean and visually exciting communities with greater opportunity for all. ■

Lead: Executive's Office, ECIDA, DEP

Potential Partners: Douglas Development, City of Buffalo

Resources: ECIDA tax incentives, where applicable

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2019



Section 4.3

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION

The various infrastructure systems in Erie County are critical assets that impact all citizens. Roads, bridges, and rail are imperative for commerce and other transportation requirements; sewer infrastructure protects public health and the environment, while promoting economic growth; modern fiber optic and electrical infrastructure support our business and personal needs. Without these systems providing a 21st century level of service, Erie County cannot grow and prosper.

Unfortunately, there is oftentimes a gap between the monies available and the documented financial needs. When grant and budget allocations fall short of the annual maintenance and capital improvement goals, our infrastructure systems can be pushed beyond their intended useful life. The result is that certain roads, bridges, sewers, and other infrastructure assets cannot provide the expected level of service. This adversely affects our region.

Erie County is committed to evaluating the infrastructure needs of our region, identifying gaps in function, service, and funding, and working with its partners to implement solutions. The following section details specific initiatives that Erie County plans to advance in the area of infrastructure assets. ■

4.3.1 Roads and Bridges

Erie County will develop a sustainable highway maintenance program. Based on assessments conducted every two years by the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (“GBNRTC”) on all 1,200 miles of Erie County roads, there is an annual budget need for approximately \$60 million per year to sustain a program to properly maintain Erie County’s highway infrastructure. Over the last 20 years, through grants and the Erie County capital budget, DPW has

GOAL: Erie County will provide infrastructure services that foster economic vitality for both businesses and communities.

managed to secure approximately \$24 million per year – or less than half the resources needed to properly maintain our road system. DPW, working with partners at all levels of government, will develop an action strategy to increase the amount of annual funding for road infrastructure to more closely address the \$60 million annual need. ■

Lead: DPW

Potential Partners: DEP, NYSDOT, GBNRTC, local DPWs

Resources: \$60 million annually

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018



4.3.2 Sewers and Treatment Facilities

4.3.2.a Sewers and Pumping Stations

Erie County will institute a rehabilitation and replacement program for its buried infrastructure. DSM is responsible for over 1,000 miles of sewer, approximately 100 pumping stations, six (6) wastewater treatment plants, and a number of other assets. Over the last five (5) years, the DSM has focused on instituting a program whereby the Erie County Sewer



Districts (“ECSDs”) are continually rehabilitating / replacing buried infrastructure. In the 2017 budget, approximately \$2.3 million has been allocated for these purposes. It is anticipated that this will be the minimum level of investment in subsequent years. Increased annual budget allocations would bring the DSM closer to its goal of addressing 1% of its system every single year.

Additionally, in 2016 the DSM completed an updated capital improvements plan for its pumping stations. In the next four (4) years, it is expected that approximately \$5.5 million will be invested in various pumping stations requiring upgrades to provide proper service and keep the facilities in a state of good repair.

The services provided by the ECSDs support area businesses and growth. Improvements to the infrastructure maintain and enhance local water quality and the associated “blue economy.” The construction projects will result in jobs for local workers. The construction projects will include apprenticeship and Minority and Women Business Enterprise (“MWBE”) requirements as applicable. Construction projects in Western New York build capacity for many of the workforce development initiatives included in this document. ■

Lead: All ECSDs

Potential Partners: NYSDEC, New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (“NYSEFC”), and other New York State entities

Resources: A minimum of \$15 million to be spent over the course of several years, financed by bonds ultimately paid by ECSDs; grant resources will be pursued where available

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2021

4.3.2.b Southtowns Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility (“AWTF”)

Erie County will invest \$75 million in upgrades to the Southtowns AWTF. ECSD No. 3 owns, operates, and maintains the Southtowns AWTF which services portions of the Towns of Boston, Eden, Hamburg, and Orchard Park, along with the Villages of Blasdell, Hamburg, and Orchard Park. The Erie County DSM submitted an “Updated Facility Plan” to the NYSDEC mapping out the needed upgrades to meet regulatory requirements and address future growth in the service area. These upgrades include outfall and effluent

pumping improvements, disinfection upgrades, new clarifiers, the addition of two (2) aeration reactors, and addressing redundancy in the solids handling processes. ■

Lead: ECSD No. 3

Potential Partners: NYSDEC, NYSEFC, and other NYS entities.

Resources: Approximately \$75 million to be spent over the course of several years, financed by bonds ultimately paid by ECSD No. 3; grant resources will be pursued where available

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2027; highly dependent on NYSDEC approvals

4.3.2.c Lackawanna Wastewater Treatment Plant (“WWTP”)

Erie County will invest \$50 million to upgrade its Lackawanna WWTP, thereby promoting water quality, smart growth principles, and economic development within the service area. ECSD No. 6 owns, operates, and maintains the Lackawanna WWTP which services the City of Lackawanna and very small portions of the City of Buffalo and Towns of Hamburg and West Seneca. The DSM submitted a “No Feasible Alternative Analysis and Permit Compliance Evaluation” to the NYSDEC recommending upgrades to ECSD No. 6 facilities to meet regulatory requirements and address future growth in the service area. These upgrades include new facilities to decrease ammonia discharges, disinfection upgrades, improvements to address capacity (either in the collection system or at the WWTP), and addressing components needed to be rehabilitated/replaced to maintain the facility. ■

Lead: ECSD No. 6

Potential Partners: NYSDEC, NYSEFC, and other NYS entities

Resources: Approximately \$50 million to be spent over the course of several years, financed by bonds ultimately paid by ECSD No. 6; grant resources will be pursued where available. \$1.5 million in New York State grants have already been awarded. Considering the socioeconomic makeup of the service area, Erie County will likely continue to target this initiative for grant resources to offset the impact to the ratepayers. The schedule may be adjusted to mitigate the financial impact in any given year.

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2027; highly dependent on NYSDEC approvals



4.3.3 Broadband Studies

Erie County will complete Phase I of its broadband study and, subsequently, pursue greater New York State involvement in broadband service or create an “Open Access Network.” Broadband infrastructure has become as critical as roadways and sewers. Public broadband will improve the productivity of existing businesses and attract new businesses to the region by ensuring that they have fast, affordable, and reliable internet access. In addition, it will help eliminate the “digital divide” and increase economic mobility by providing high-speed internet connectivity to those who are currently not served or underserved – especially in Erie County’s urban and rural communities.

The goal of this study is to determine how best to approach broadband in Erie County. Options include relying on the New York State Broadband Program Office (“BPO”) to increase service or creating a new “Open Access Network” that would be the backbone for a fiber network within Erie County. DEP will be tasked with maintaining an inventory of broadband within Erie County. Of particular interest will be the publicly owned fiber and conduit that could be used as part of an “Open Access Network.” ■

Lead: DEP and Erie County Division of Information and Support Services (“DISS”)

Potential Partners: Empire State Development Corporation (“ESD”), BPO, ECIDA, Erie County Legislature, private providers

Resources: Existing staff time, Erie County or ESD funds for engineering; \$1 million for engineering, \$20 million for full 360 mile “Open Access Network”

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2020 (ongoing)

4.3.4 Smart and Connected Erie County Roadmap

Erie County will embrace new technological infrastructure to improve its governmental services and quality of life for its residents. To become a 21st century community, Erie County must embrace new technologies to improve the lives of its residents. Developing the technological infrastructure to collect, integrate, and analyze the vast amount of data created

through government administration will facilitate improved services, reduced costs and drive equitable regional growth. The “smart and connected” roadmap will be anchored by civic engagement through digital inclusion and open access to public data. ■

Lead: DPW

Potential Partners: DISS, UB, Buffalo State College, IBM, Siemens, Verizon

Resources: United States Department of Commerce (“DOC”), National Science Foundation (“NSF”), United States Department of Energy (“DOE”)

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018

4.3.5 Regional Utility Infrastructure Planning

Erie County and its partners will provide a unified response to National Grid’s rate filing. National Grid’s 2017 rate filing provides a unique opportunity for Erie County and public and private stakeholders to develop a unified plan that addresses infrastructure needs of the industrial corridor in South Buffalo, Lackawanna, Blasdell, Woodlawn and Hamburg. By providing a unified response to National Grid’s rate filing, regional partners can help establish policy and direct infrastructure planning resources to efficiently address the entire redevelopment of this corridor as well as leverage other resources to implement the plan. The rate filing response will include the consideration of renewable energy and co-generation facilities to reduce the overall infrastructure needs as well as provide opportunities to reduce the cost of power to adjacent low income neighborhoods. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: National Grid, ECIDA, City of Buffalo, Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (“BUDC”), ESD, NYSERDA, Public Services Commission, New York State Association of Counties (“NYSAC”), Town of Hamburg

Resources: \$75 million (National Grid infrastructure investment); Buffalo Billion 2

Target Completion Date: 3rd Quarter, 2017



4.3.6 Complete Streets Policy

Erie County will adopt a Complete Streets Policy. A Complete Streets Policy would require consideration of design features such as sidewalks, paved shoulders suitable for use by bicyclists, crosswalks, traffic calming measures, and other items on major Erie County road projects. This is intended to complement the 2009 NYS Complete Streets Legislation. The various functions and location of Erie County roads will require a flexible policy. Strong coordination between DPW and DEP will be required to insure that the initiative is successful. ■

Lead: DEP, DPW

Potential Partners: NYSDOT, GBNRTC, Erie County Legislature, local governments

Resources: Additional costs to current Erie County road design and reconstruction will likely occur given the added features; actual increase unknown at this time

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2020



An example of a “complete street” that considers all modes of transportation

4.3.7 Light Rail Expansion to Amherst

Erie County and its partners will work to advance light rail expansion between the University at Buffalo (“UB”) north and south campuses. Ever since the Light Rail Transit (“LRT”) system from UB South Campus to downtown opened, discussions about an extension to UB North Campus in Amherst have taken place. This effort brings us closer to that reality. Since 2014, NFTA has been performing corridor studies of potential routes from the current terminus at UB South Campus to UB North Campus. The studies detailed above and below ground LRT and Bus Rapid Transit (“BRT”) options along the various route options. The proposed project would accelerate further

design studies and environmental impact studies of LRT from UB South Campus to UB North Campus. ■

Lead: NFTA and New York State

Potential Partners: GBNRTC, DEP, Erie County Legislature, federal government

Resources: Design, environmental impact statement (“EIS”) (Buffalo Billion 2); \$1 billion for construction

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2022

4.3.8 Light Rail Expansion to DL&W Terminal

Erie County and its partners will work to advance light rail expansion from Canalside to the DL&W terminal. The existing LRT system has its downtown terminus at Canalside, with an additional station for arena events. There has been an increased desire to extend the activity of Canalside to the DL&W terminal, located south of the arena. Studies have shown the vacant second floor of the terminal to be a possible location for public spaces ranging from public markets to restaurants. Connectivity of this space to the arena and Canalside is vital if the concepts are to succeed. Funding for design and construction is necessary to bring this potential project to completion. ■

Lead: NFTA and New York State

Potential Partners: GBNRTC, DEP, Erie County Legislature, federal government

Resources: Design and construction (Buffalo Billion 2)

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2022

Infrastructure and Transportation: Conclusion

Erie County’s infrastructure and transportation decisions have a widespread impact on housing, development, investment patterns, and quality of life. This is why it is critical for the outcomes of these decisions to be fair and beneficial to all. By advancing the initiatives outlined in this section, Erie County will work toward addressing the infrastructure and transportation needs of our region using a comprehensive approach – an approach to modernize services that are accessible to everyone in all types of communities. Strategic investments in infrastructure and transportation systems will position Erie County to prosper in the 21st century and will allow for greater access to shared employment and economic opportunity throughout the region. ■



Section 4.4

MUNICIPAL SMART GROWTH INITIATIVES

In Erie County, “smart growth” is essential to the future economic, environmental, and social prosperity of its communities. Smart growth is often defined as growth that makes connections between land use patterns and environmental protection, public health, economic vitality, and social equity. The principles of smart growth are described in varying ways; however, the following provides a few concise statements which clearly illustrate their intention.

Smart growth concentrates investments in areas where infrastructure already exists. These include preserving historically important buildings and districts, reviving downtowns and main streets, reinvesting in established neighborhoods, and remediating former industrial lands for future industrial use. Smart growth also promotes new infrastructure investments that enhance walkability, provide for multiple transportation modes, connect disadvantaged communities with employment centers, and foster mixed use private investment. Smart growth supports protection of existing open space, natural resources, and water supplies. In addition, smart growth preserves agricultural land and encourages the incorporation of natural ecosystem projects, including green infrastructure, into future land use development.

Although smart growth is already a leading principle that guides county-wide decisions, policies, and programming, Erie County will align its new smart growth initiatives with strategies presented in WNYREDC’s *A Strategy for Prosperity in Western New York*, One Region Forward’s *A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara*, and the *Western New York Regional Sustainability Plan*, developed in 2012 by the Regional Planning Consortium of Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Allegany, and Cattaraugus Counties.

GOAL: Erie County will fully embrace smart growth principles as the guiding tenet when making decisions that affect physical and economic development.

It is important for Erie County to lead by example and work with communities to incorporate smart growth principles into a collective set of actions and policies affecting physical and economic development. As so clearly described in WNYREDC’s *Strategy for Prosperity in Western New York*, adherence to principles of smart growth must be followed if the region is to create the right environment for job growth and wealth creation. The following initiatives promote smart growth communities within Erie County. ■



Recent streetscape improvements in the Village of Springville (Source: Erie County)



4.4.1 Tonawanda Tomorrow



Erie County and its partners will assist the Town of Tonawanda in developing an economic development plan in response to the closing of the Huntley power station. Tonawanda Tomorrow is a community-driven effort to develop strategies that address the void left in the local and regional economy by the closing of the Huntley power station. Through a grant from the United States Economic Development Administration (“EDA”) aimed at helping communities adapt economically to a changing energy landscape this initiative brings residents, local businesses, community groups, organized labor, and government together to plan for the growth of Tonawanda’s economic future. ■

Lead: Town of Tonawanda, UBRI
Potential Partners: DEP, Clean Air Coalition of Western New York, local labor unions, Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology
Resources: EDA Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (“POWER”) Initiative grant
Target Completion Date: 1st Quarter, 2018

4.4.2 Smart Growth Fund

Erie County will provide \$1,000,000 in federal Community Development Block Grant (“CDBG”) funds to fund up to four smart growth projects. Erie County’s Smart Growth Fund promotes projects that further smart growth principles such as enhancing village and hamlet centers, connecting employment corridors with new neighborhoods, and integrating a mix of housing and commercial activity into new land development. Approximately \$1,000,000 will be available to local governments through a competitive process in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Project goals will include enhancing

existing infrastructure in village and hamlet centers to increase pedestrian traffic in those areas. Investments in infrastructure lay the foundation for economic development and growth. Projects will be offered in low income areas and will help to ensure that all residents have access to improved recreational, food, and shopping centers. ■

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: Community Development Consortium municipalities
Resources: \$1,000,000 (Erie County CDBG funds) along with matching funds from municipalities
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2020

4.4.3 County Funding of Municipal Comprehensive Plan Updates

Erie County will provide \$400,000 in federal CDBG funds to assist 13 municipalities with updating their comprehensive plans to be consistent with One Region Forward principles and have a strong social equity component. Comprehensive plans provide a framework for creating livable, healthy communities and communities that have resilient economies, social equity, and strong regional ties. Several of the comprehensive plan updates will be combined plans, whereby towns and villages will work together through the comprehensive planning process to develop joint themes and aspirations important to their communities. Each will contain implementation plans for the development, preservation, and enhancement of residential, commercial, and industrial neighborhoods as well as public facilities and infrastructure. This initiative, along with the initiative to establish a county-wide planning advisory board, strive to assist municipalities in “thinking regionally and acting locally” by incorporating One Region Forward values and strategies for smart, sustainable development. ■

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: Community Development Consortium municipalities
Resources: Approximately \$400,000 (Erie County CDBG funds) received through Regional Development Corporation (“RDC”) Loan Fund
Target Completion Date: 1st Quarter, 2018



4.4.4 Façade Improvement Program

Erie County will provide \$150,000 in federal CDBG funds to assist 15 business owners within 3 village and hamlet centers in improving the exterior building facades of their commercial establishments. The condition and appearance of commercial buildings within a business district often reflect the viability of the businesses within. This program, funded through Erie County's CDBG grant, will help business owners in village and hamlet centers improve their building facades. Improvements to the appearance of commercial buildings will result in a better physical environment and enhance economic development. The program is offered in low income, underserved areas in Erie County. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"), Community Development Consortium municipalities

Resources: \$150,000 (Erie County CDBG funds); \$150,000 in matching funds from small business owners.

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2020



Recent façade improvements to the Alden Pharmacy (Source: Erie County)

4.4.5 County Planning Advisory Board

Erie County will establish a Division of Planning Advisory Board. The purpose of the board will be to provide the Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development advice and counsel on significant land use planning decisions s/he must make in the execution of his/her duties under section 9.03 of Article 9 of the Erie County Administrative Code. The board will include a cross-section of planning professionals who will work together to engage a broader spectrum of development, conservation, and municipal interests in Erie County's planning processes and certain classes of 239 (m) reviews. ■

Lead: DEP

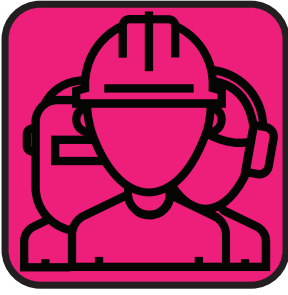
Potential Partners: UBRI, the Farmland Protection Board, GBNRTC, One Region Forward Implementation Council, local governments, developers, environmental and conservation organizations, and other regional agencies and institutions

Resources: Existing staff time

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018

Municipal Smart Growth Initiatives: Conclusion

Erie County strives to assist local municipalities with the inclusion of smart growth policies in their land use planning efforts. According to the *Western New York Regional Sustainability Plan*, "sustainability as it pertains to land use and livable communities in the Western New York region includes the incorporation of smart growth principles in land use planning and the creation and preservation of livable communities." Erie County recognizes that a smart, sustainable, and livable physical environment creates an ideal climate for economic growth. The implementation of smart growth initiatives and strategies will enhance the overall image of Erie County, attract new visitors, residents, and businesses, increase job opportunities for all income groups, revitalize disadvantaged communities, and save taxpayers from the significant costs associated with land use patterns that are unsustainable. ■



Section 4.5

AN INCLUSIVE AND PREPARED WORKFORCE

Through a coordinated approach, involving support from industry groups, community organizations, and state and federal resources, unemployment in Erie County is under 5% - an all-time low, down from 8% in 2013 when I4SE 1.0 was released. Though this decrease in unemployment speaks to progress, Erie County recognizes there is more to do to strengthen workforce preparation and ensure continued economic growth and equity within Erie County.

Erie County is in a period of economic transition and development, where it is becoming increasingly challenging for businesses to hire well-trained employees. As we have learned from the *Buffalo Niagara Labor Market Assessment 2017*, (a comprehensive study that explores the region's labor market), one-fifth of all jobs in the region will be impacted by retiring workers over the next 10 years. Furthermore, the gap between workforce needs and the current labor supply persists, and better alignment is needed between workforce training programs and business needs. The *Racial Equity Dividend: Buffalo's Great Opportunity* highlights the racial equity gap that exists in local communities and the impact this divide has had on the workforce. According to the United States Census Bureau's 2011-2015 American Community Survey, unemployment for non-whites is more than twice that for whites in Erie County.

Erie County strives to assess and continually improve its workforce strategy to be flexible, demand-driven, and responsive to public and regional economic development goals. Erie County recognizes the importance of attracting and retaining a diverse workforce that reflects and meet the needs and expectations of a diverse, mobile, and active community. Through Erie County's *Affirmative Action Plan*, practices that support diversity and inclusion in all aspects of employment are underway.

GOAL: Erie County will address the needs of job seekers and employers through flexible, demand-driven workforce development efforts.

Providing quality training opportunities that are accessible to all is fundamental to Erie County's efforts to combat poverty and inequality in the region. As noted in *The Racial Equity Dividend: Buffalo's Great Opportunity*, by bridging the gap in unemployment, positive gains for the community will occur, including greater workforce participation rates, a broader tax base, lower public expenditure costs, and increased wealth for households. ■

4.5.1 First Source Executive Order and Program

Erie County will enforce a First Source executive order applicable to public works projects in whole or in part. A First Source program will help ensure employment opportunities for qualified local residents who are also disadvantaged workers living in high poverty areas. ■

Lead: Erie County Executive Office, Erie County Law Department

Potential Partners: DPW, Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board ("BECWIB"), ECIDA, Buffalo Building Trades, Partnership for the Public Good ("PPG"), VOICE-Buffalo

Resources: Existing staff time

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2017



4.5.2 One-Stop Career Center at Erie County Correctional Facility (“ECCF”)

Erie County will create a One-Stop Career Center at the ECCF. A One-Stop Career Center will provide assistance to individuals with several months left on their sentence. It will allow them the opportunity to prepare for reentry into the workforce by receiving job search and training assistance along with several weeks of personal development. ■

Lead: BECWIB, Erie County Executive Office, Erie County Sheriff’s Office

Potential Partners: City of Buffalo, Center for Employment Opportunity, VOICE-Buffalo

Resources: Federal Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership (“LEAP”) grant; United States Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration has recently made available approximately \$5 million annually for 10 grants of up to \$500,000 each to place specialized American Job Centers within county, municipal or regional correctional facilities

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2019

4.5.3 Evolution of Career Pathways Program

Erie County will implement a Career Pathways Training Program. The program will lead to career advancement and self-sustaining wages for Erie County residents. Using information learned from the Erie County-led Workforce Development Summits of 2012 and 2013, the BECWIB has developed career pathways programming that combines classroom training with internship and/or training wages for participants. Pathways programming will be developed in priority sector industries to include: advanced manufacturing, energy, hospitality and tourism, and life & health sciences. ■

Lead: BECWIB

Potential Partners: Buffalo Niagara Manufacturers Association, Buffalo Niagara Partnership (“BNP”), United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, Hotel and Motel Association of Western New York, VBN, Buffalo Niagara Convention Center (“BNCC”), Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus (“BNMC”), Delaware North, SolarCity, Erie 1 BOCES, Western New York Workforce Training Center, ECC, Goodwill Industries

Resources: Federal workforce funds

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018



4.5.4 Increased Collaboration with Local IDAs

Erie County will promote closer collaboration between the workforce system and local IDAs, thereby strengthening the workforce of new and existing businesses within Erie County. In 2017, the BECWIB will expand its relationship with suburban IDAs. Some of the efforts will include informational workshops coordinated through area business chambers, active attendance to partner board meetings and mutually agreed upon goals that provide comprehensive services to the businesses Erie County supports. ■

Lead: BECWIB

Potential Partners: Invest Buffalo Niagara, BNP, ECIDA, Amherst Chamber of Commerce, East Aurora Chamber of Commerce, Amherst IDA, Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, Lancaster IDA, Rural Outreach Center.

Resources: Existing staff time

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018

4.5.5 Middle Skills Workforce Development for Women

Erie County will establish a collaborative of community partners to provide educational programs and apprenticeship opportunities to women. One of the most effective ways to narrow the gender wage gap and address systemic poverty in Erie County is to promote a trained inclusive workforce that prepares women to fill the demand for middle skills jobs—those jobs that



require more than a high school diploma, but less than a bachelor's degree – in the occupational areas of advanced manufacturing, transportation, distribution and logistics.

The Erie County Commission on the Status of Women (“ECCSW”) will serve as a convener to establish a county-wide collaborative of community partners including public education, higher education and advanced manufacturing. The collaborative will develop a series of interconnected educational programs and apprenticeship opportunities designed to foster sustainable career opportunities for female high school graduates and women returning to the workforce who are looking to expand their skills set and earning potential. ■

Lead: ECCSW

Potential Partners: Erie County Workforce Investment Board, Western New York STEM, Buffalo Public Schools CTE Education, Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance, Buffalo Manufacturing Works, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology, Erie 1 & 2 @ BOCES, and Erie Community College and Institute for Women's Policy Research

Resources: To be determined

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018

4.5.6 Employ Buffalo Niagara

Erie County will work with partners to create and implement a workforce development pilot program.

Workforce development will be a key factor in determining if the economic renaissance the Buffalo Niagara region is experiencing is momentary or long lasting. In the next ten years, over 137,000 jobs will be impacted by retirements. At the same time, over 132,000 people are underemployed and 42 % of the population is out of the labor force. We also know due to the economic resurgence thousands of new jobs, especially in advanced manufacturing, will be coming online in the next several years. These realities have caused a great sense of urgency among many of the major stakeholders in the Buffalo-Niagara region. They wish to work together to help solve the impending workforce crisis the region may experience.

In 2014, the BNP formed a working group of employers to address the need for a systems change in workforce development. The effort grew to include addi-

tional stakeholders such as Erie County, the City of Buffalo, Niagara County, the City of Niagara Falls, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, the Workforce Investment Board, the United Way, ECC and others to study the workforce issue and find solutions. The group applied for and was awarded a “Communities That Work Partnership Grant” from the United States Department of Commerce. The grant allowed the working group to partner with the Aspen Institute to help better understand the workforce issue the region and the country is facing and to learn how to foster a system to help tackle the issue. Upon completion of the work with Aspen Institute, the working group formed an official coalition, Employ Buffalo Niagara, of more than 40 stakeholders across the public and private sectors. Now armed with the data obtained from the 2017 Labor Market Assessment conducted by Invest Buffalo Niagara and UBRI, the *Racial Equity Dividend Report* by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo and the knowledge gained through the partnership with the Aspen Institute, the coalition has begun designing a workforce development pilot program focused on the advanced manufacturing industry with plans to eventually expand the program to other sectors.

Employ Buffalo Niagara will work with private business to design and implement a program that addresses many of the issues facing workforce development, including recalibrating education and training to meet local job market demand, barriers to employment like transportation and child care, and moving the underemployed into higher skilled employment. Erie County will remain steadfast in addressing this crucial issue not just by its leadership role with Employ Buffalo Niagara, but also its participation and leadership with many other current and future workforce initiatives and programs. ■

Lead: BNP, United Way, BECWIB, Erie County, City of Buffalo, Niagara County, City of Niagara Falls

Potential Partners: ECC, Niagara County Community College (“NCCC”), Say Yes to Education, BNP Manufacturers Council, Buffalo Center for Arts and Technology, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, the Urban League, other employers and interested stakeholders

Resources: Existing staff time, BECWIB and DSS workforce training resources

Target Completion Date: Ongoing



4.5.7 Preservation Buffalo Niagara

Erie County will determine the feasibility of creating an apprentice program with contractors, labor representatives, and Preservation Buffalo Niagara (“PBN”). PBN has identified a significant shortage of qualified craftspeople to properly restore historic structures across Erie County. The apprentice program would be designed to train individuals on skills needed to repair federal Works Progress Administration (“WPA”) park infrastructure within Erie County Heritage Parks. ■

Lead: Erie County Parks Department and DEP
Potential Partners: PBN, labor unions, tradesmen, contractors, Center for Employment Opportunities (“CEO”)
Resources: PBN and CEO grants; existing Erie County maintenance funds
Target Completion Date: 1st Quarter, 2018

4.5.8 Job Training Related to Environmental Work

4.5.8.a Geospatial Technology

Erie County will implement a geospatial technology apprenticeship program. This collaborative program, involving local governments, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations will provide marketable skills in a high-growth industry. It will also generate vital maps and geospatial data for municipal and not-for-profit projects. The apprenticeship program will provide local governments and non-profit organizations with geospatial technical support on a short-term, project specific basis. ■

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: Buffalo State College, Western New York STEM, high schools, local governments and non-profit organizations
Resources: To be determined
Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019

4.5.8.b Lead Abatement

Erie County will create a lead abatement certification program for veterans. The initiative will provide a job training certificate program for veterans in lead-safe abatement practices focusing on residential

renovation, painting, and repair work. This effort will build off of existing work in the Erie County Health Department and Veterans Service Agency by bringing together job training for veterans and lead abatement work that is needed to protect the health of some of our most vulnerable residents. ■

Lead: Health Department
Potential Partners: Veterans Service Agency, DEP, Green and Healthy Homes Initiative
Resources: Grant funding from Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo, DOH, workforce development agencies, veterans’ offices
Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019



4.5.8.c Horticultural Program Expansion at ECCF

Erie County will expand its horticultural program at ECCF. This initiative will expand job training opportunities related to the current horticultural program at ECCF to include food composting and a tree farm/native plant nursery. It will also reduce internal operating costs for Erie County. The Erie County Correctional Facility Food Composting Project, recently funded through a NYSDEC grant, will plan, design and construct a small composting area directly on the site. Inmates will be trained on the composting process and benefits, thus giving them skills and knowledge they may be able to use after incarceration. ■

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: Erie County Sheriff’s Office, Erie County Parks Department, Western New York Land Conservancy, People United for Sustainable Housing (“PUSH”)
Resources: \$694,390 (NYSDEC grant)
Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2020



4.5.9 Erie County-ECC Joint Strategic Planning Committee

Erie County and ECC will partner to establish a committee that examines current and future ECC operational issues. Erie County and ECC have established a 10-member Operations and Strategic Planning Committee, which is working to better understand and address ECC's needs and role within the greater community. The committee will explore long-term campus infrastructure needs and community college charge-backs; as well as issues related to student needs, such as class offerings and locations, and transportation. ■

Joint Partners: Erie County, ECC

Resources: Existing staff time

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019



The city campus is one of several SUNY ECC campuses.

4.5.10 English as a New Language (“ENL”) Services for Immigrants and Refugees

Erie County will collaborate with partners to develop an occupational ENL program to serve immigrants and refugees. Enhancing English proficiency among immigrants and refugees will increase opportunities for them to enter into and sustain employment. Erie County and its partners will collaborate to develop a pilot occupational ENL program to be launched in partnership with ACCESS of WNY in Lackawanna. ENL instruction specific to the advanced manufacturing industry, along with career and technical training, will be provided by Erie 1 BOCES Workforce Development. ACCESS of WNY will provide support services to participants to help increase the probability of their success through training, while the New York State Department of Labor will coordinate targeted employment outreach services to make direct connections between and program participants and employers. ■

Lead: BECWIB

Partners: ACCESS of WNY, Erie 1 BOCES, New York State Department of Labor

Resources: To be determined

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018

An Inclusive and Prepared Workforce: Conclusion

The link between educational attainment, job readiness, and poverty is clear. To reduce poverty and achieve greater social and economic equality, Erie County strives to connect local people to education and training that lead to job opportunities, career paths with living wages, and economic self-sufficiency. The I4SE 2.0 workforce initiatives provide a path toward an inclusive and prepared workforce by focusing on priority industry sectors, serving vulnerable populations, and collaborating with key stakeholders to ensure access for all. ■



Section 4.6

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is often the overlooked economic engine of our national economy. A report by Farm Credit East Knowledge Exchange entitled, *Economic Impacts of Agriculture in Eight Northeastern States*, cites that, in New York State alone, agriculture and agriculture-dependent business—from the farm stand to the yogurt producer—have a \$46 billion impact on state economic output, including 193,500 jobs. Much of the \$46 billion in total output, stays within the community, such as money spent on payroll, state and local taxes, and at local businesses. While more difficult to quantify, agriculture also protects open space, air and water quality, and attractive landscapes, which contribute to the budding agritourism industry, increase our quality of life, and promote smart growth.

Locally, it is estimated agriculture sales contribute \$133 million into the Erie County economy, according to the 2012 United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) Census of Agriculture. The economic impact of agriculture in Erie County also extends to secondary industries like food processors. These rely upon local farms to supply raw agricultural materials for processing. Erie County’s proximity to major markets and agricultural suppliers has contributed to the success of agribusinesses in the area. Companies like Steuben Foods, Goya, Sorrento Lactalis, Perry’s Ice Cream, and Rich Products exemplify the Buffalo Niagara region’s significant advantages in the agribusiness sector. The Erie County Agribusiness Feasibility Study confirmed that the region is well positioned to succeed in the Food and Food Processing industry cluster. Recognizing the significant economic impact of agriculture, WNYREDC’s *A Strategy for Prosperity in Western New York* incorporated agriculture as part of the regional industry sectors.

GOAL: Erie County will be a statewide leader in new and innovative programs that elevate agriculture to equal standing with other priority sectors of the local economy.

Despite this, Erie County’s farms are struggling. According to the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, the number of farms decreased by 14% while acreage in farms decreased by 4% between 2007 and 2012. In an effort to combat the loss of agriculture, Erie County’s Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board produced the “Erie County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.” This document identifies issues and recommended actions to protect farmland and enhance the economic viability of agriculture. Some of the issues identified in the plan include farmer access to local markets, burdensome regulatory environment, educating the public about the value of agriculture, access to financial assistance, and an aging workforce. Recommendations such as enhancing linkages between producer and consumer, and promotion of careers in agriculture were echoed in WNYREDC’s *A Strategy for Prosperity in Western New York*. ■

4.6.1 Agribusiness Park

Erie County will develop an agribusiness-focused industrial park at the former Angola Airport. The Erie County Agribusiness Park will offer local and regional employment opportunities to help alleviate rural poverty that exists in southern Erie County. This project seeks to create a 152 acre agriculture-oriented industrial park in the Southtowns of Erie County for



the purpose of attracting private sector investment in food processing and manufacturing. Many of the jobs created at the site will be production and distribution jobs which pay a livable wage and align with the skills of residents in this low to moderate income community. The Agribusiness Park will also provide a market for farmers' agricultural products, potentially providing additional farm jobs. ■

Lead: DEP and ECIDA

Potential Partners: ESD, Erie County Legislature, DPW and Town of Evans

Resources: \$1.2 million for acquisition through ECIDA, Phase I Generic Environmental Impact Statement ("GEIS"), \$500,000 for roadway design (source to be determined); \$3.4 million for Phase I construction

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2021

4.6.2 Food Processing Industry Marketing

Erie County and partners will develop marketing materials for the food processing industry. Erie County has many of the necessary ingredients – a local agricultural supply, a wealth of producer service companies knowledgeable in servicing food processing machinery, and a trained food manufacturing workforce – to compete in the agribusiness sector. Erie County will market these assets as a means to attract new food processing businesses to the agribusiness park and the region. ■

Lead: DEP and Invest Buffalo Niagara

Potential Partners: BECWIB, ESD, ECC

Resources: Existing staff time

Timeline: 4th Quarter, 2019

4.6.3 Increased Local Food Procurement for County Food Service

Erie County will increase local food procurement for its food service operations. Purchasing local ingredients from community-supported farms and food processing centers for use within Erie County food service operations will maintain local economies, create jobs, prevent sprawl, preserve farmland, make fresh food accessible to all, and minimize transportation and storage. Each year, Erie County purchases millions of dollars of food for the jail and senior citizens through its Meals on Wheels program. If a fraction of the food purchased was locally sourced, the economic impact to local producers would be significant. ■

Lead: DEP and Purchasing

Potential Partners: Erie County Farm Bureau ("ECFB"), Erie County Legislature, ECCF, Erie County Law Department

Resources: Existing staff time

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2020

Agriculture: Conclusion

Erie County recognizes that more needs to be done to address rural poverty. Rural communities need positive, sustainable development strategies that will create economic opportunity and enhance the quality of life for all who live and work in these communities. The agriculture initiatives herein promote cooperation with agricultural and economic development partners to help agriculture thrive as a critical element of the Western New York economy. These initiatives will attract new agribusinesses and increase the profitability and market access for small- to medium-sized farmers, increasing job opportunities for rural residents while also increasing the accessibility of healthy, locally produced food for all. ■



Section 4.7

BI-NATIONAL LOGISTICS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Western New York is ideally located along the United States-Canadian border to become an international logistics center. Within a one day drive is 60% of the Canadian population and 40% of the United States population.

A strong foundation already exists in Western New York for every type of transportation utilized in the shipment of domestic and international goods. Manufacturers and distribution companies can accept and deliver raw materials and finished products via rail, air, highway, and water transportation systems. The region is home to two international airports - Buffalo Niagara International Airport (“BNIA”) and Niagara Fall International Airport - and 28 maritime terminal facilities, all of which are conveniently located near major thoroughfares, international border crossings, and rail service. There are also two United States and two Canadian railroads – CSXT, Norfolk Southern, Canadian Pacific, and Canadian National, respectively – which operate or have access to intermodal facilities in Erie County. Each railroad provides immediate rail access to a significant percentage of the United States and Canadian populations.

Along with the transportation infrastructure, Erie County is host to a cluster of international distribution professional support services including banking, customs brokerage, insurance, and legal services as well as expertise in speed to market services.

Currently, key ports of entry on the west coast and in northeastern United States are near capacity due, in part, to the Panama Canal expansion and increased imports from China. As delays grow at these ports, freight forwarders will seek out secondary ports of entry – such as those in Western New York – for efficient distribution of international goods. The Buffalo Niagara

GOAL: Erie County will become the first choice location along the United States-Canadian border for foreign investment and the distribution of domestic and international goods.

combined points of international entry have enabled \$10.9 billion of international trade to cross borders and define the region as the third largest port of entry in the United States for the volume of goods. ■

4.7.1 Southern Ontario Marketing and Attraction

Erie County will continue its marketing efforts to Southern Ontario and also seek more Canadian investment within the region. These efforts will include a combination of business attraction, sports marketing and tourism strategies. Invest Buffalo Niagara will continue to strategically reach out to businesses in priority sectors for potential operations in Erie County. This will bring new manufacturing and distribution employers to Erie County and, as a result, add new job opportunities and investment. VBN will engage in drawing Canadian visitors through its visitation and sports marketing efforts, in a plan to draw visitors to the area, thereby making them comfortable and eager for investment in Erie County. The increase in tourism will also create job opportunities in the service sector, a valuable entry level opportunity for many job seekers. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: Invest Buffalo Niagara, Visit Buffalo Niagara, Erie County Legislature, ECIDA

Resources: Existing staff time; \$100,000 annually

Target Completion Date: Ongoing



4.7.2 Foreign Trade Zone

Erie County will continue to market the Foreign Trade Zone Program to companies that can financially benefit from its duty free provisions. The Foreign Trade Zone Program allows firms to import goods or component parts, process and add value, then export the finished product without paying duty. This can create a tremendous advantage over facilities that do not have a foreign trade zone. Erie County is the grantee for Foreign Trade Zone No. 23 through the United States Foreign Trade Zone Board in the United States Commerce Department. Erie County contracts with the ECIDA for day-to-day management of the Foreign Trade Zone Program. ■

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: ECIDA, Erie County Legislature
Resources: Existing staff time
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2022

4.7.3 EB-5 Program and Capital Development

Erie County will utilize the federal EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program for its large scale developments. The program offers green cards to entrepreneurs seeking entry into the United States if they invest over \$500,000 in commercial enterprises. Erie County is fortunate to have a representative of the EB-5 Program located in Buffalo. Construction project investments will be sought for large scale efforts such as the Bethlehem Steel site redevelopment. Public investment at this site can be used as matching funds under the EB-5 Program. ■

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: ECIDA, New York State EB-5 Regional Center
Resources: Existing staff time; previously committed funds to the Bethlehem project
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2022

4.7.4 Canadian Outreach

Erie County will work with partners to cultivate business by participating in foreign trade missions to Canada. While the region has a solid track record of attracting Canadian firms, a long-term, Canadian outreach effort is critical to its continued success. Erie County, along with its partners, will attend meetings and conferences with firms in Ontario, Canada that may be interested in the Buffalo Niagara region for a United States presence. This initiative will assist Erie County in creating jobs and securing more foreign investment dollars as a part of its economic development strategy. ■

Lead: DEP
Potential Partners: Invest Buffalo Niagara, CIDEP, ECIDA
Resources: Existing staff time
Target Completion Date: Ongoing

Bi-National Logistics and International Trade: Conclusion

Positioning Erie County as a primary port of entry into the United States from Canada and other international ports will have an immediate impact on the region. Attracting investment from Canada and around the world will increase opportunity to create new shipping and rail jobs for those underserved and underemployed. Improvements to Erie County's intermodal infrastructure will create a favorable business climate for international shippers and manufacturers. They, in turn, will bring new investments from outside the region, generating new wealth and expanding opportunity for all Erie County residents. ■



Section 4.8

ENERGY

As stated in WNYREDC's *A Strategy for Prosperity in Western New York*, "Western New York is already an important center of renewable energy production by virtue of the hydropower facility in Niagara County. Our natural potential to participate in development of a broader range of renewables—solar, wind, biomass, and geothermal—combined with strengths in research and manufacturing make it possible to imagine our region as a global hub for renewable energy."

Internally, efforts to conserve energy and increase renewable energy production can be clearly seen. For example, Erie County is working to install 2 megawatts (MW) of solar capacity through a power purchase agreement on the ECCF property. This is estimated to save Erie County almost \$1 million dollars over 20 years. The recent re-lamping of the Rath Building with LED lights has resulted in energy conservation that is saving Erie County more than \$100,000 per year.

It is important to note that such investments will not only save money but also spur economic development. The WNYREDC calls out this potential in their strategy: "Western New York once led the nation and the world in innovation in the development and long distance transmission of electrical energy, particularly using hydropower, and in the development of oil and natural gas as energy sources, thus creating one of the strongest economies in the U.S. Re-harnessing the region's natural and human resources through the use of renewable energy, conservation, smart grid and new energy technology will spur sustainable economic revival." The SolarCity production facility that is scheduled to come online within the next year will strengthen the region's place in this economic engine that also has environmental and health benefits.

GOAL: Erie County will lead national best practices in sustainability that create economic development, address the economic impacts of climate change, and drive equity and community resilience.

Energy conservation and renewable energy investment not only protect the quality of life by reducing air pollution, but they also create jobs. A report from the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy ("ACEEE") entitled, *Energy Efficient Job Creation: Real World Experience*, states, "for every \$1 million of investment in energy efficiency and conservation, 20 jobs were created either directly or indirectly, as opposed to the 17 jobs created directly or indirectly through 'business as usual'."

Unfortunately, there remains a narrative that pits the environment and economy against one another. The data shows this to be a false construct. In fact, a Brookings Institution report entitled, *Growth, Carbon, and Trump: State Progress and Drift on Economic Growth and Emissions 'Decoupling'*, states that what has happened in New York State between 2000 and 2014 is an astonishing 23.8% increase in state Gross Domestic Product ("GDP") while achieving a 19.7% reduction in greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions. The New York State 2015 State Energy Plan serves as a commitment and a roadmap to economic growth, job creation, emissions reduction, innovation and affordability through the REV initiative. Erie County affirms a similar commitment and embraces the challenge of localizing the benefits of a clean energy economy in Western New



York. The following initiatives outline a framework for continuing Erie County’s investment in an inclusive and equitable economy that considers growth and sustainability together. ■

4.8.1 Clean Energy Designations

Erie County will work to achieve national and state designations to signify it is “open for business” to the clean energy sector. The following designations are important in raising Erie County’s clean energy status. Clean Energy Communities Designation: Funded by NYSERDA, The Clean Energy Communities Program provides grants, direct technical support and recognition to local governments that complete High Impact Actions which save energy costs, create jobs, and improve the environment. Climate Smart Communities Designation: Led by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, local governments earn certification and recognition for their local work to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. SolSmart Designation: SolSmart is a national no-cost technical assistance and recognition program of the DOE’s SunShot Initiative for local governments. It is designed to facilitate greater deployment of solar energy within homes and businesses. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: DPW, Meister Consulting Group, PV Trainers Network, UBRI, the Energy Foundation

Resources: Existing staff resources

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018

4.8.2 Community Solar Initiative

Erie County will work with partners to identify sites suitable for community solar and implement both place-based and community-wide programs for enrollment of households that are not otherwise candidates for solar energy installations. Solar and other forms of renewable energy are delivering tremendous benefits across the country and the state, but renewable energy hasn’t reached all communities equally. The traditional “panels-on-your-roof” approach to solar simply doesn’t work for a majority of Americans – as much as 75% of households – because of roof suitability problems, lack of access to financing, or lack of ownership.

I4SE 1.0 clearly expressed interest in “positioning the region as a ‘global energy hub.’” One way of achieving that goal is enabling the broader adoption of renewable energy through community solar, bypassing the need for a “solar-ready” roof, and allowing residents from across the region to share in the generation of energy from an off-site solar array. Democratizing access to renewable energy across the region has clear economic and environmental justice benefits that, given the urgency of climate change, must be realized as quickly as possible. ■

Lead: DPW

Potential Partners: DEP, University at Buffalo, National Grid, BUDC, P2 Collaborative of Western New York, New Yorkers for Clean Power

Resources: Department of Energy, NYSERDA, NY Green Bank

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019





4.8.3 Erie County Low Income Program for Sustainable Energy (“ECLIPSE”) Program for Home Energy Assistance Program (“HEAP”) Residents

Erie County will create a community scale energy program to spur local energy related economic development and address the Home Energy Affordability Gap (“HEAG”). HEAG represents the difference between an affordable energy bill and an actual energy bill among energy insecure households. As of April 2016, the cumulative HEAG in Erie County stood at \$69 million dollars. This represents an incredible drain on the local economy and is a driver of chronic economic vulnerability among households as they struggle to meet their basic needs. Reducing trade-offs associated with energy insecurity, such as the “heat-or-eat” scenario, will promote healthier, more prosperous communities across Erie County.

Erie County will use ECLIPSE in several ways. First, it will extend the benefits of Erie County’s bulk purchasing efforts to residential, small commercial and non-profit customers. Second, ECLIPSE will drive collaboration among departments that provide energy and environmental services – breaking silos within government – to reduce disparities across populations facing high energy burdens. Third, ECLIPSE will utilize data driven program design and evaluation to gain valuable insights about individuals and populations participating in the program to determine its impact, optimize outcomes, and better align services to help reduce costs. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: DPW, Department of Social Services (“DSS”), Department of Health (“DOH”), DISS, National Grid, National Fuel, NYSAC, UBRI, Fluent Energy, New Yorkers for Clean Power

Resources: New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (“NYSERDA”)

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2020

4.8.4 Property Assessed Clean Energy (“PACE”)

Erie County will work with the Erie County Legislature to pass enabling legislation allowing PACE financing for renewable energy projects and energy efficiency upgrades on commercial buildings. Bringing PACE financing to Erie County will catalyze investments in commercial buildings, including improvements to multi-family housing. PACE is a New York State initiative that provides financing for renewable energy projects and energy efficiency upgrades on commercial buildings. PACE financing is lower cost and longer term than typically available to property owners, and is paid as an annual assessment on the owner’s property tax bill, allowing the loans to be transferable on sale of the property. The program allows for projects that would not otherwise be feasible, spurring investment in the region’s building stock.

PACE requires the local taxing authority to pass enabling legislation and administer some aspects of the program. If adopted in Erie County, by virtue of its taxing authority, this financing mechanism would be available to all areas of Erie County except the Cities of Buffalo, Lackawanna and Tonawanda. Due to their taxing authority, these cities would need to pass their own enabling legislation in order PACE to be accessed in their communities. ■



Lead: County Executive’s Office, Erie County Legislature

Potential Partners: DEP, Real Property, Energize NY, energy efficiency contractors, and renewable energy contractors; PUSH

Resources: No funding required

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019; once enabling legislation is passed, the program can be kicked off locally within a few months.



4.8.5 Erie County Sustainable Buildings Initiative

Erie County will prepare and implement a comprehensive strategic energy management plan. Energy conservation and efficiency are strong priorities within Erie County as part of its responsibility to its taxpayers and its interest in sustainability, as evidenced by energy savings projects that saved over 1 million kilowatt hours (kWh) in 2015 alone. Through its internal energy conservation team and with support from National Grid, Erie County has identified its highest priority office and public service buildings which consume more than 75% of the electricity purchased by Erie County for that category of buildings. The energy management plan will be driven by industry best practices for high performance building operation, incorporate professional development training to sustain savings gained from installed conservation measures, and define career pathways to retain and attract high quality facilities staff. ■

Lead: DPW

Potential Partners: DEP, Personnel, National Grid, NYSERDA, third-party vendors

Resources: Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds (“QECCBs”), NYSERDA funding

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019

Energy: Conclusion

A tremendous opportunity exists for Erie County to play a vital role in energy conservation and renewable energy investment. Changing systemic inequities in the region’s energy systems can become a key part of its economic revival. Erie County will work with its energy partners to find clean energy solutions that reduce burdens on communities that are often disproportionately impacted by high-risk energy choices. These partnerships support a sustainable culture anchored in data-driven decision-making, greater operational efficiency, and community resilience. ■



Section 4.9

TOURISM

According to WNYREDC's 2016 *Strategy for Prosperity Progress Report*, tourism is the second fastest growing industry sector in Western New York, with the number of jobs and annual average wages increasing by 10.1% and 14%, respectively, between 2011 and 2015. Visitor spending has also increased by 14% throughout the region since 2011.

Western New York is a world class destination that boasts art, architecture, history, theater, culture, amateur and professional sports, and parkland. It is also home to Niagara Falls, a world wonder that attracts millions of visitors each year. According to VBN, visitors to the region contribute more than \$2.2 billion on an annual basis. Canadians make up a large portion of the visitor population as they come to the region to shop, attend sporting events, and use the BNIA. Canadian shoppers visit approximately three times per year and stay overnight just once a year.

Even though Western New York has an overabundance of unique, regional assets that draw visitors from around the world, the tourism sector still underperforms. As a result, tourism spending in the region – and in New York State as a whole – continues to lag behind other areas nationwide. According to WNYREDC, the tourism sector in the region faces challenges such as a lack of consistency in quality of visitor experience and a lack of trained workers.

The following initiatives will help Erie County brand itself as a destination. This can be done by promoting a culture of hospitality, by investing in tourism venues and visitor infrastructure, and by enhancing the quality of visitor experience to encourage longer stays. ■

GOAL: Erie County will become a major international tourism destination by capitalizing on its abundance of natural, cultural and athletic tourism opportunities and assets.

4.9.1 Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens

Erie County will restore sections of the historic houses at the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens. The Botanical Gardens are a national historic site, education center, and tourist attraction for over 100,000 annual visitors. The Gardens, coupled with the nearby Our Lady of Victory National Shrine and Basilica, form a regional tourism hub. It provides access to nature, cultural history, and open space for all to enjoy. The site is an anchor institution on the edge of the economically distressed downtown City of Lackawanna (28% poverty rate). The Gardens contain stately Victorian glasshouses that were designed and constructed in 1900 by the world famous Lord and Burnham Company to model the Kew Gardens Palm House in England. Erie County will restore sections of the historic houses to align with the Botanical Gardens master plan and New York State Historic Preservation Office (“SHPO”) standards, which represents a capital investment in the economic future of downtown Lackawanna. ■

Lead: DEP and DPW

Potential Partners: SHPO and Botanical Gardens

Resources: \$500,000 (2016 SHPO grant); \$500,000 (2016 Capital Budget); \$1.2 million needed (to be determined)

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2020



4.9.2 Outer Harbor Fishing Access

Erie County will identify and develop new fishing attractions within the Outer Harbor. The Outer Harbor on Lake Erie is one of the world's greatest freshwater fishing resources. Unfortunately, as the community and the ECHDC plan and implement strategies to revitalize and bring people back to the shoreline, there has been little effort to include fishing access as a strategy to revitalize the waterfront. Connecting the members of the ECFAB with ECHDC to discuss opportunities to utilize the Outer Harbor will greatly support the redevelopment and revitalization of the waterfront. New Outer Harbor attractions could include dedicated fishing piers, designated fishing access points, bait and equipment sales, and fishing pole rentals. ■

Lead: DEP, ECHDC

Potential Partners: ECFAB, United States Army Corps of Engineers ("USACE"), NYSDEC

Resources: To be determined

Target Completion Date: 1st Quarter, 2018

4.9.3 Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park

Erie County will expand the Hangar Building at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park. This park has become one of the prime tourist attractions and premier regional destinations in Erie County. It provides access to and promotes an appreciation of the United States Armed Forces history for residents and tourists alike. In addition to the Hangar Building expansion, Erie County will assist in obtaining funds for the development and implementation of a master plan for the entire Naval Park site. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park, City of Buffalo, Greenway Commission, ECHDC, Erie County Legislature

Resources: \$250,000 committed (City of Buffalo) for Hangar Building design; \$950,000 committed for Hangar Building Phase I construction; \$1,500,000 not secured for Hangar Building Phase II construction; \$25,000 (Greenway Commission) for site master plan

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019

4.9.4 Increased Bed Tax for Cultural Organizations and Tourism

Erie County and its partners will increase the bed tax from 1.00% to 1.50% to expand cultural and tourism resources. VBN, working with a group of Western New York hoteliers, has proposed to raise the bed tax in the amount noted above. This would create additional revenue for VBN to better grow Erie County's tourism industry. The proposal includes sharing 40% of the additional revenue with arts and cultural organizations in Erie County. A 1% raise in the bed tax would result in approximately \$1.2 million annually for VBN and \$800,000 for cultural organizations. ■

Lead: VBN, area hoteliers

Potential Partners: Erie County Legislature, VBN, arts and cultural organizations and enthusiasts

Resources: Will generate approximately \$2.0 million in additional funding annually for VBN and cultural organizations

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018



The Buffalo and County Naval & Military Park is a popular attraction for tourists.



4.9.5 Buffalo Niagara Convention Center Study

Erie County will conduct a market and location study to determine the feasibility of a remodeled, expanded, or new downtown convention center. The future of the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center, which was also highlighted in I4SE 1.0, continues to be a priority for Erie County. Currently, consultant proposals are being solicited to provide a market analysis, feasibility study, concept design, and locational study for the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center property. Development objectives for the downtown convention center include: (i) create a modern, state-of-the-art, multi-purpose convention center, (ii) re-establish Buffalo as a convention destination, (iii) generate new room nights and increased hotel occupancy, (iv) reinforce Buffalo's position as a regional hub, (v) stimulate economic growth for existing downtown businesses and the region, (vi) bring more regional residents downtown, and (vii) improve Buffalo's visitor and tourist infrastructure. ■

Lead: DEP, VBN

Potential Partners: WNYREDC, ESD

Resources: \$150,000

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018

Tourism: Conclusion

Erie County has a long history of investing in its unique tourism assets. These assets are already supporting economic revitalization but also have the potential to attract even more new visitors to the region, create jobs across all socioeconomic groups, increase business investment, and spur downtown revitalization efforts. The potential return on this investment is substantial. The initiatives laid out in this section seek to capitalize on the investments already made by the public sector. Erie County and its partners will continue working to determine the most appropriate way to ensure funding for the marketing and branding of the Buffalo Niagara region and to maximize the amount of outside revenue flowing into Erie County communities and fueling their growth. ■

5.0

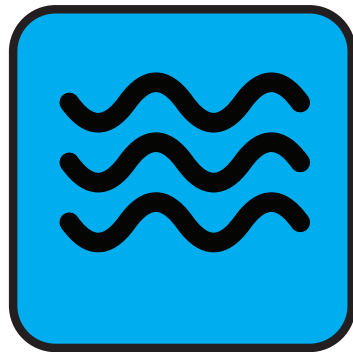
**OTHER
IMPORTANT AREAS**



**ECIDA
ENHANCEMENT**



**QUALITY
OF LIFE**



**THE BLUE
ECONOMY**



Section 5.0

OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS

In addition to those areas identified by the REDC as primary growth sectors for the Regional economy, Erie County has identified other important areas which the County can influence to support local economic growth. These other areas include further enhancement of the Erie County Industrial Development Agency, ongoing improvement to the County's quality of life, and renewed focus on the Blue Economy. ■



Section 5.1

ECIDA ENHANCEMENT

Industrial Development Agencies (“IDAs”) were created in New York State to induce job creation and wealth producing activities by private sector companies that would not have otherwise occurred, or would have occurred at a smaller or slower rate. In large part, IDAs were created to offset certain well known disadvantages companies competing nationally or globally faced by being located in New York State. The IDAs were created to help stem the flow of New York State companies out of state by the offer of valuable inducements.

IDA inducements are not direct payments to companies, but rather they reduce or eliminate for a period of years certain tax liabilities related to an investment a company makes in its business. These tax liabilities fit into three categories: (i) local real property taxes on the value of a new building or improvements made to an existing building, (ii) state and local sales tax on materials and equipment that are used to construct and equip a building, and (iii) state mortgage recording tax on the project.

Over the past four years, under the leadership of County Executive Mark Poloncarz, the ECIDA has worked extensively on enhancing its policies and programs to ensure projects receiving ECIDA incentives deliver a significant community benefit to taxpayers in exchange for the loss of revenue to local and state governments. The ECIDA and County have remained steadfast on focusing on projects that bring true economic development to Erie County while avoiding retail type projects, which in most instances do not bring new wealth or new jobs to the community but only shift retail sales and jobs from one local company to another. The ECIDA has also engaged other IDAs not just in Erie County but around the State to share best practices and pursue a more uniformed group of

GOAL: Erie County will help to fuel economic development while creating new wealth for its citizens.

policies and procedures to ensure all IDAs are focusing on projects that produce net new jobs and wealth for the region. While strides have been made to improve IDAs, Erie County will continue to work with the ECIDA and town IDAs to develop policies that ensure businesses receiving benefits provide investments and jobs to the region.

Smart Growth: As Western New York has undertaken a transformation over the past four years, the focus of the economic development community has shifted from the flawed model of “sprawl without growth” to a new concept that is driving development in the region often referred to as “smart growth.” This concept is derived from several recent planning documents, including the *Framework for Regional Growth*, One Region Forward’s *A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara*, and WNYREDC’s *Strategy for Prosperity*. These reports focus on how the region found itself in an economic downturn and defined strategies necessary for recovery. The ECIDA Board of Directors, Policy Committee and staff have spent time analyzing these new growth strategies and have begun to implement them while assessing new projects and policies.

Smart growth principles such as focusing development in existing urban centers and villages, connecting land use to public transportation, and the redevelopment of brownfields align with the ECIDA’s mission of aiding economic development to spur new private



investment and job creation. Although the ECIDA has already begun integrating smart growth principles, it will look to formally align itself with various smart growth concepts and establish goals based on those concepts over the next year.

Affordable housing: The ECIDA has played a major role in the creation of new multi-family residential developments in the City of Buffalo. The ECIDA, through its Adaptive Reuse Program, has incentivized 34 projects since 2008 that have transformed obsolete, blighted properties into approximately 1,137 residential units. Despite the successes of these developments, housing – especially affordable housing – remains a major issue in certain areas of the City of Buffalo. The ECIDA has begun to study what tools it can use to help spur affordable housing development in Erie County. Possible changes to the Adaptive Reuse Policy, creation of a tax increment fund, tiered incentives and partnerships with non-profit housing organizations are all options. Each process will be explored as a strategy to make affordable housing development more palatable to private developers.

Uniform Tax Exemption Policy: In addition to the ECIDA, there are five IDAs operated by the Towns of Amherst, Clarence, Concord, Hamburg, and Lancaster. The ECIDA has power county-wide, but focuses its activities in the three cities and twenty one other towns which do not have their own agency.

In order to coordinate activities and to reduce or eliminate forum shopping by developers, a Uniform Tax Exemption Policy (“UTEP”) had been adopted by the six Erie County IDAs. Over the years changes in New York State Law have made portions of the UTEP confusing and outdated, including retail restrictions. The current version of the UTEP relating to the eligibility of specific business sectors was completed at a time when the current retail restrictions were not in place. Given the new law restrictions, the entire UTEP system should be streamlined and made simpler. In addition to reforming the UTEP due to changes in New York State law, the tiered incentive scoring, Payment in Lieu of Taxes (“PILOT”) Schedules, county-wide policies considerations and recapture sections all

need to be revisited.

Local workforce: One of the major benefits the community receives from ECIDA induced projects is the creation of local jobs. Project agreements between the ECIDA and applicants outline required retained and net new jobs but there are also a significant amount of jobs created during the construction phase of the projects. The ECIDA is committed to helping the local workforce receive opportunities through the ECIDA induced projects and ensure the building of an inclusive economy. The ECIDA has worked closely with BECWIB over the past few years to set up a referral program between the ECIDA, applicants and BECWIB. The ECIDA continues to study other avenues for providing opportunities to the local workforce, especially in high poverty areas. For example, the adoption of a First Source policy will help to fuel minority hiring with jobs created through ECIDA induced projects. As an agency that provides tax dollars to private business, the ECIDA will continue working to maximize the benefit the community receives in return and ensure that all aspects of Erie County’s workforce are given opportunities to partake in economic development.

Community redevelopment projects: In certain limited instances, it is appropriate for ECIDA benefits to be made available to a project where the primary purpose is community development rather than economic development. This is done to support the redevelopment of downtown business districts that have fallen on hard times, to redevelop certain identified buildings through adaptive reuse and to enhance smart growth initiatives. This should be done carefully with narrow targets to prevent the exception from swallowing up the rule.

Culture of entitlement: A culture has developed in Erie County economic development circles among major developers, commercial real estate brokers and economic development professionals that every project is entitled to a taxpayer supported benefit simply because a developer or company is undertaking a project. This runs counter to good economic theory, distorts the free market, and weakens an already fragile tax



base. Not every project should receive taxpayer support. Such benefits should be reserved for projects that would not otherwise have occurred, have significant job and wealth creating benefits to the community, or provide targeted community redevelopment benefits.

It is incumbent upon IDAs to hold companies granted incentives accountable for the benefits they have pledged to the community through a legitimate recapture policy. When a company signs an agreement with an IDA, they are in essence signing a contract with the taxpayers to provide specified economic benefits to the community in exchange for tax breaks. The effect of granting tax benefits to companies that do not create new wealth is to shift the tax burden from these companies to all other companies and individuals who pay property and sales tax in the community. When a company receives a tax benefit without producing net new jobs and net new wealth for the community, the community becomes that much less attractive for all other companies and for residents. The culture of entitlement must end.

Minority and Women Business Enterprises: Utilization of MWBE remains not just a focus of the ECIDA board of directors but also the Policy Committee. MWBE utilization is already an existing item on the Policy Committee agenda and will remain so moving forward in an effort to explore ways to increase MWBEs involvement with ECIDA projects. The Policy Committee will continue to study data and reports, including the Racial Equity Roundtable indicators report and the PPG's report on racial disparities in employment data. The committee will determine how MWBEs create a fairer system of economic development benefitting all, not just a select few, and present its findings to the greater Board. A policy on MWBE utilization and other measures may emerge as the best option to address the findings in these important reports and data. ■

5.1.1 First Source Policy at ECIDA

Erie County will create and pass a First Source Policy at ECIDA. One of the main areas of focus for the administration has been ensuring that all residents of Erie County are positively impacted by the economic renaissance Western New York is experiencing. One way of achieving this has been the administration's involvement in the various workforce development programs and coalitions that have been created to address the workforce shortage due to the economic boom.

In 2016, during his State of the County speech, the Erie County Executive called for the development of an executive order and program to foster construction employment opportunities for qualified local residents, including disadvantaged workers in high poverty areas. Eligible construction projects would have to be located within the geographic boundaries of Erie County and be funded in whole or in part by Erie County. The Erie County Executive has also called for a similar type of policy to be passed at the ECIDA. The policy would be attached to projects receiving tax incentives from the ECIDA in which job creation was a component. This type of program is often referred to as First Source hiring. Similar policies have been implemented throughout the country with great success at bringing more local and disadvantaged workers into the workforce. ■

Lead: ECIDA staff, Policy Committee

Potential Partners: BECWIB, Buffalo Building Trades, Bevlar Associates, PPG, VOICE-Buffalo

Resources: Existing staff time

Target Completion Date: 1st Quarter, 2018

5.1.2 Revision of Adaptive Reuse Policy

Erie County will revise its Adaptive Reuse Policy. The ECIDA is currently undertaking a study of its Adaptive Reuse Policy, and Erie County is committed to ensuring the policy not only continues to add to the economic resurgence of Erie County but is only used when appropriate. When completed, the study will provide a report on best practices and recommend specific policy changes. Some of the likely changes to come from the report will be to include an affordable hous-



ing component in the policy, make language changes to ensure projects that are receiving incentives are reusing existing structures and not tearing them down to build new structures, that adaptive reuse incentives are not provided for a project to change the use from an otherwise productive building and the policy is targeting specific need areas and it is consistent with One Region Forward and WNYREDC strategies. ■

Lead: ECIDA Staff, Policy Committee
Potential Partners: Affordable housing organizations
Resources: Existing staff time
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2017



5.1.3 New York State Legislation for ECIDA to Provide Venture Capital

Erie County will create Venture Fund programs and provide venture equity to local entrepreneurs through the ECIDA. Current New York State law does not explicitly allow IDAs to utilize IDA fees or general revenue to make equity venture investments in private companies. Many IDAs have fund balances which could be used to leverage entrepreneurial activity and new business formation by providing equity investments in startup companies and technologies.

ECIDA venture programs would provide additional funding to Erie County entrepreneurs of all levels to help stimulate their businesses. In addition, ECIDA

funding would be targeted to help fund entrepreneurial activity in portions of the community which presently do not have adequate access to venture funds. In order to achieve a change in New York State law, the ECIDA will work with NYSEDC and the local New York State legislative delegation to pass legislation to codify the powers and duties of an IDA to operate an equity venture program and to provide venture investment to startup entrepreneurs and private companies. ■

Lead: ECIDA
Potential Partners: NYSEDC, Harris Beach
Resources: ECIDA has previously approved a budget allocation of \$1 million to capitalize the first year of the Venture Fund program, with plans for 2 to 3 years of allocations to fully capitalize the fund; additional bill drafting and legislative work to be coordinated through staff resources at NYSEDC, ECIDA and Harris Beach
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2017

5.1.4 Tax Increment Fund (“TIF”)

Erie County will create a TIF to leverage the tax revenue growth associated with ECIDA assisted projects to fund public infrastructure and community development projects. TIFs have been used by economic development organizations around the country to provide funding for public infrastructure and community development initiatives. An increment fund would be developed to enable a portion of PILOT payments to be used to provide resources on a limited basis to fund specific projects that align with ECIDA initiatives targeting infrastructure and community development in areas of Erie County that have seen disinvestment. At the discretion of the ECIDA Board of Directors, the fund would incentivize specific initiatives for ECIDA assisted projects, including: First Source hiring, affordable housing, transit oriented development and other specific community development and public infrastructure projects. ■

Lead: ECIDA
Potential Partners: Erie County Legislature, local taxing jurisdictions
Resources: ECIDA staff and counsel, Erie County Legislature, various taxing jurisdictions
Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018



5.1.5 Tiered Incentive/UTEP Update

Erie County will review and update the county-wide ECIDA Uniform Tax Exemption Policy. The ECIDA's UTEP, which governs the ECIDA and other local IDA incentive policies and eligibility criteria, was last comprehensively updated in 2010. Since 2010, NYS has passed several new reform measures, the ECIDA has adopted several additional reforms, and the region has advanced several WNYREDC, One Region Forward, and I4SE strategies. The UTEP provides the framework for determining incentive levels and eligibility to help target incentives to best promote growth and investment in Erie County. The UTEP should promote regional goals and ensure that public sector incentives are providing benefits for all residents of Erie County. The UTEP needs to be reviewed and amended to ensure alignment with regional strategies and best practices in economic development. Once complete, the Tiered Incentive Scoring systems should be revised to ensure projects are being evaluated and scored in alignment with regional goals and the agency is able to best incentivize the projects that return the greatest benefit to the community. ■

Lead: ECIDA

Potential Partners: Local and regional economic development organizations, Erie County, local municipalities

Resources: ECIDA staff and Policy Committee members, ECIDA legal counsel

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2018

unfair treatment of assessed property under a PILOT, generate needed revenue for local taxing agencies and restore the partnership between school districts and economic development agencies that existed prior to enactment of the tax cap. Erie County and the ECIDA will continue to strongly advocate for the enactment of this provision. ■

Lead: ECIDA, Erie County Executive Office

Potential Partners: Local New York State Assembly and Senate delegation, New York State Governor's office, NYSEDC

Resources: Existing staff time

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018

ECIDA Enhancement: Conclusion

Under the leadership of the Erie County Executive, the ECIDA will continue to build off the successes of the last four years by remaining focused on true wealth creation for all citizens of Erie County while helping fuel economic development activity throughout the region. The ECIDA will make targeted, strategic investments, consistent with New York State Law and in the interests of all Erie County taxpayers. Projects assisted by the ECIDA will be those that bring outside investment and self-sustaining jobs to Erie County while strengthening the regional economic base, helping to create a more inclusive economy and leading to population stabilization throughout the area. ■

5.1.6 Amend Tax Cap Law to Factor in PILOT Assessment

Erie County will seek amendment of the New York State Tax Cap Law to Factor in PILOT Assessment. In 2016, both the New York State Assembly and Senate introduced bills to allow property assessments under a PILOT agreement to be factored into the two percent Real Property Tax levy. This change is important to Erie County and other municipalities as it would generate additional revenue for school districts and other local governments. This change is especially important since the many local governments have realized nearly no new growth in the tax levies over the past couple of years. Enactment of this provision would remedy the



Section 5.2

QUALITY OF LIFE

The concepts of “quality of life” and “livability” consider broad community goals that support sustainable community design and land use, environmental protection and enhancement, mobility and accessibility, public health, and economic well-being. Erie County provides a rich quality of life with a multitude of manmade and natural assets that have been built and cultivated over generations. Many of these assets have been protected and supported over the years, resulting in rich contributions to the overall livability of Western New York. Protecting and improving the quality of life of a region must not be a footnote on some larger economic development strategy. It is instead a key enabler of growth as it is a major reason why some regions succeed at attracting new residents, professionals, and businesses, while others do not. Erie County’s assets include world renowned architecture, historic parkland, and thriving arts and cultural institutions. The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Buffalo Museum of Science, and the Buffalo History Museum are all celebrating over 150 years in this community.

For decades, Erie County has provided public funding for arts and cultural institutions in Erie County’s operating budget. During most of that time, funding was determined through a competitive process and applications evaluated by a Cultural Advisory Board. However, because funding for the arts is discretionary, there were many times including recently when public funding for the arts was dramatically cut out of Erie County’s Budget. These came despite a December 2006 study by the UBRI, which reported that for every \$1.00 invested in local art and cultural organizations, \$9.65 is returned to the local economy. In addition, the 22 arts and cultural organizations studied by UB supported 3,819 full and part time jobs in Erie and Niagara Counties and generated \$5 million in sales tax

GOAL: Erie County will be a place of choice for residents and newcomers with a quality of life rich in art, history, culture, and sports; public access to parks, natural habitats, and prime waterfront property; and affordable housing, clean water and reliable public safety.

revenue for Erie County alone. This is on top of the \$46 million spent locally by the organizations, further impacting the region’s economy.

Erie County is blessed with a beautiful parks system, which includes diverse landscapes ranging from heavily forested areas to waterfront beaches. Eleven thousand acres of land are spread throughout 38 sites in Erie County. Erie County parks support different activities including hiking, biking, sledding, snowmobiling, downhill and cross country skiing, boating, and more. In May 2003, Erie County completed a comprehensive and award-winning Parks Master Plan, which assessed existing conditions, identified strategic uses for specific areas of the park system, and recommended necessary capital improvements. The Erie County Park System, first established in 1925, is also historic with Chestnut Ridge, Ellicott Creek, Akron Falls, Como Lake, and Emery parks designated as “heritage” parks within the plan. Some features throughout these five parks were built during the Great Depression as part of the Work Projects Administration.



There has been a concerted effort over the last 30 years to develop a waterfront trail system in Erie County. Waterfront trails are a quality of life issue for residents, and lure tourists from neighboring regions. Trails are recognized as an economic boon to the region as they provide important links between neighborhoods and services.

A robust quality of life agenda must be outlined and implemented in Erie County. Local governments, public safety personnel, non-profits, and citizen advocates have an important role in implementing the agenda. Below is a discussion of Erie County's role in protecting and enhancing the region's quality of life as it relates to cultural institutions, parks, and public access. ■

5.2.1 Erie County Cultural Funding Initiative

Erie County will increase funding for arts and cultural institutions by 1-2% annually. The unpredictable nature of public funding for the arts has affected local arts and cultural institutions by limiting their ability to engage in multi-year planning efforts. The administration will work with the Erie County Legislature to provide an annual increase in arts and cultural funding. Although the proposed increase is small, it will allow the funding of new applicants without taking money away from already existing, well-established institutions who continue to rely on public support. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: Erie County Legislature, arts and cultural organizations, VBN

Resources: Approximately \$60,000 - \$120,000 annually

Target Completion Date: Annual



The Albright-Knox Art Gallery is a prominent arts and cultural institution in the region.

5.2.2 Parks Master Plan

Erie County will implement recommendations contained in the updated Erie County Park System Master Plan. Improvements to Erie County Parks may include bicycle maintenance kiosks, electric upgrades to campsites at Sprague Brook Park, installing a Life Trail multi-generational exercise recreation area at Como Lake Park, shelter upgrades and improvements throughout the system, and a 550 foot shoreline restoration project at Ellicott Creek Park. The Erie County Parks Department will increase partnerships, and shared service arrangements with various local municipalities in which its parks are located. ■

Lead: Erie County Parks Department

Potential Partners: DPW, DEP, Budget and Management, Erie County Legislature

Resources: \$1,000,000 annually in capital investments; \$1,000,000 annually in increased operating expenses

Target Completion Date: Annual

5.2.3 Park Ranger Program

Erie County will expand its Park Ranger Program. Full implementation of the Parks Ranger Program is an important component to protecting Erie County parks and providing public safety for visitors to the parks. The Park Rangers assist, guide, and educate visitors at Erie County parks as well as offer a protective presence. The popular "Walk with the Ranger" program teaches visitors about wildlife, natural habitats, and invasive species within the Erie County park system. A public education goal for the Park Ranger Program is to expand upon its wide variety of interpretive, outdoor skills, and safety programs that will enhance enjoyment of the parks. ■

Lead: Erie County Parks Department

Potential Partners: Erie County Budget and Management, Erie County Legislature

Resources: Possible grant to hire additional park ranger; increase in operating expenses

Target Completion Date: Ongoing



5.2.4 Natural Habitat Pocket Parks

Erie County will establish Seneca Bluffs Natural Habitat Park as a model for neighborhood stewardship and environmental education activities. Over the past 2 years, through separate acquisitions, Erie County has purchased the entire open green space with parking frontage at the Seneca Bluffs Natural Habitat Park along the Buffalo River. The urban, under-served community in South Buffalo will directly benefit by having 25+ acres of parkland in their neighborhood to preserve as natural green space. Erie County will re-engage the community to become stewards of “their” park. Seneca Bluffs will flourish with opportunities for users and partnerships. ■

Lead: DEP and Erie County Parks Department
Potential Partners: Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper; Valley Community Center; Seneca Babcock Community Center; South Park Middle School; Friends of Times Beach; Erie County Sheriff’s Office; NYSDEC Trees for Tribes, PUSH Buffalo; Urban Fruits & Veggies; NYS Tiff Nature Preserve; Pollinator Conservation Association; Kayak Group; ECFAB
Resources: Existing Parks Department maintenance budget; volunteer efforts and contributions; grants as they become available
Target Completion Date: Ongoing

5.2.5 Black Rock Canal Park

Erie County will complete Phase III of Black Rock Canal Park improvements. The Black Rock Canal Park project is a multi-phased total reconstruction of a Erie County park along the Niagara River. It offers the only free public boat launch within the City of Buffalo and brings to the City’s Black Rock/Riverside neighborhoods easy public access via several modes of transportation including walking, bicycling, boat, and auto. Phases I and II are complete. Phase III will include rehabilitation and safety improvements to the boat launch and surrounding areas. Construction is expected to be completed in 2017. ■

Lead: DEP and Erie County Parks Department
Potential Partners: Erie County Legislature, City of Buffalo, Black Rock Canal Park Steering Committee
Resources: \$700,000 (NYSPA Greenway funds)
Target Completion Date: 3rd Quarter 2017

5.2.6 Shoreline Trails

5.2.6.a Shoreline Trail: Sunset View Section (Hamburg and Lackawanna)

Erie County will conduct a Shoreline Trail Concept Study for Hamburg and Lackawanna. The Town of Hamburg and City of Lackawanna sections of the trail present a number of challenges. This project will identify the gaps in the system and create conceptual plans for missing areas of the Shoreline Trail. ■

Lead: DEP and NYSDOT
Potential Partners: Town of Hamburg, City of Lackawanna, NYSDOT, Erie County Legislature
Resources: To be determined
Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2020

5.2.6.b Shoreline Trail: Beaches Section (Evans – Phase II)

Erie County will complete the Evans Shoreline Trail Phase II. This phase involves the construction of a trail section from Evans Town Park to Bennett Beach. ■

Lead: DPW and DEP
Potential Partners: Town of Evans, NYSDOT, Erie County Legislature
Resources: \$405,000 (DOT); \$182,000 (Erie County)
Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019

5.2.6.c Shoreline Trail: Beaches Section (Evans – Phase III)

Erie County will complete the Evans Shoreline Trail Phase III. This phase involves the construction of a trail section from Roat Drive through Wendt Beach Park to Sturgeon Point Road. ■

Lead: DEP and DPW
Potential Partners: Erie County Parks Department, Town of Evans, NYSDOT, Erie County Legislature
Resources: \$2 million (DOT); \$500,000 (Erie County)
Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019



5.2.6.d Shoreline Trail: Sunset View Section (Bethlehem Steel)

Erie County will complete the Bethlehem Steel Shoreline Trail. The Bethlehem Steel Shoreline Trail section is approximately 1-1/4 miles along NYS Route 5 which is part of the NYS Scenic Byway System. It will start at the Lackawanna/Buffalo municipal boundary and continue south to the Dona Street intersection. Further information can be found under the initiative specific to the Bethlehem Steel Redevelopment. ■

Lead: DEP and DPW

Potential Partners: Erie County Parks Department, Town of Evans, NYSDOT, Erie County Legislature

Resources: \$2 million (DOT); \$500,000 (Erie County)

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2019

5.2.7 Wendt Mansion

Erie County will investigate the possibility of renovating the Wendt Mansion at Wendt Beach Park. Wendt Beach Park is a 178-acre, Erie County-owned park along the Lake Erie shoreline in the Town of Evans. In recent years, the Wendt Mansion, located within the park, has deteriorated due to vandalism and flooding. Erie County will examine and study options to save the mansion and consider potential reuses such as a banquet hall or a mini-conference facility for the property. ■

Lead: Erie County Parks Department

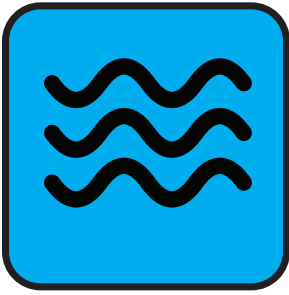
Potential Partners: DEP, Preservation Buffalo Niagara

Resources: Unknown

Target Completion Date: 4th Quarter, 2020

Quality of Life: Conclusion

Erie County embraces its arts and cultural organizations, historic parks, and extensive trail systems as integral components of the community. Its quality of life strategies often align with those in other sectors – community and economic development, housing, transportation, health and education, technology, and recreation – to achieve vibrant communities throughout Erie County. These strategies pave the way by supporting the creation of equitable, sustainable neighborhoods that promote participation, cohesion, and shared opportunities for all. Arts and cultural organizations and the vast network of historic parks, forests, and trails are key enablers of economic development by bringing in outside revenue and retaining and attracting residents to Erie County. ■



Section 5.3

THE BLUE ECONOMY

Western New York's water resources are a vital part of the economy. In fact, water access and the waterfront are highlighted as assets for both smart growth and tourism in WNYREDC's *A Strategy for Prosperity in Western New York*. Preserving and restoring water quality builds upon these assets. Moreover, keeping the drinking water and beaches safe, investing in improved water treatment infrastructure, and other water quality projects can be an economic driver for the region. The concept of the "blue economy" has been developed to refer to the jobs and economic development that can be created as a result of protecting watersheds and water resources.

Erie County plays a large role in water quality, access and infrastructure. DEP's DSM is responsible for seven Erie County sewer districts that provide sanitary sewer service to a geographically diverse area. DEP's Environmental Compliance Services Division is also a leader in three local stakeholder groups working on water quality: the Erie County Water Quality Committee, the Western New York Stormwater Coalition, and the Lake Erie Water Protection Alliance. DEP is a partner in the redevelopment of the Inner and Outer Harbors as well as the leader with respect to the development of the waterfront trail system. Lastly, the Erie County Parks Department is responsible for managing and maintaining two beaches on Lake Erie as well as four natural habitat parks along the Buffalo River.

Erie County's investment in enhancing and managing all of these programs and assets contributes to the local "blue economy." There are many opportunities for investments to be made in water quality and water access which will serve as economic drivers in that they will create jobs, improve tourism, and encourage smart growth. ■

GOAL: Erie County will create and support a wide variety of jobs through the protection and improvement of its water resources.

5.3.1 Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance ("LEWPA")

Erie County will implement key elements of the LEWPA Watershed Management Plan. LEWPA, comprised of Erie, Chautauqua, and Cattaraugus Counties, is currently in the process of a Niagara River/ Lake Erie watershed management planning effort, which is an important step in protecting the drinking water of the region, as well as addressing infrastructure and quality of life issues in urban, suburban, and rural areas. This planning work, in partnership with Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, will characterize the watershed, create project implementation plans in 5 prioritized sub-watersheds, as well as create a design plan for Scajaquada Creek. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District, NYSDEC

Resources: Currently funded through NYS Department of State and the NYS Environmental Protection Fund

Target Completion Date: Ongoing; contingent on funding



5.3.2 Buffalo River Delisting

Erie County will assist in the delisting of the Buffalo River Area of Concern from the Great Lakes List of Toxic Hot Spots. This effort involves continued improvements to habitat and public access along the river corridor. In fact, “the restoration of natural habitat and improved public access” is the only remaining goal that must be met to delist the Buffalo River Area of Concern from the Great Lakes List of Toxic Hot Spots. Erie County, through the development of three natural pocket parks along the Buffalo River and Times Beach at the Buffalo River’s mouth, has played a role in creating habitat to address this goal. Working with multiple partners, DEP will investigate opportunities for Erie County to again assist and contribute to efforts to increase habitat and reach the delisting goal for the Area of Concern. Erie County will also be working with its partners on the Buffalo River Remedial Action Committee (“RAC”) to develop long term maintenance plans for these habitat sites in order to secure the long-term environmental benefit of this work. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: RAC, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, NYSDEC, Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency, USACE, USEPA

Resources: Dependent on specific sites selected, scope of restoration efforts identified, and the availability of grant resources

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2020

5.3.3 South Park Lake Restoration

Erie County will complete a study of the hydraulic and drainage conditions in the vicinity of South Park Lake and will dredge and restore the lake. South Park Lake is located in the historic 155-acre South Park, which was designed by renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Over time, the lake has become a eutrophic body of water due to the overload of nutrients and pollution from stormwater runoff. It is currently one quarter of its original size and does not support any aquatic animal life. South Park Lake was once a local fishing resource for the surrounding South Buffalo and Lackawanna neighborhoods. The study of hydraulic and drainage conditions will address the reduction and elimination of the sources of pollutants impacting the lake, while the dredging and restoration

will support aquatic animal life and aesthetically complement the golf course, the nearby historic botanical gardens, and the rest of South Park. ■

Lead: Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, DEP, City of Buffalo

Potential Partners: USACE, City of Buffalo, Congressman Higgins’ Office

Resources: Approximately \$160,000 (USACE); local match to complete study

Target Completion Date: 1st Quarter, 2018 to complete assessment study

5.3.4 Springville Dam Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration (“GLFER”) Project

Erie County will construct the Springville Dam Great Lakes Fishery in order to restore aquatic habitats and ecological connectivity in Cattaraugus Creek. The overall goal of the Springville Dam GLFER Project is to restore ecological connectivity of the upper Cattaraugus Creek watershed to the downstream areas of the creek and Lake Erie. Currently, the existing dam blocks the connection between the upper and lower sections of the watershed. As a result, many fish and aquatic species are limited to lower quality habitat areas found downstream of the dam and are isolated from high quality habitat upstream of the dam. In addition, the Springville Dam does not meet New York State dam safety standards. The project will insure compliance with those regulations along with restoring the local fishery and ecosystem. The project consists of breaching Springville Dam, constructing a new sea lamprey barrier within the breach, and constructing a fish passage system to allow certain fish species to access approximately 70 miles of high quality habitat located upstream of the dam. ■

Lead: USACE, Erie County, NYSDEC

Resources: Total \$6,471,000; \$500,000 (Erie County local match); remaining covered by state and federal funding

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018 for construction



5.3.5 Big Sister Creek Feasibility Study and Design Project

Erie County will design a natural systems solution to the water quality issues in Big Sister Creek and at Bennett Beach. The Big Sister Creek and Bennett Beach – an Erie County park – have been identified as having impaired water quality, and Bennett Beach experiences frequent beach closures, impacting public recreation. Erie County owns land along Big Sister Creek near its outfall at Bennett Beach, and adjacent to the Erie County Big Sister Wastewater Treatment Plant. This location is conducive to constructed wetlands and other green infrastructure, which have been shown to manage and treat stormwater runoff, sediment, pathogens, nutrients, and other contaminants. Once implemented, not only will the project improve water quality and decrease beach closures, it will also improve habitat along the stream corridor, including fish and wildlife habitat, and decrease the Great Lakes pollutant load. ■

Lead: DEP

Potential Partners: Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, NYSDEC

Resources: \$25,000 (New York State Sea grant); funding for implementation to be determined

Target Completion Date: 2nd Quarter, 2018 for design

The Blue Economy: Conclusion

In advancing the “blue economy” initiatives and supporting other water quality programs, Erie County will create an environment where clean, safe water is accessible to all. It will also receive a tremendous return on investment. According to the 2007 Brookings Institution report entitled, *Healthy Waters, Strong Economy: The Benefits of Restoring the Great Lakes Ecosystem*, it is estimated that every \$1 spent on Great Lakes restoration activities will lead to \$2 of benefit. The calculation of this benefit to the Great Lakes economy included enhancements to tourism, fishing, and recreation; coastal property values; reduced costs to municipalities; economic activity by making the region more attractive to business and workers; and short-term multiplier effects for the jobs supported during restoration activities.

Driving revitalization through the protection and restoration of the health and integrity of Western New York’s fresh water systems is not only sound environmental policy but also represents a smart investment in the region’s economic future. ■

6.0

CONCLUSION



Section 6.0

**NEXT STEPS FOR A SMART,
INCLUSIVE ECONOMY**

Western New York's economy has begun an impressive turnaround. Federal, state, and local governments are combining resources and making strategic investments. When coupled with government resources, massive private sector investments are resulting in tangible economic growth. Nevertheless, serious problems persist. High poverty concentrations, both in the urban center and on the rural edge of Erie County, remain prevalent. People in need throughout the community are still struggling to access high-paying, self-sustaining jobs. Some people—especially people of color, underemployed workers, formerly incarcerated individuals, immigrants, and those living in Erie County's more rural communities—face additional barriers that require keen attention to ensure that a rising tide really does lift ALL boats.

I4SE 2.0 is Erie County's economic development plan. But it is also a unique attempt to ensure that actions undertaken by Erie County help build a truly inclusive economy. Only when the talent of all of Erie County's human capital is tapped, can the true growth and potential of the region be realized. Erie County, under the leadership of County Executive Mark Poloncarz, is committed to marshalling the resources of its departments and partners to successfully complete the I4SE 2.0 initiatives, and in turn, helping to build a local economy that benefits all residents. ■

7.0

APPENDICES

7.1

**RELATED
DOCUMENTS**

7.2

**GLOSSARY OF
TERMS**

7.3

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Section 7.1

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Initiatives for a Smart Economy 1.0

<http://www2.erie.gov/environment/sites/www2.erie.gov.environment/files/uploads/pdfs/SmartEconomy%20for%20Web3.pdf>

I4SE 1.0 January 2017 Bi-Annual Report

<http://www2.erie.gov/environment/sites/www2.erie.gov.environment/files/uploads/I4SE%202.0-FINAL.pdf>

Framework for Regional Growth

<http://www2.erie.gov/regionalframework/index.php?q=FrameworkPlan>

One Region Forward

<http://www.oneregionforward.org/the-plan/>

WNYREDC Strategy for Prosperity

https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/westernny/A_Strategy_for_Prosperty_WNY_Strategic_Plan.pdf

2016 Strategy for Prosperity Progress Report

https://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/sites/default/files/regions/westernny/WNY_ProgressReport2016.pdf

Racial Equity Roundtable Report

<https://racialequitybuffalo.org/files/documents/report/theequitydividendfinalseptember2016.pdf>

Buffalo Niagara Labor Market Assessment

<http://regional-institute.buffalo.edu/project/labor-market-assessment-for-buffalo-niagara-2/>

7.2

Section 7.2

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACRONYM FULL NAME

| | |
|----------|---|
| ACEEE | American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy |
| AWTF | Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility |
| BECWIB | Buffalo and Erie County Workforce Investment Board |
| B&ECILDC | Buffalo & Erie County Industrial Land Development Corporation |
| BPO | Broadband Program Office |
| BNCC | Buffalo Niagara Convention Center |
| BNIA | Buffalo Niagara International Airport |
| BNMC | Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus |
| BNP | Buffalo Niagara Partnership |
| BRT | Bus Rapid Transit |
| BUDC | Buffalo Urban Development Corporation |
| CDBG | Community Development Block Grant |
| CFA | Consolidated Funding Application |
| CSXT | CSX Transportation |
| CTE | Career Technical Education |
| DEP | Erie County Department of Environment and Planning |
| DISS | Erie County Division of Information and Support Services |
| DOC | United States Department of Commerce |
| DOE | United States Department of Energy |
| DOH | Erie County Department of Health |

ACRONYM FULL NAME

| | |
|---------|---|
| DPW | Erie County Department of Public Works |
| DSM | Erie County Division of Sewerage Management |
| DSS | Erie County Department of Social Services |
| ECC | Erie Community College |
| ECCF | Erie County Correctional Facility |
| ECCSW | Erie County Commission on the Status of Women |
| ECLIPSE | Erie County Low Income Program for Sustainable Energy |
| ECFAB | Erie County Fisheries Advisory Board |
| ECFB | Erie County Farm Bureau |
| ECHDC | Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation |
| ECIDA | Erie County Industrial Development Agency |
| ECSD | Erie County Sewer District |
| EDA | Economic Development Administration |
| ENL | English as a New Language |
| ESD | Empire State Development |
| GBNRTC | Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council |
| GEIS | Generic Environmental Impact Statement |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GHG | Greenhouse Gases |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |

| ACRONYM | FULL NAME | ACRONYM | FULL NAME |
|----------------|--|----------------|--|
| GLFER | Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration | NZE | Net Zero Energy |
| GTA | Greater Toronto Area | PACE | Property Assessed Clean Energy |
| HEAG | Home Energy Affordability Gap | PBN | Preserve Buffalo Niagara |
| HEAP | Home Energy Assistance Program | PILOT | Payment in Lieu of Taxes |
| HUD | U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development | POWER | Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization |
| I4SE 1.0 | Initiatives for a Smart Economy 1.0 | PPG | Partnership for the Public Good |
| I4SE 2.0 | Initiatives for a Smart Economy 2.0 | PRP | Potentially Responsible Parties |
| IDA | Industrial Development Agency | PUSH | People United for Sustainable Housing |
| ILDC | Industrial Land Development Corporation | RAC | Remedial Action Committee |
| IWPR | Institute for Women's Policy Research | RDC | Regional Development Corporation |
| L&D | Learning and Development | REDC | Regional Economic Development Council |
| LEAP | Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership | REV | Reforming the Energy Vision |
| LEWPA | Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance | SHPO | State Historic Preservation Office |
| LRT | Light Rail Transit | STEM | science, technology, engineering and math |
| MWBE | Minority- and Women- Owned Business Enterprise | TAP | Transportation Alternatives Program |
| NCCC | Niagara County Community College | TIF | Tax Increment Financing |
| NFTA | Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority | UB | University at Buffalo |
| NSF | National Science Foundation | UBRI | University at Buffalo Research Institute |
| NYS | New York State | UDAG | Urban Development Action Grant |
| NYSAC | New York State Association of Counties | USACE | United States Army Corps of Engineers |
| NYSDEC | New York State Department of Environmental Conservation | USDA | United States Department of Agriculture |
| NYSDOT | New York State Department of Transportation | USEPA | United States Environmental Protection Agency |
| NYSEDC | New York State Economic Development Council | UTEP | Uniform Tax Exemption Policy |
| NYSEFC | New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation | VBN | Visit Buffalo Niagara |
| NYSERDA | New York State Energy Research and Development Authority | WNYREDC | Western New York Regional Economic Development Council |
| | | WPA | Works Progress Administration |
| | | WWTP | Wastewater Treatment Plant |

7.3

Section 7.3

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Poloncarz Administration gratefully acknowledges the work of many individuals who conceived of and drafted I4SE 2.0. Specifically, we wish to thank the following people:

Maria Whyte, Deputy County Executive

Thomas Hersey, Commissioner, DEP

Bonnie Lawrence, Deputy Commissioner of Environmental Compliance, DEP

Julie Barry, Deputy Commissioner of Planning & Economic Development, DEP

Joe Fiegl, Deputy Commissioner of Division of Sewerage Management, DEP

Heather Gresham, Executive Director, BECWIB

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Karen King, Executive Director, Commission on the Status of Women

Bill Geary, Deputy Commissioner of Highways

Dan Rizzo, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation & Forestry

Brian Bray, Special Assistant Commissioner, DSS

Delores Funke, Director of Environmental Health

Steve Weathers, President and CEO, ECIDA

John Cappellino, Executive Vice President, ECIDA

Thomas Dearing, Commissioner, DEP (retired)

Mary Rossi, Principal Environmental Compliance Specialist, DEP

Shawn Rooney, Intern, DEP

The Administration also wishes to thank the many partners, both internal and external, identified in each of the initiatives. Partnerships like the ones proposed in the document break down silos, support cooperation, maximize resources, and drive results. Without the alliances and partnerships proposed, building a truly inclusive economy would not be possible.

