Food System Planning in Buffalo Niagara

Bart Roberts, AICP
University at Buffalo Regional Institute
UB School of Architecture and Planning

Growing the Local / Regional Food Systems Workshop
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Research from S. Raja, J. Hall, T. Norton, P. Gooch, S. Raj, T. Hawes, and J. Whittaker, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York
64 independent municipal governments in the two-county region

6 cities

37 towns

21 villages

Hundreds of public authorities, school districts and special districts
5 BIG IDEAS FOR OUR PLAN

- Create Great Places and a Thriving Economy through Efficient Land Use
- Connect Our Places by Expanding and Diversifying Our Transportation Options
- Provide Housing Choices in Neighborhoods that are Great Places to Live
- Conserve Our Energy and Promote Renewables to Prepare for the Impacts of Climate Change
- Strengthen Our Food Systems for a Healthier Population and Economy

and dozens of potential strategies and actions to get us there.
National Geographic ranks Buffalo as top 10 food city in the world

As the birthplace of the chicken wing, Buffalo ranks among best food cities in the world. (Derek Gee/Buffalo News file photo)
Buffalonians Rank #1 in the Nation in Caring About Their Ranking on Arbitrary Internet Lists

By Gil Phultanks, Correspondent for Unfounded and Ill-Defined Pride

As outside temperatures dropped throughout the day, social media feeds all around Western New York were ablaze with posts, comments, likes, and shared links regarding an online publication’s placement of Buffalo atop a list ranking cities nationwide on their overall level of enthusiasm for being highly placed on random lists that rate cities nationwide for strangely specific and intangible characteristics.

“Move over New York and Chicago,” reads the opening line...
City Planning is for Kids

Family Sessions at Buffalo Green Code Meetings
June 4th - 9th
AUGUST 16th, 2013
6:00 PM

University at Buffalo South Campus
146 Diefendorf Hall

Accessible via NFTA rail - University Station stop
Free parking available in Diefendorf Lot
Bike parking available in Crosby Loop

Come learn how you can be part of the new
Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County

Applications available at http://food.b-ap.net/hkhcbuffalo/
Applications due on 9/1/2013

Then join us for light refreshments and a free screening of the documentary "A Place at the Table"

Participating organizations
Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, CDP-Erie County, CDP-Niagara County, Environmental Justice ACTION Group, Erie County Department of Health, Food Bank of WNY, Growing Gardens of Buffalo, Massachusetts Avenue Project, University at Buffalo Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab, and University at Buffalo, School of Architecture and Planning.

Sponsors:
University at Buffalo’s **Food Systems Planning & Healthy Communities Lab**, under the leadership of **Dr. Samina Raja**, was engaged to oversee planning and research on food system issues.
UB’s Food Lab authored a detailed food system strategy document, rich in research, best practices, and potential actions to take.
Food System Assessment Overview

Regional context: location, people, climate

State of the region’s food system: production, processing and distribution

Functionality of food system: food access, capacity to grow, economic impacts

Barriers and opportunities perspectives: Farmers and residents

Ideas for Action: Key policy levers/strategies/best practices
The food industry is an important part of our economy.

About 1 out of every 5 jobs in the region is food-related.

Farmers are aging at an alarming rate.

More than $\frac{1}{2}$ of farmers are age 55+.

Source: Agricultural Census, 2007
Large institutions feed the equivalent of a ¼ of the region’s population.

- 163,000 university students
- 89,000 public school students
- 6,000 inmates in corrections
Our poor diets have real impacts on our health.

Of Adults in Buffalo Niagara...

...less than 3 out of 10 consume five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

...about 6 out of 10 are overweight or obese.

...and 1 out of 10 live with diabetes.

~200 acres of prime farmland, with the potential for much more.

196,739 acres
255,919 acres
333,306 acres
207,019 acres
1 million acres Total land
We don’t grow enough healthy food for ourselves.

38% we’d need to eat in order to follow USDA healthy-eating guidelines.

Source: Calculations by the Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab. Data Sources: United States Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Statistics Service and Economic Research Service; Department of Commerce: United States Census.
Residents in many areas find it hard to find fresh, healthy food.

55,954 households lack access to a car and live beyond walking distance to a grocery store.

Uneven access

- Supermarkets
- All Food Stores

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<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supermarkets</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Food Stores</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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We are losing farms at an alarming rate.

33 Farms out of business every year.

1,254 Farms lost since 1969

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Farms</th>
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<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>3,334</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>2,080</td>
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1,254 operating farms out of business since 1969, including 789 in Niagara County alone.

We continue to lose cropland every year.

Since 1992, our two counties have seen nearly 21 square miles of cropland go out of production* – an area roughly double the size of North Tonawanda.

Engaging people around issues of food at farmer’s markets
Engaging people around issues of food on the web

Fruit and Vegetable Farming in Buffalo Niagara

In recent years, the farming of fruits and vegetables in the region has been on a steady decline. What affects this has on our fruit and vegetable consumption?

Eating fruits and vegetables is vital to a healthy diet. Across the United States, however, there is a discrepancy between the types of food available to us and the kinds of food we are consuming to have a healthy diet. Through the 20th century, farming in the region has dramatically been moving away from growing fruits and vegetables and towards producing crop plants, which are primarily used in processed foods and for animal feed. Currently, the Buffalo Niagara region grows only 10 percent of the fruits and vegetables we eat.

Sustainability 101

How much agricultural land have we been losing?

Since 1970, the Buffalo Niagara region has lost over 1,250 working farms, and nearly 160 square miles of farmland—an area nearly the size of the City of Buffalo and down by roughly a third from what the region had 40 years ago.

What the data says

Nearly 30 percent of Buffalo Niagara (that’s 466 square miles) is devoted to agriculture. If that seems like a lot, imagine forty years ago when 40 percent of land within our two counties (that’s 616 square miles) was used for farming.

The region has lost 1,254 operating farms since 1969. 269 in Niagara County alone.
Food access is integrated as a variable in our FHEA opportunity index.
A chapter in our regional plan is devoted to strategies to support the region’s food system.
Indicators on food access and food systems are key parts of the plan.
A commercial kitchen geared towards educating new business owners and reducing barriers to entry would help level the playing field for people who just need that small break to get going.

Della Miller
Small Food Business Incubation for East Side Residents

Visit OneRegionForward.org/Champs to view a video of Della’s project
Our neighborhood needs a place where residents can have access to nutritious, affordable food to increase health and quality of life. Any market that comes into the neighborhood should reflect the needs and desires of the neighborhood.

Visit OneRegionForward.org/Champs to view a video of Daria’s project.
I want to provide fresh, nutritious, and affordable food to the residents of Buffalo’s East Side in a manner that is convenient, predictable, and takes into account that many of these community members do not have access to cars.
PLANNING FOR FOOD

Research, Education and Planning & Policy

These three major activities will work hand-in-hand to address the concerns of struggling farmers and vulnerable consumers by building capacity of local governments and their partners to create, implement and sustain food system policies and plans that both promote food security and foster a healthy agricultural sector.

FEATURED

January 8, 2015
Food Systems Planning Highlighted at American Farmland Trust Conference

December 17, 2014
New Website for APA Food Systems Planning Interest Group

Baltimore, MD
The City of Baltimore is making a name for itself in the realm of food systems planning. The hallmark of its success is the work [...more]

Policy Database
The Growing Food Connections Policy Database is a searchable collection of local public policies that explicitly support community food systems. This database provides policymakers, government staff and others interested in food policy with [...more]
For more information...

Bart Roberts, AICP
bjr8@buffalo.edu
@bflobart

regional-institute.buffalo.edu
foodsystemsplanning.ap.buffalo.edu

www.oneregionforward.org