Rebuilding the Economy and Quality of Life after the Control Board in
The City of Buffalo & Erie County

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State of New York Cities: Creative Responses to Fiscal Stress
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Buffalo: From a glorious past to a promising future
Manufacturing economy to creative, service-based economy

The historic Erie Canal in the early 20th century

Proposed Canalside development
Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority (Control Board)

“Adult supervision” or “Improved fiscal management?”

Measures for fiscal stability:

- Wage freeze for four years
- City wide hiring freeze & large scale layoffs
- Switch to a single health insurance provider to save expenditures on employee benefits
- Positive budget in 2005-06 and improved credit ratings

Failed to:

- Focus on how these changes impacted the quality of life of residents
- Address structural issues like poverty and demographics
Trends:

- Decreasing trend in property taxes
- Renewed commitment towards expenditures for social, cultural and community services after Control Board went into advisory status
- Dependence on fund balances to close budgetary gaps

Fiscal Vulnerabilities:

- Open labor negotiations, limited flexibility to raise revenues due to property tax cap, and heavy reliance on State aid

**Current fiscal situation**

Improved credit ratings but heavy reliance on fund balances

Mayor Brown’s 2013-2014 budget provides $160,000 for the Buffalo Broadway Market

Source: www.buffalochow.com
Fiscal situation in the School District
Trend towards privatization & public-non profit partnerships

Trends:

- Decline in school enrollment due to population decline & suburbanization
- Increase in enrollment of non-white children

Measures:

- Cuts to special education programs, employee layoffs, and conversion of public schools to charter schools
- Partnership with ‘Say Yes Buffalo’ to provide special academic services

’Say Yes to Education’ is providing college scholarships and support services for Buffalo Public School students

Source: The Buffalo News, 9 March 2014
Innovative fiscal approaches

Parks Agreement with Erie County & Olmsted Park Conservancy to save expenditures
People’s Mandate by Erie County
Prioritizing popular programs that matter to people

- Screening facilities for under-insured residents
- Smart Economy: Workforce development, attract tourists & investment from neighboring Canada
Reuse delinquent properties to revitalize neighborhoods

Over 75,000 tax liens with a balance of $58 million distributed over Erie County

Neighborhods suffer due to delinquent properties are often vacant and/or foreclosed

Source: The Buffalo News, 31 Oct 2013

Source: Knight 2013
Social Unionism & Non-profit networks
Greater voice & democratic participation in economic and community development

Cooperative strategies between unions and management in the late 1990s for economic development

Open Buffalo is a network of various grassroots non-profits to promote increased civic engagement through innovative policy making for sustainable economic development

Source: The Coalition for Economic Justice Buffalo
Source: Buffalo Rising 21 Jan 2014
Regional Economic Development Initiatives

WNY REDC’s Buffalo Billion Investment Development Plan for long term economic development in advanced manufacturing, health, life sciences, and professional services.

**Artist’s rendering of the proposed UB Medical School at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus**, which currently employs 12,000 people, in 6.5 million SF of clinical, research, and support facilities.

**Theatre District Main Street Program to support commercial building rehabilitation for neighborhood revitalization to increase investments.**

*Source: The Buffalo News, 14 Oct 2013*

*Source: TripAdvisor.com 2014*
One Region Forward
Regional efforts to solve regional problems & conserve regional assets