

CHAPTER 2: Planning Process

Process Overview

In fall 2005, the City of Buffalo sent out a request for proposals for the completion of a new comprehensive plan that would replace their outdated plan from the 1970's. Responses were due by November 2005 and ultimately WLC and Ken Markert, AICP were selected to complete the work.

The planning process included several steps and took nearly one year for draft completion. It incorporated strategic, meaningful public participation; issue identification; goal-setting; analyses of land use, infrastructure, public utilities, transportation, and housing; analysis of surrounding unincorporated land for edge development and annexation potential; opportunities for economic development, including tourism; and implementation strategies.

Major steps were as follows:

Outreach: The plan's Steering Committee was set up at this stage. Members of the planning commission served on the committee, along with two members of the City Council or their designees. Additional members on the committee represented the local conservation district, business community, Chamber of Commerce, and other interests. All meetings were open to the public. A dedicated Web site was used to keep the public informed of the project and to solicit their input. Periodic news releases were also used.

Issue Identification: A list of issues to be addressed in the plan was compiled by the Steering Committee. At the same time, the positive aspects about Buffalo that should be protected and respected were identified. A review of the 2001 Buffalo Community Assessment was conducted. A survey was mailed to approximately 400 households to get a sense of community issues and problems, and a sampling of area residents, business owners, and students were contacted and asked to take photographs of city problems and assets.

Mission Statement: The project team and Steering Committee used the results of the issue identification to develop a mission or vision statement, and that statement has been incorporated into the plan.

Goals, policies and strategies: Issue identification results were also used to develop goals that the City can use for guiding future development activities. Policies to achieve the goals and specific implementation strategies were then prepared. The strategies are tasks the City can do to implement the plan, with assignments for each task to various groups within the community.

Inventory and Analyses: The project team reviewed and evaluated the infrastructure and physical character of the City. Past city plans and aerial photography were used to assemble base maps of critical information, including existing land use, infrastructure,

natural hazard conditions, and other areas with development limitations for Buffalo and its surrounding unincorporated area. A map identifying vacant parcels and underutilized land that could be used for commercial or industrial purposes was created. Land that could be available for development with transportation enhancements has been identified on the map, along with surrounding unincorporated land that the Council may wish to consider annexing.

Assessment of Potential Growth Areas: Information about the unincorporated land that surrounds Buffalo gathered in the preceding step was analyzed in order to determine where growth is likely to occur and what issues may arise as a result of that growth, and to develop recommendations for more orderly growth in the outlying areas of Buffalo. Growth projections compiled by the State of Wyoming and in the Johnson County Land Use Plan were reviewed. The project team has also taken a close look at methods to encourage intergovernmental cooperation.

Economic development: The team took a look at the local economy with input from the Steering Committee and the public, in order to recommend economic development strategies suitable for the area.

Plan sections: Past city plans, the Johnson County Plan, current census information, state projections, state reports, and local information on the economy were used to complete a population projection for the City up to the year 2025. This information combined with the inventory and economic development analyses has been used for the written plan.

Assessment of regulations: The project team reviewed current development regulations for Buffalo and recommended changes to them in order to bring them into conformance with the new comprehensive plan. Johnson County regulations and policies were also reviewed in order to make recommendations for fringe development in the adjoining unincorporated land surrounding the city limits.

Plan review: The plan's adoption process included a public workshop on the plan followed by Planning Commission review. After receiving and addressing the Commission comments, the plan was forwarded to the city council for review, public hearing and adoption.

Public Participation Plan

The project team was committed to meaningful public participation opportunities that allowed the general public to help shape plans, have a role in critiquing them, and provide substantive input prior to formal public hearings. A wide variety of methods were used in order to obtain citizen input at most stages of the plan's preparation. The foundation of citizen input was the Steering Committee. This group served as the constant review body throughout the plan's scoping, development, review, and adoption.

In summary, the citizen public participation program included:

- Buffalo Steering Committee
- Contact with stakeholders including but not limited to the Chamber of Commerce; local, state, and federal agencies; students; and others identified by City staff
- Media relations
- Printed survey
- Comprehensive Plan Web site
- Open houses for stakeholders, elected officials, Steering Committee, and citizens at large
- Contact with the Johnson County Commissioners and Planning and Zoning Commission

The methods used to implement the public participation program were:

- Workshops held on a scheduled basis with the Steering Committee
- Distribution of disposable cameras to a sampling of city residents, business owners, and students with the request that they take photos of what they like and do not like about Buffalo
- Compilation of photo boards of likes and dislikes about Buffalo area
- Personal visits or telephone calls
- Press releases and interviews with the Buffalo Bulletin
- Survey of Buffalo area voters regarding their opinions on development issues and potential solutions
- Distribution of plan summary in newspaper and on the Web site, as well as at key locations such as City Hall, County Courthouse, library, and senior center
- Posted plan information, feedback opportunities, and a plan comment form on the Comprehensive Plan Web site
- Open houses for issue development and confirmation; presentations of draft material; alternative selection; and information in general

Buffalo Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was appointed by the City of Buffalo and represented a broad spectrum of the community. They met throughout the plan's development and served as the primary review body as the plan progressed. Their assistance was invaluable to the completion of the comprehensive plan.

Craig Cope, Interested Citizen
Jeremy Grimm, Buffalo Planning Director
Skip Hancock, Buffalo City Councilman
Kate Holt, Buffalo City Councilwoman
Tom Holt, First National Bank
Nikki Lohse, Lake DeSmet Conservation District

Steve Reimann, Planning Commissioner
Dee Woodall, Buffalo Chamber of Commerce
Bob Zimmerschied, Downtown Business Owner