

VISIT BUFFALO NIAGARA

Tourism Master Plan



Steering Committee

Visit Buffalo Niagara would like to recognize and thank these community leaders for the enormous contributions they have made as part of the Tourism Master Plan Steering Committee. Their guidance, leadership and support were critical in the development of this plan.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Cindy Abbott-Letro, Law Office of Francis M. Letro, Esq.

Mark Alnutt, University at Buffalo - Division of Athletics

Thomas Beauford, Jr., Buffalo Urban League

Woody Brown, Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Daniel Castle, County of Erie

Jim Charlier, Gardens Buffalo Niagara

Matthew Chiazza, Hyatt Place Buffalo/Amherst

Jonathan Dandes, Rich Products

Ann Dugan, Buffalo Lodging Associates

Stephen Eden, Delaware North

Andrew Federick, County of Erie

Norah B. Fletchall, Buffalo Zoo

Robert Free, Buffalo Bisons Baseball

Callie Johnson, Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Thomas Long, The Westin Buffalo

Michael Murphy, Shea's Performing Arts Center

Mary Roberts, Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House

Huseyin Taran, Buffalo Marriott at LECOM HARBORCENTER

William Vanecek, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
(NFTA)

Don Vidler, Vidler's 5 & 10

Leslie Zemsky, Larkin Development Group

PROJECT TEAM

Melissa Burke, Buffalo Niagara Convention Center

Michael Even, Visit Buffalo Niagara

Edward Healy, Visit Buffalo Niagara

Patrick Kaler, Visit Buffalo Niagara

Cynthia Kincaide, Visit Buffalo Niagara

David Marzo, Visit Buffalo Niagara

Judy Smith, Visit Buffalo Niagara

A Message from **Visit Buffalo Niagara**

Buffalo has been busy reinventing itself for the last 10 years. Investments in tourism-related infrastructure, attractions, assets and amenities totaling well over a billion dollars have transformed the landscape of our destination, creating a multifaceted visitor destination that can compete for the out-of-town dollars essential to a resilient and sustainable economy.

Cities and regions around the world recognize the transformative power of tourism and, like Buffalo and Erie County, are making the hospitality industry a pillar of their economic development strategies. The competition for visitors is fierce. The stakes couldn't be higher. Successful cities of the 21st century attract visitation and inward investment and then use the resulting infusion of new money to create jobs and opportunities for their citizens. But success is not guaranteed. It takes foresight, imagination, collaboration and the kind of thoughtful planning that balances the quality of the visitor experience with the county's residents' quality of life.

"If you build it, they will come," is the kind of romantic, fanciful notion that's appealing in its simplicity and certainty; but the real world doesn't work that way. Competing in the global marketplace for the attention of the traveling public requires thoughtful, creative and persistent sales and marketing, and a strategic and disciplined approach to winning hearts and minds that only emerges from a deep understanding of your value proposition, competitive identity and the narrative that distinguishes your storytelling in the marketplace. Such a plan sets forth a clear vision for the future and provides direction for the shared idea of what a destination wants to accomplish.

With that in mind, Visit Buffalo Niagara convened a diverse group of citizens – customers, industry partners, elected officials, economic development experts, community activists, entrepreneurs and stakeholders from across the county – and asked them to help us craft a plan to create economic development opportunities through tourism. One-on-one conversations, focus groups and community meetings provided a multiplicity of viewpoints and opinions that have been incorporated into the Destination Master Plan you have in front of you.

It's our hope that the sharing of this plan represents the beginning of a new chapter in the rebirth of Buffalo and Erie County. This is the playbook that will guide our strategic thinking and inform the steps we take to promote our city and county as a destination of choice for travelers across the globe. As you'll see, it's time for a reinvigorated Buffalo and Erie County to think big, make bold choices and aggressively share our story with the world.

Sincere thanks to everyone who joined us on this journey, including the Visit Buffalo Niagara and Buffalo Niagara Convention Center Board of Directors, our dedicated staff, and the stakeholders and partners who are the backbone of our industry. Together, we will build a better Buffalo and Erie County.

Sincerely,



Patrick Kaler

President and CEO

Executive Summary

The Visit Buffalo Niagara Tourism Master Plan is designed to enhance and leverage the local visitor economy in ways that support the long-term goals of the City of Buffalo and Erie County, key stakeholders and the community at large.

The purpose of a Tourism Master Plan is to optimize the connections between visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them and the natural environment to deliver a balanced, year-round economy that benefits all residents and local organizations.

The creation of the four strategic goals for the Visit Buffalo Niagara Tourism Master Plan is based on extensive destination research and community engagement, including: 40+ one-on-one interviews; 16 focus groups with 200+ local stakeholders; a resident survey with 1,300+ participants; and a comprehensive DestinationNEXT industry and community assessment survey. The four goals are:

- 1. Enhance and expand the county's tourism infrastructure – Destinations and their industry partners must have the required infrastructure and shared vision to deliver the experience that tomorrow's visitor will expect.**
- 2. Activate and connect the county's visitor experiences – More varied and integrated outdoor, arts, cultural, historical, heritage, waterfront and wellness experiences will attract high-value visitors who spend more, stay longer and explore more of the destination.**
- 3. Strengthen awareness and perception of the Buffalo and Erie County place brand – We will put words to the feelings of pride residents feel for their home and help to tell a deeper layer of Buffalo and Erie County's story to the world.**
- 4. Foster stronger stakeholder alignment and collaboration – Aligning the priorities of industry stakeholders, small businesses, community groups and government organizations improves overall destination performance.**



Each of the goals includes actionable initiatives designed to accomplish the primary objectives. Looking ahead, the successful implementation of the plan and its initiatives will require ongoing, strategic alignment and engagement among the industry, community and stakeholders for Buffalo and Erie County to flourish.

Approach and Timeline

This Tourism Master Plan is a 10-year strategy that includes a vision, goals and strategic initiatives. It is an ongoing platform that will be used to cooperatively fulfill the vision for Buffalo and Erie County's visitor economy and be the foundation for future community engagement.

The 12-month process to develop the plan was anchored in a robust series of community engagement experiences to ensure that key stakeholders and residents were aligned around a collective vision for their future. Community members from across the county shared their views on the opportunities and challenges in the local visitor economy in a variety of formats, including more than 40 one-on-one interviews, 16 focus groups with various industry and community segments, a stakeholder survey with 95 participants and a resident survey with over 1,300 participants. The plan also considers key insights in other local planning initiatives that are underway or were recently completed.

The effective engagement and alignment of all stakeholders is the key element in the journey of building and maintaining a successful visitor economy. It is a journey the people of Buffalo and Erie County will take together, and one that will benefit residents, businesses and visitors for years to come.

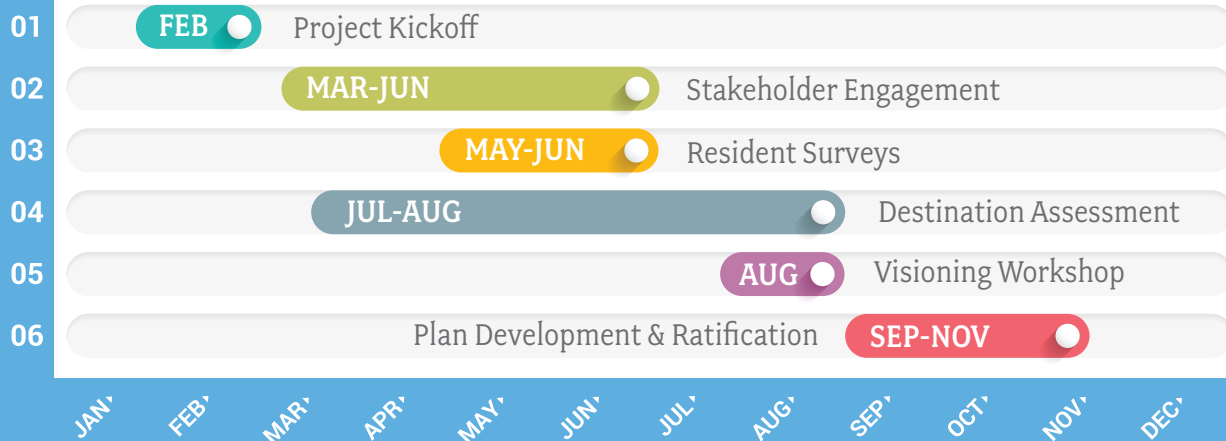




PHOTO CREDIT: JOE CASCIO



STAKEHOLDER and Community Feedback

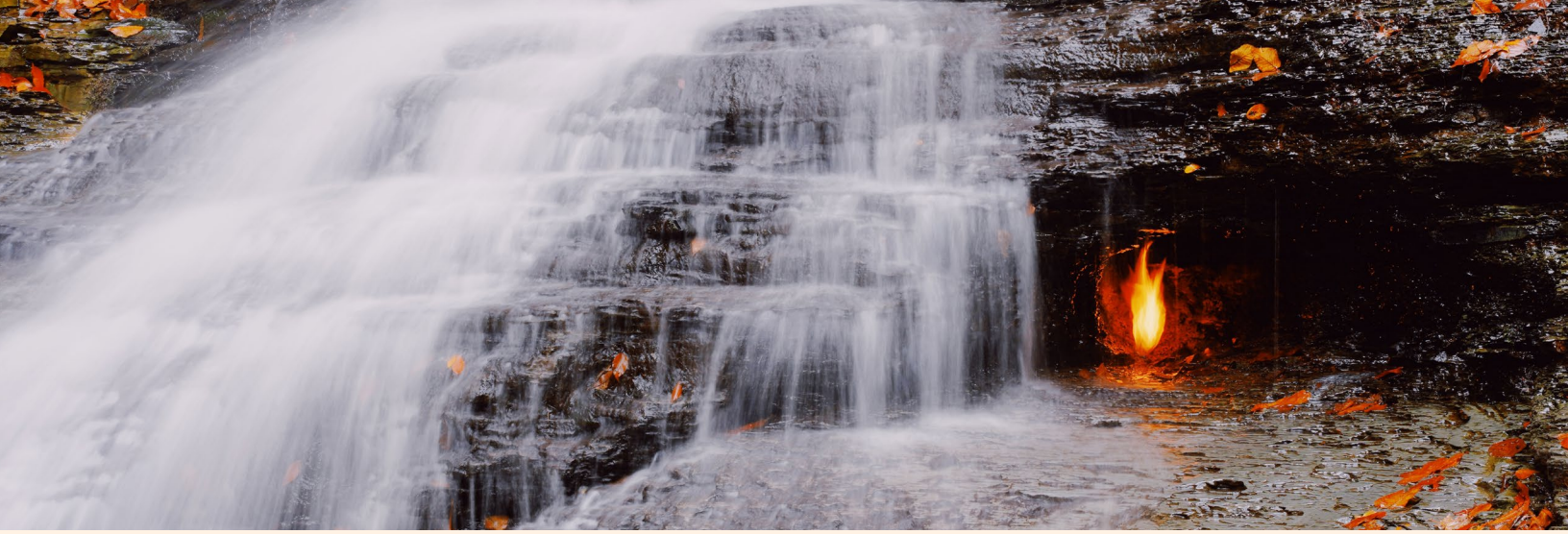
Key stakeholders and local community members in Buffalo and Erie County were aligned around the below opportunities and challenges impacting quality of life for residents and quality of place for visitors. The many community engagements ensured a transparent process that delivered a cohesive vision for the future.

Those mandates are wide ranging. For some destinations, the priority is driving visitor volume and spend above all else. For them, room nights, average daily rate, per person spend, and citywide event attendance metrics are the key measurements of success, and everything else is a distant second.



Key Opportunities & Challenges

1. The Buffalo Niagara Convention Center and supporting event infrastructure is outdated and places the destination at a disadvantage for attracting events.
2. Visit Buffalo Niagara lacks the sufficient and sustainable tourism funding necessary to be competitive.
3. Buffalo and Erie County require a stronger place brand to be viewed as an attractive place to live, work and visit.
4. Greater collaboration is needed to align efforts and broaden the impact of tourism.
5. From Canalside to the Outer Harbor, the Buffalo waterfront is an essential element of the destination experience and a critical development opportunity.
6. Amateur and professional sporting events can position the destination on the national and international stages, driving economic impact.
7. Parks and outdoor recreational experiences represent a significant development and promotional opportunity.
8. Buffalo and Erie County have an opportunity to build a more integrated cultural and heritage tourism experience to better augment anchor institutions and offerings.
9. Fulfilling the county's potential as a visitor destination will require focus on diversity, inclusion and equity.
10. The county's local and authentic culinary scene offers an opportunity to develop a more integrated culinary tourism experience.
11. Hospitality and tourism businesses require strategies to foster a new generation of travel and tourism professionals.
12. Access and mobility challenges are being exacerbated by COVID-19 and must be addressed to remain competitive.



VISION

Our collective vision is ...
... to be the most surprising
destination you'll
ever visit.

Recent visitors to Buffalo and Erie County are discovering something that locals have known for years – our county has been enjoying something of a renaissance. No longer merely the portal to nearby Niagara Falls, Buffalo is a modern and multifaceted city – more than ready for its moment. The days of grumbling about the curse of “wide right” have been overtaken by a sense of optimism.

Abandoned industrial sites have been transformed to become part of a growing entertainment complex in Buffalo’s downtown. A long-neglected waterfront has been reborn as Canalside, a 21-acre park with concerts, sporting events, festivals and a sandy playground for kids. It’s a brilliant reclamation of the majestic Erie Canal. Young chefs are heating up a restaurant scene that’s both adventurous and unpretentious. This transformation has earned our destination numerous accolades, including being recently named by *Afar Magazine* as one of “9 of the Most Surprising Cities in the U.S.”

But our comeback story isn’t over – in fact, it’s only beginning. From the ambitious AK360 Campus Development and Expansion Project at the renowned Albright-Knox to the renovation and revival of 38-story landmark Seneca One tower, Buffalo’s renaissance continues. From Canalside and Silo City to the Buffalo Medical Campus and from Michigan Avenue to Waterfront Village, we’re continuing to invest in our county’s future

What hasn’t changed is the welcoming spirit embodied by the “City of Good Neighbors.” Today’s Buffalo is more multicultural than ever, having long drawn diverse communities and inspired new beginnings. This diversity of thought, perspective and experience continues to drive the creative engine that will mold and shape our county’s future.

With thoughtful investment and a collaborative mindset, we can achieve our vision of becoming the most surprising destination you’ll ever visit. Because while we’ve made tremendous progress, we believe Buffalo and Erie County are still an untapped destination – a springboard for future possibilities.



PHOTO CREDIT: DREW BROWN

► GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Four guiding principles lay the foundation for all recommendations in the Tourism Master Plan. They provide a vision for a visitor economy which not only creates jobs and generates revenue, but also drives awareness to our amazing county and contributes to our local economic vibrancy, future and quality of life.

1

A collaborative approach – This plan recognizes that tourism by its nature involves the destination as a whole, not only industry businesses but also its ecosystems, natural resources, cultural assets and traditions, communities, aesthetics and built infrastructure. It will take a collaborative effort to successfully build and shape tourism in Buffalo and Erie County, with equal participation by government, the private sector and the community. This can only be accomplished by expanding our knowledge, presence and relationships with community members across the county.

2

A more equitable and inclusive community – Tourism in Buffalo and Erie County should support a collective commitment to achieving racial equity by helping to build a new, shared future with prosperity, equity and opportunity on each side of Main Street. To become a truly great city and county, the next chapter of Buffalo and Erie County's history must not be a story of contrasts and divisions, of different sides of Main Street and of different levels of opportunity that are divided by neighborhood and by race. The time is now to close the gaps in equity and create a county ready for the future. We will do so by tackling the divisions and disparities that hold us all back, celebrating the broad range of human differences among us and embracing the commonalities we all share.

3

A broader definition of success – The impact of tourism on Buffalo and Erie County cannot be measured solely in economic terms. We must also measure success against the well-being of the destination, considering nature, human health and community identities. We must be thoughtful about how the quality of the visitor experience can be balanced with the quality of life for residents. We must think about the types of visitors who would provide maximum financial value to our local communities while having the optimal social and environmental impact and how we can responsibly grow our tourism industry for the benefit of all in our community.

4

An expanded role for Visit Buffalo Niagara – The social awareness regarding tourism is changing among travelers, residents, businesses and government bodies. The next decade of tourism in Buffalo and Erie County will require a different view and approach compared to the previous 10 years. In addition to promoting the destination, we must invest more resources into developing and managing the visitor experience. Doing so will allow us to achieve our mission of transforming our community by inspiring visitors and locals to discover Buffalo.



Strategic Goals

For Buffalo and Erie County to realize this bold vision for the future, the public and private sectors must work in unison to achieve the four major goals and strategic initiatives that are explored in greater depth on the following pages.

The goals are aligned around elevating the long-term viability of the visitor economy, developing a competitive positioning for the county as a destination, maintaining the community's authentic character and improving the overall destination experience for both visitors and residents.

1. Enhance and expand the county's tourism infrastructure.
2. Activate and connect the county's visitor experiences.
3. Strengthen awareness and perception of the Buffalo and Erie County place brand.
4. Foster stronger stakeholder alignment and collaboration.

Enhance and expand the county's tourism infrastructure

What it means

Known as the “City of Good Neighbors,” Buffalo has a history of welcoming visitors to our community. But our welcoming nature will only get us so far. To continue inviting the world to our community, we need to ensure we have the proper tourism infrastructure.

To become truly great hosts, we must invest in our facilities and infrastructure to maintain, refresh and upgrade the existing visitor experience through developing new products, addressing infrastructure gaps and capitalizing on future growth opportunities.

This investment needs to be well-targeted and focused on priority investment needs in line with tourism and wider policy goals in order to maximize value for money and investment returns, avoid problems associated with excess or scarce capacity, and contribute to other economic, environmental and social goals.

What it means for our destination

Despite the rampage of the coronavirus pandemic, downtown Buffalo's bustling development scene continued its march of new and ongoing projects that will change the landscape in years to come. However, to achieve the next level, we need to take action in the areas in which we're lacking – particularly in convention, sports and mobility spaces.

Buffalo needs expanded and enhanced convention infrastructure to contribute to our destination's ability to effectively host major local, national and international events. Business and convention visitors are vital to Buffalo and Erie County's visitor economy. Prior to the pandemic, the convention center generated an average annual economic impact of \$43 million. And while the pandemic has had significant impacts on this side of the tourism sector, it is expected to return to prominence. Tourism Economics, an industry leader in tourism research, estimates that meetings and conventions will return to 2019 levels in 2024.

With that said, their forecasting predicts small to midsize markets to return faster than larger, urban

markets such as Toronto, Chicago and New York City. This represents an opportunity for Buffalo and Erie County to become a premier-level host to conferences and conventions. Ensuring that we have the capacity, facilities and ability to be welcoming hosts to these visitors is a priority.

We have a great story right now. With continued capital improvements to the convention center, City of Buffalo streetscape and entertainment district, the reopening of the Hyatt (Regency) under new management and the transformation of the Statler Hotel and Mahoney Building, our convention facilities and district are beginning to catch up to the renaissance taking place across the city. However, other cities across the country continue to invest significant resources toward expanding and modernizing their meeting and conference facilities, and Buffalo must follow suit to remain competitive. This means investing in technologies to adapt to the changing convention business and continuing conversations and analysis of new and expanded development opportunities.

In addition to convention hosting, with the proper infrastructure, Buffalo and Erie County have an

opportunity to enhance their ability to host sporting events at both the amateur and professional levels. Much of the conversation around sporting facilities has focused on the city's professional franchises. However, Buffalo's challenges in amateur and youth sports infrastructure represents a significant lost opportunity for our visitor economy. In fact, these sporting areas likely represent a greater opportunity for drawing in visitors than professional sporting events.

Finally, developing infrastructure that supports walkable, connected communities – particularly in the convention district and waterfront areas – is vital to fostering a vibrant experience in our city. Investments in placemaking should also focus on creating a safer, more welcoming environment for both residents and visitors.

With an enhanced and expanded convention space, new sports infrastructure, and a thoughtfully redesigned, vibrant and pedestrian-friendly

connection to a cultural hub, Buffalo's ability to host the world for memorable experiences that drive repeat visitation will expand exponentially.

How it will be achieved

- Invest in physical plant and technological upgrades to the existing convention facility to adapt to new trends and demands.
- Continue to advocate for the development of more full-service hotels that support meetings and events at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.
- Create a compact, walkable convention district that, when combined with a state-of-the-art facility, will present an attractive package to meeting planners considering our city.
- Disseminate knowledge and trends related to current audience segments and meeting planner





preferences to guide and prioritize investments in regional meetings and events facilities.

- Communicate the benefits and economic impact of the convention center to local stakeholders, residents, the industry and media.
- Create a convention experience at the Buffalo Convention Center that is unique, authentic, and embodies the spirit of the destination and its people.
- Increase efforts associated with sports tourism as an important component of Buffalo and Erie County's visitor economy and determine, facilitate, and develop the new infrastructure, facilities and venues necessary to serve this important market.
- Support and encourage construction of a multi-use stadium that will be accessible for other events other than the NFL, while also creating a surrounding entertainment district for related business growth.
- Explore the potential for non-traditional sports such as esports.
- Ensure that visitor transportation (public, mass transit, private, biking, micro-mobility and walking) needs, programs, plans and resources are considered and addressed in broader transportation strategies and plans.
- Connect public places to surrounding areas with sidewalks and pathways to increase pedestrian and cyclist mobility and capitalize on the completion of the Empire State Trail.
- Adopt street transformation policies that create shared stewardship of public spaces and repurpose streets to be more active, accessible and safe.
- Research and analyze transportation options between hospitality clusters and activity/experience clusters, like Niagara Falls and the Outer Harbor, to determine possible opportunities for managing hospitality demand via shared shuttle transportation services.

Activate and connect the county's visitor experiences

What it means

Experiential travel isn't particularly new. There's been a growing demand around cultural exploration and activity-based travel experiences for several years, and it shows no signs of slowing down.

Travelers today want more than a simple visit to a new destination or days spent relaxing on a beach. Instead, the travel they are seeking is an experience of the world that goes deeper – one that changes them in ways they may not even be aware.

Today, tourism experiences that best exemplify this transformative travel experience meet at least one of the following criteria: they integrate multiple areas of tourism (such as cultural tourism, adventure tourism, culinary tourism, etc.), they have a hands-on learning aspect and they are social.



What it means for our destination

The Buffalo and Erie County experience has undergone a dramatic renaissance over the last decade. For a visitor, that means discovering a vibrant destination with surprises around every corner. New and existing developments offer the potential to appeal to new markets and expand the visitor offerings.

Delivering a modern visitor experience is critical for attracting high-value visitors who spend more, stay longer, explore more of the destination and align with local community values. That requires more varied, integrated and accessible outdoor, arts, cultural, historical, heritage, waterfront and wellness experiences. At the same time, there must be a higher level of marketing content and resources for the entire industry and community to promote these experiences.

More diversified experiences also have vast and far-reaching benefits for current residents and for attracting new residents, investors and organizations to Buffalo and Erie County. Therefore, a more highly-diversified visitor experience is directly related to higher quality of life for residents and higher tax revenues for the city and county.

How it will be achieved

- Expand outdoor recreational opportunities by developing and promoting experiences that emphasize engaging with the county's parks and outdoor spaces and supporting the development and implementation of the Buffalo Parks Master Plan.
- Support the implementation of the Niagara River Greenway Plan, Outer Harbor General Project Plan, North Aud Block Initiative, and other existing plans and initiatives to activate the waterfront and create a more vibrant destination and gathering place.
- Support the development of Buffalo's blue economy by investing in the restoration, remediation and revitalization of the county's waterways.
- Support the development of the Buffalo Blueway to provide enhanced recreational opportunities on the Buffalo River and encourage the use of the river as a connective network.
- Support the development of the Waterways Center to help position the region as a healthy outdoor recreation and eco-tourism corridor.
- Foster town, village and neighborhood personalities, character and identity throughout Erie County to generate more diverse and clustered cultural products and invest in cultural and historic districts that exemplify the destination's character and history.
- Showcase Buffalo and Erie County's unique history and heritage by sharing, developing or incorporating authentic heritage elements into the visitor experience (e.g., Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor).
- Leverage Buffalo's inventive and authentic culinary industry to develop a fully-integrated culinary tourism experience and showcase an authentic taste of place.
- Support, reimagine and leverage Buffalo and Erie County's wide range of signature and community festivals and events.
- Enhance Buffalo and Erie County's identity as a desirable winter destination by providing more opportunities for winter experiences.

Strengthen awareness and perception of the Buffalo and Erie County place brand

What it means

In a world where the movement of people, capital and ideas is increasingly fluid, a strong place brand is more important than ever. Why do we live where we do? Why do we travel where we do? Often, it's because something draws us in and makes us feel a certain way, creating a desire to be a part of the culture, the scene, the excitement, the energy or the atmosphere.

From Nashville's "Music City" to Austin's "Keep Austin Weird," city brands communicate a place's values, offerings and identity to the world. Effective place brands bring diverse stakeholders together, building local community and external awareness.

A well-articulated place branding strategy strengthens a community's sense of place because it creates alignment between the language and messages created for and by businesses, the community and visitors. Best of all, it helps destinations chart not only who they are but who they want to become. That's part of its power. A place brand reflects what a place currently is and inspires what it can be in the future.



What it means for our destination

In a recent survey of travelers in Buffalo's key source markets, potential visitors were asked to give one word to describe the city. The word "cold" was by far the top descriptor given. There's no denying it, Buffalo faces a place brand challenge. Potential visitors often don't associate Buffalo and Erie County with the types of experiences and amenities that make us an attractive destination.

Interestingly, the association with "cold" and "snow" was much more common among travelers who have not yet visited Buffalo. By bringing visitors to our destination, we can shift their perceptions and create new advocates for the destination.

The place brand challenge exists among our own residents, as well. In a survey of more than 1,300 Erie County residents, "snow" and "cold" were once again two of the top words used to describe the area. And those who do have a deep understanding of what makes us great often have a mindset that we should keep it to ourselves. But the reality is that we can no longer afford to "Keep Buffalo a Secret."

As our economic and cultural upswing continues, Buffalo and Erie County are garnering national and even international attention as sought-after destinations. Not only does this attention continue to sustain our growing tourism and recreation industry but it is vital to workforce attraction efforts. As more people learn of our vibrant work/live/play lifestyle, the pool of candidates who would consider relocation to our destination will grow, bringing much-needed new talents and skills. As Buffalo and Erie County's economy continues to evolve, we must be doing everything we can to attract a more dynamic workforce.

By strengthening the awareness and perception of the Buffalo and Erie County place brand, we will put words to the feelings of pride residents feel

for their home and help to tell a deeper layer of Buffalo and Erie County's story to the world. This will help both visitors and residents connect with our destination in new ways. It will also help to develop advocates for Buffalo and Erie County, locally and beyond, as this work will be woven into the fabric of what the destination is, what it offers, what it values and how it expresses itself.

How it will be achieved

- Continue to articulate Buffalo and Erie County's unique sense of place through the co-creation of a common storytelling strategy for the destination.
- Amplify local ambassadors, creatives, entrepreneurs and influencers by curating and promoting their passionate and authentic stories.
- Further integrate the connection to the Great Lakes and Buffalo River into the destination's brand identity by showcasing the largely untold success story that played a large part in the city's resurgence and renaissance.
- Embrace winter as an element of Buffalo and Erie County's place brand by changing how we think, talk about and experience winter.
- Promote and celebrate the distinct communities that contribute to Buffalo and Erie County's brand story.
- Align regional economic development efforts to develop a holistic strategy for positioning Buffalo and Erie County as a place to live, work and visit.
- Take advantage of post-pandemic growth markets (e.g., New York City) for leisure travel.
- Align market-growth potential with direct airline service into the region's airport.
- Celebrate accolades in a more pronounced way, both within and outside of the destination.

Foster stronger stakeholder alignment and collaboration

What it means

Destinations of all sizes are more competitive in the global visitor economy when government, community and industry priorities are aligned as much as possible. A “whole-of-destination” approach, where the public, private and civic sectors are all speaking to each other, creates stronger communities that elevates the visitor experience, supports sustainable and economic development across all sectors, and improves quality of life for residents.

Every destination is made up of interconnected networks and complex systems. A visitor will encounter and patronize many of those, spanning a range of industry stakeholders, community organizations and events, small businesses and all of the infrastructure that connects a destination. The leisure or business traveler isn’t generally aware that they are navigating so many of these interrelated elements that make up a destination, but all of them impact and influence the visitor in some way.

Therefore, how well government, community and industry leaders work together influences how well visitors will experience the destination. It impacts where visitors travel in the destination and for how long, when they go and why, how much they spend, what types of businesses they patronize and what they share on social media. It impacts why they even show up in the first place.

Because of COVID, there is now a much greater awareness at the municipal, town and county level of how and why governments, community organizations and the visitor industry are all linked. Furthermore, the pandemic showed how they share many like-minded goals for each of their audiences; and all of these goals are related to community and neighborhood development, equitable workforce development, and small business and priority sector growth.

The oft-used adage, “What benefits locals benefits visitors,” is something that destination leaders like to say. Looking ahead, more and more of them are focusing on exactly what that means and how to accomplish it.

What it means for our destination

Guided by this plan for the advancement of our destination, Visit Buffalo Niagara will continue its work of uniting the industry and advancing our collective goals which will lead to countless benefits for residents and visitors, including infrastructure

development, job creation, economic spending, major event attraction and accessibility to grassroots meetings/conventions, sports and cultural events.

By fostering stakeholder alignment and collaboration, this community will strengthen

and grow for the betterment of both our residents and visitors. This also means supporting our partners as they advance their work. We will continue to provide leadership to the industry through leveraging effective partnerships, communicating relevant and timely information and sharing useful research insights. We will also advance our efforts through educational programs and support skill and product development within our industry and community.

Ultimately, the success of this strategy will come from meaningful, mutually beneficial participation oration with the public sector, area schools and industry partners. By working together, we will achieve more for the benefit of our citizens and visitors to our destination.

How it will be achieved

- Continue to advocate for regional cooperation to create a seamless visitor experience and share a “rising tide lifts all boats” mentality across the destination
- Develop marketing assets and resources for businesses owned by people of color, LGBTQ+, women and other underrepresented groups to remove systemic barriers and provide access and opportunity to benefit from the destination’s visitor economy
- Showcase fresh voices, perspectives, and experiences by making diverse populations part of the Buffalo and Erie County story
- Enhance industry workforce development initiatives in collaboration with the public sector, area schools, and industry partners
- Communicate the value of industry career paths and promote hospitality and tourism as a dynamic occupation with significant growth potential for people of all ages and backgrounds.
- Build industry engagement with organizations and networks responsible for planning and policy decision-making that impacts the visitor economy.
- Continue to pursue and monitor Tourism Improvement District (TID) legislation in the State of New York and explore the formation of a county-wide TID should the opportunity arise.
- Continue to pursue investment from private sources including, but not limited to, the business community, foundations, partners and other funding opportunities to support the implementation of the plan.
- Develop community-wide programs to increase awareness and support of tourism and hospitality as a key economic driver that provides growth opportunities for all residents and small businesses.
- Invest in data management platforms and community crowd-sharing tools to ensure intelligent, data-driven decision-making across all levels of the public and private sectors.







Next Steps

Throughout the planning process, our community demonstrated an overwhelming willingness to come together and develop a shared vision for Buffalo and Erie County's visitor economy. That collaborative spirit will be needed once again as we aim to bring this vision to life. No single individual or organization will be able to implement this plan alone. It will require the support of a broad-reaching group of contributors and a 'Team Visit Buffalo Niagara' philosophy.

Visit Buffalo Niagara will champion this strategy, at times leading initiatives, at times supporting others in their pursuits and at all times advocating for the strategic development of our visitor economy for the benefit of residents and visitors.

When appropriate, project teams will be recruited and tasked with developing strategic initiatives and collaborative metrics, guiding and aiding implementation, reviewing success measures and ensuring the lasting relevance of the work.

Many of the strategic initiatives resulting from this plan have been and will be incorporated into Visit Buffalo Niagara's current and future strategic plans, ensuring the work plan becomes a natural part of the organization's values and operations, and not just a one-time activity.



403 Main Street » Suite 630 » Buffalo, New York 14203 » 716.852.0511

VisitBuffaloNiagara.com



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