

Vision Update

Meeting Summary

March 31, 2016 6:00pm – 8:00pm
D'Youville College, Madonna Hall
334 Porter Avenue, Buffalo NY 14201
(online feedback open from March 31 – April 8)



This Meeting

This session presented the draft Vision Document that summarized all the feedback generated through the Niagara Street Now community engagement process. This work yielded 13 priorities for translating community values into streetscape elements. Participants at the meeting (as well as those who reviewed material and weighed in online), were given the opportunity to rank each priority on a scale from 1 – 13.

Niagara Street Now

The City of Buffalo's Department of Public Works and the Buffalo Sewer Authority are leading an effort to transform Niagara Street. This streetscape project seeks to enhance accessibility, safety, and corridor vibrancy for all – residents, visitors, and businesses. Niagara Street Now will cover Niagara Street from Porter Avenue up to Ontario Street.

Who Participated?

51 participants

31 participated in-person, 20 participated online
Representatives from 26 different organizations

Participated in-person: Clint Holcomb; Dale Madison, Joe Kedron (Wendel); Brian McAlonie (Thinking Outside the Square); David Stewart; Megan Szeliga; Seth Amman (Allentown Association, Vision Niagara); Bonnie Brenon; Aimee Buyea, Nick Gordon (Sugar City); Brian Conley (UBRI); Brian Dold (Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy); Russ Gaiser Jr.; John Michael Mulderig (Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council); Tim Nichols; Nick Solly, Evelyn Vossler, Jim Vossler (Rediscover Riverside, Black Rock-Riverside Alliance); Maryann Moriarity (Legislator Peter Savage); Michael Wysochanski; Martin Gugino (PUSH); Kevin Menal; Sharon Giardina; Nathan Attard; Molly Vendura (peter j smith & company); Ev Janish; Mark Kuisiniek (Grant-Amherst Business Association); Giles Kavanagh (Jergo LLC); Gorey Totaro

Participated online: Andy Rosevear; Charlie Wesley (Daemen College); Arethusia Venn; Jarrett C; Craig Labadie (Buffalo Alternative Therapies); Daniel Snyder, Russell Gullekson (D'Youville College); Brianna Grine (Days Park Block Club); Ruby Nunez (Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses), Bob Burshtynski (Bird-Herkimer Block Club); Dennis Pelczynski; Joe Winiewicz (Rich Products); Bryan Lohr (Burnwood Studios, Roycroft Realty, Papercraft Miracles, Ingersoll Painting & Construction); Kristin Roberts, Ana Hernandez (Buffalo Audubon Society), Jen Kaminsky (PUSH Buffalo), Dawn Wilson (PUSH Buffalo), David Ettestad

Priorities ranked



Provided below is a composite ranking of each of the thirteen priorities presented in the vision document. The order (from top to bottom) reflects the composite ranking of each priority, while the number on the graph reflects the average ranking each priority.



Additional Comments



Provided below are comments participants of priority data transcription of feedback provided by community members at the Vision Update Meeting held at D'Youville College, as well as on the Niagara Street Now website the week following the meeting.

Written Comments from meeting attendants:

- The NYS Thruway has not been in taking care of their landscape/properties between Hertel Ave and Ontario Street
- Coordinate with DOT's traffic calming of Scajaquada 198 Project. Work with City of Buffalo to open up West Ave to relieve traffic pressure on Niagara Street. Find other ways to relieve traffic volumes, i.e. look to make one way streets into two-ways- Prospect, Mass/Vermont and many others.
- Separated cycle track on West Side
- Green Infrastructure / Stormwater management
- Pedestrians
- Control traffic, all critical components of roadway design
- My first three priorities are the basics - they need to be addressed regardless. The Greening, access to the water, wayfinding and interpreting signage and biking access are the real priorities in my mind. It truly is about creating a Niagara Street experience that will draw people to it to make it a destination and place you want to visit and utilize. Essentially, it is all about the visitor experience whether you are on foot, a bike, a bus, or a car.
- Tie in Aqua Lane into bike lanes. Paint the skyway.
- Get the infrastructure right
- Soften the street and connect it to the neighborhoods and river
- Traffic movement is a lesser priority
- Some of the priorities were shades of grey. Hard to pick one or the other.
- Want to pitch bulbs at corners or improve transit services.
- Give buses signal priority/reception.
- I think these are all great priorities, but I am most interested in making Niagara St work for walking, biking, and driving. Connecting to waterfront is also very important to me.
- Avoid the typical 4' Grass planting (AKA the "hellstrip"). Use woody shrub plantings in between street trees. Also, direct street lights down to minimize light pollution.
- Careful focus on adequate growing room for trees to become mature and stay healthy.
- Niagara St has both residential and commercial sections and the priority should not be treated equally across those areas.
- Design: Fix the intersection at Tonawanda St. It disconnects the west side and riverside and it is pivotal to involving that community in Buffalo's Renaissance.

Written Comments submitted online:

- Protected bike lanes would help to promote biking and safety in the area. Traffic calming measures should also be adapted. Buffalo in general is still far too car-centric. If you make Niagara Street more accessible to walkers and bikers, businesses and residential units will thrive.

- The one thing I consistently notice in driving Buffalo streets vs. driving in other cities in the US is that the signage for streets is terrible. Often they are small signs way off on the side, making it so that people who are not familiar with the area miss their turn and then have to back track around (difficult to do when we have so many one-way streets and Buffalo is not laid out in a strict grid pattern). Other cities have cross street signage large and above the intersection. This may not be such a big deal for those drivers that have a GPS, but it's frustrating for those that don't. Maybe this helps in some sense in that lost people may get to discover new neighborhoods they wouldn't normally go into, but on the other hand - if you are trying to get somewhere on time it can make you late and possibly get you into a neighborhood you don't want to be in.
- Appreciate what you've done so far. Looking forward to seeing some designs.
- I would like to see the protected bike lane option explored on sections of Niagara Street that are wide enough for it (the section from Ontario St. to Forest Ave comes to mind). Parked cars can even go on the opposite side of the protected cycle track to provide a physical barrier between cyclists and traffic, and to keep cyclists from getting "doored" like in conventional unprotected lanes. This configuration also offers the opportunity for plantings and vegetation along the bike lane.
- I am a long term resident of Niagara St, over 30 years.
- In my opinion Niagara St. is not heavily transited by bikes, and there is a trail along Busti Ave by the bridge and the Niagara Seaway. Hence, bike paths along the street are not a priority for residents in this area. Also, please keep in mind that residents would like a balanced approach to adding new businesses as this may cause congestion. Finally, you may want to seriously look at the presence of the Hookah Bar at 901 Niagara St, which is frequented by bad element. Please check on the extremely high number of 911 calls from concerned residents. The noise levels on the weekend until 4am, the shady characters that often fight on the street. The lack of respect for parking rules, several arrests & recent shootings, have created a huge cause for concern among the residents here & does not fit into the projected Niagara St Now vision. This issue can be remedied quite easily, as you have sufficient police records to justify removing this business from our neighborhood. Please discuss this issue with the Niagara region council member & the police dept., as the issue is serious enough for many long term residents to consider selling their properties in this area which would be a shame. We have been committed to this area for many decades & it's sad to allow a low-class establishment to overrun these devoted citizens.
- You should be more worried about Niagara and Tonawanda streets and under the international bridges then worry about bikes that cause accidents.
- I have been driving this daily for more than 23 years including weekends as I have family on Ashland that I have been taking care of. I am impressed with the recent changes but more needs to be done. The area should feel welcoming and people should feel safe walking or biking. Encouraging small local business/retail shops and food with an international flair to set up here will bring the foot traffic. Perhaps mimicking the West-side bazaar. Add police presence on bike/foot. It is exciting to see what is happening to Buffalo and finally to the Niagara St. corridor.
- I feel that Unity Island and the new park designed for the mouth of the Scajaquada have the potential to be the centerpieces of this transformation. Easier, more attractive access to Unity Island is crucial, but not sure if building a new bridge is within the scope of this project. Personally, I would like to see the porn shop removed, but I'm not one to forcibly evict persons or businesses.
- I have not been able to make any of the meetings, but have made it a point to respond to surveys when asked. The information that has been sent out is clear, thorough, and professional--all of which is much appreciated. The priorities listed in the vision document pretty much mirror my own. I'm not concerned with parking on Niagara--however, if and when activity ramps up, I would be somewhat concerned about overflow onto side streets: in terms of parking, traffic, and other activity. As it is, my

home is on a block bordered on one side by Niagara. We do not have a driveway. It can be somewhat frustrating to share current on-street parking with patrons of the restaurant on the corner. I imagine parking will be, to some degree, less plentiful in the coming years. So, while parking is nowhere near my top priority, neither is it a nonissue. One issue I didn't see represented in the vision document was mass transit, i.e., bus stops and routes (though I may have simply missed it). Many of the bus stops along Niagara do not include shelters, and existing shelters are often poorly maintained. It can be frustrating to see a family at an uncovered bus stop in the middle of a Buffalo winter, having hiked through calf-deep snow, only to be blasted by wind coming off the frozen river while waiting for a bus. I wonder if the most underserved members of our community, including some of our refugee and immigrant neighbors, have been given ample voice here. It would seem that public transit would be high on the list were it so. I don't mean this is a criticism, only to say that I wonder whether--and hope that--everyone who lives, works, visits, and travels through our neighborhoods has had the opportunity to make their concerns known. I sincerely thank you for your efforts, and please do keep up the good work. It is exciting and heartening to see this level of community involvement, particularly in a city that has a history of ignoring the needs and desires of its residents.

- The results of this planning process so far are very exciting. I have spent a great deal of time on this street doing all sorts of things and I love its ethnic diversity. It makes me very happy to know that the City is serious about doing right by it. Thank you!
- I am very concerned about the impacts of these improvements on area home prices and rents. While I very much support and am excited by the improvements, we are already seeing displacement of lower income tenants from the neighborhood. An inclusionary zoning policy and a commitment to use publicly owned land for affordable housing should be adopted in conjunction with these improvements.