

# City of Buffalo

# 2021 Vision and Goal Setting Report

On April 14 and 22, 2021, the City Council and representatives of the City staff team met over a series of two workshops to review the City's Mission and Vision, and to develop long-term strategies and short-term goals. The process was facilitated by an outside facilitator and included citizen input through a FlashVote process. Participants were asked to respond to a series of prompts and questions that created discussion around topics of the City's long-term direction, its values and how it desires to conduct its business, and short-term goal targets for the next 1-2 years.

The group involved the full Council - Mayor Teri Lachermeier and Councilmembers Eric Anderson, Steve Downer, Scott Enter, and Nick O'Rourke. Staff representation included Laureen Bodin, City Administrator, Alison Matthees, Assistant City Administrator, Pat Budke, Police Chief, Derek Eiklenborg, Fiber Lead Technician, Ashley Hansen, Finance Manager, Justin Kannas, City Engineer, Jennifer Nash, Community & Economic Development Director, Ross Pyka, Street Maintenance Worker, Lee Ryan, Park and Recreation Director, and Teri Welter, Community Center Assistant.

## Process

In session 1, the participants discussed questions related to the community and organization in the present and long-term. These conversations were designed to generate thought and input regarding the future direction of the City, with the end in mind of revising the City's vision and core strategies. The first session also involved a review of the mission and values, key elements of the organizational directives about how and why the City conducts its business. The mission is often referred to as the City's commitment to the community and a statement of purpose.

Session 2 built off the discussion from the first session and included the results of a FlashVote process to provide public input into the process. The activities included a refinement of the City's Vision, Mission, and Values, the development of Core Strategies, and brainstorming of short-term goals. Collectively, the work output of the second session supports the development of the overall Visioning and Goal Setting Report.

## Vision and Core Strategies

The purpose of the vision statement is to describe the City's long-term objective, articulate the leadership's direction, and state what the City wants to achieve. The statement should be inspiring and outline the key elements of value that will provide the backbone for future actions.

### Vision Statement

**Buffalo strives for excellence by providing superior services and a safe environment to live, work and play. The City and its stakeholders will meet the changing needs of the community through innovation and collaboration.**

The vision statement will be supported by Core Strategies, which identify the key long-term elements that the City strives to accomplish. Core Strategies derive from the top priorities of the leadership team and serve as guiding statements.

### Core Strategies

#### **Core Strategy #1: Fostering a welcoming culture of engaged and active citizens**

- a. Share information and communicate proactively. Encourage civic engagement.
- b. Fostering an environment of inclusivity and diversity.
- c. Lead a community that works together for common good.
- d. Support and raise awareness of collaborative opportunities.

#### **Core Strategy #2: Maintain and improve public infrastructure**

- a. Develop and implement a long-term infrastructure investment strategy.
- b. Accomplish outcomes and results that meet citizen expectations.
- c. Maximize lifespan through innovation, technology, and planning.

#### **Core Strategy #3: Fiscal responsibility**

- a. Maintain long-term capital improvement plan
- b. Diversify funding sources; seek grant opportunities
- c. Strategically manage debt profile
- d. Adopt financial policies to guide operations

**Core Strategy #4: Safe, secure and healthy community**

- a. Ensure a sense of safety through communication and approachability.
- b. Maintain appropriate staffing for quick and effective response.
- c. Collaborate with partners on training and communication in addressing community health needs.

**Core Strategy #5: Planned and sustainable growth**

- a. Identify community goals and connect strategies.
- b. Keep updating large guiding planning documents and small area plans.
- c. Balance developer needs and desires with ongoing City needs into the future.
- d. Review and plan for infrastructure capacities.
- e. Understand market conditions and connect with opportunities to meet community goals.

**Core Strategy #6: Supportive and balanced business environment**

- a. Define and streamline processes.
- b. Eliminate unnecessary hurdles.
- c. Produce and publicize information about services available within the community.
- d. Support workforce needs like available housing, daycare, and quality of life amenities.
- e. Foster ongoing relationships.

**Core Strategy #7: Collaborative, inclusive and high-functioning team**

- a. Foster engaged team environment.
- b. Empower staff to be innovative decision-makers.
- c. Recognize successes and support learning opportunities.
- d. Encourage inter-departmental communication and cooperation.

## Core Strategy #8: Continued evolution in the quality of life for Buffalo's diverse needs

- a. Continued excellence in parks, trails, recreation and technology
- b. Partnerships, collaboration, and communication with School District, Chamber, County, Townships, community organizations, health care providers, and community organizations
- c. Preserving hometown environment, sense of community, and local support
- d. Managing and preservation of natural resources

## Mission and Organizational Values

The mission statement should be brief and identify the organization's reason for existence and is the beginning point for how an organization conducts itself. It supports the vision and serves to communicate the commitment of the organization to elected/appointed officials, employees and community stakeholders.

### Mission Statement

#### **Buffalo: A community where excellence and opportunity come together**

The City's organizational values provide a statement of how it endeavors to conduct business and manage interactions with stakeholders. It is a statement that both carries importance internally with elected/appointed officials and employees, but also with members of the community. In order to maintain focus on accomplishing the Vision and operating consistently with the mission, the City has identified seven values to serve as guides for all it does.

### Organizational Values

**Accountability**

**Transparency**

**Inclusivity**

**Integrity**

**Innovation**

**Excellence**

**Visionary**

## Development of 2021-2022 Short-term Goals

The last part of the goal setting process leaned on the outcomes of the previous elements in order to develop a goals platform for the coming years. Participants were given time to revisit the group's visioning activities and the environmental assessment results in order to individually brainstorm goals. After sharing individual ideas, the group refined the proposed goals into goal statements.

### **2021-22 Recommended Goals**

- Update and complete comprehensive sanitary sewer and water plans
- Continue systematic rollout and marketing of fiber service
- Marketing to our residents on what Buffalo/the City have available
- Address 2nd Substation plan - seek land to build
- Develop automated metering infrastructure for water and electric
- Continue progress to serve every municipal property with electric service
- Stay engaged and give the opportunity to pursue Community Center
- Developing internal plan to turn individual expertise into institutional knowledge
- Conducting a staffing analysis and developing a plan to meet needs/goals
- Update pavement management plan and develop funding sources/strategies
- Continue to collect public input
- Conduct a facilities study
- Marketing and recruiting businesses and services to meet community needs
- Developing a business continuity plan - continuing business as usual in an emergency
- Develop a list of resources and opportunities for seniors to connect
- Identify the feasibility of communication tools (social media, website, phone, etc.); develop and implement a communication plan

The draft of the goals program is ready for review and adoption by the City Council, which will key implementation by City staff. The City has invested quality time and effort into the review of mission and values, along with the development of a goals program. As the City has in the past, ongoing review and measurement against the adopted goals will be an important action step for staff and the City Council.

In conclusion, it was my pleasure to work with your team on this important project. This goals program will provide organizational clarity for both the Council's decision-making process and the day-to-day service delivery by City staff. The commitment of the leadership team to devote time and critical-thought throughout this process has resulted in a comprehensive assessment of the organization and City, along with a plan for the coming years.

Prepared and submitted by Phil Kern on behalf of the City of Buffalo.

## Appendix A - Brainstorming outcomes from discussion activities

1. What makes you proud of Buffalo
  - a. We come together when we need to lift each other up
  - b. City staff
  - c. Enthusiasm and passion amongst the Team
  - d. Council and staff work well together, has always been a characteristic
  - e. Care taken by Council and staff
  - f. Collaboration with other governments, civic organizations, work well together
  - g. How hard everyone works and gets along
  - h. Community/Citizens are passionate about local issues, value the process
  - i. Departments working together
  - j. Ice rink - utility - working through disagreements
  - k. Positive change and continued improvements
2. Things that are going well
  - a. Buffalo Strong - community engagement through a tragedy
  - b. Collaborative working relationship - school, county, chamber, etc.
  - c. History of working through difficult issues
  - d. Growing
  - e. Environment of downtown area, downtown character
  - f. Evolution of the downtown
  - g. Variety of recreation, amenities, and services available without leaving
  - h. Electric utility is doing well
  - i. Lakes, parks, playgrounds, ice rinks, golf course, shopping, etc.
  - j. Willingness to brainstorm and consider new ideas
  - k. Fiber utility is a strength
  - l. Like to be cutting edge
  - m. County seat and hospital
  - n. Safe environment
  - o. Geographic location, proximity/distance to metro
  - p. School system
  - q. Daycare availability, about to meet workforce needs
  - r. Hometown feel with amenities
  - s. Downtown and places to create community
  - t. Good Chamber of Commerce, civic organizations, churches, make it a good place to live
  - u. People working together for the common good

3. Areas that should be addressed/changed

- a. Having resources to align services and staff with needs
- b. Systematically keeping pace with growth
- c. Technical expertise in the IT area
- d. Interdepartmental communication
- e. Marketing our City within our community - telling our story
- f. Balancing affordability with service needs
- g. Maintaining and having a plan with respect to City assets

4. STEP Analysis - Trends, Challenges, Opportunities

- a. COVID - how it impacts businesses and causing struggles
- b. Lifestyle Buffalo provides, desire for safety, movement out of the metro
- c. Inflationary pressures, cost of living impacts
- d. Online viciousness, lack of decorum
- e. Political polarization and threat to local stability
- f. Technology improvements, example of being able to conduct remote meetings
- g. Technology has changed communication expectations
- h. Expectations regarding service consumption, immediate response and instant gratification expected
- i. Mental health
- j. Work from home transition has added pressure for fiber, parks
- k. Government Center relocation and impacts on downtown property
- l. Housing market, growth pressure
- m. Environmental regulation - water, wastewater