



Community Agenda Update

Progress Report

June 27, 2019

1. Protect and Expand Voting Rights

What we've won: In early 2019, New York State passed historic voting reform legislation, including three of our five priorities: 1) Starting in November 2019, we'll join 37 other states with **early voting**. New York will have nine days of voting available before every election, including the two weekends prior to the election; 2) New York shortened the **party enrollment deadline**, setting it four-months ahead of an election, rather than eleven-months ahead; 3) Starting in January 2020, New York will allow 16 and 17 year olds to **pre-register to vote**, and the Board of Elections will automatically register those individuals when they turn 18. This makes it easier for young adults to get engaged and become voters.



Where we're going: Two of our priorities still require advocacy: Automatic Voter Registration (opting out of voting rather than opting in, to increase the number of active voters) as well as restored voting for people on parole. We're also focusing on local implementation. The Erie County Board of Elections submitted 37 early voting polling sites to the state, including ten in the City of Buffalo; we're requesting the addition of two more sites in Buffalo neighborhoods to ensure broader access.

2. Expand Community Policing and Alternatives to Arrest in Buffalo

What we've done: Efforts to establish a **Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)** program in Buffalo are making progress. Our group met with Buffalo Police Commissioner Byron Lockwood in March to share our research on LEAD in other cities and the need for its pre-arrest approach to addressing poverty, mental health, and substance use. Commissioner Lockwood expressed his support for LEAD and nominated two police captains to join our working group. Since then, we've met monthly with the captains and gained their input on draft policies and procedures for creating a LEAD program.



Where we're going: Over the next two months, we will complete draft LEAD policies to share with BPD leadership as well as a draft Memorandum of Understanding to establish a LEAD pilot. With our partners, we welcome Commissioner Lockwood's support for community policing, including his statement that "every police officer should be a community police officer." We will continue to ask the department to integrate this commitment into programs and policies. Together with the Fines and Fees Justice Coalition, we are currently drafting "**fix-it-tickets**" legislation, which has support from several Common Council members.

3. Form a Complete Count Committee for Buffalo-Niagara Representation in Census 2020

What we've won: Earlier this year, Buffalo and Erie County both formed committees to promote a fair, accurate, and complete census count of the region. The two have since combined into the **Buffalo and Erie County Complete Count Committee**. PPG and our partners presented testimony at the New York State Complete Count Commission's hearing in Buffalo, highlighting the need for funding for community-based organizations to lead on census outreach and the importance of reaching historically undercounted populations and neighborhoods. PPG published a policy brief, "Census 2020: Making Western New York Count," which maps undercounted areas in Buffalo and Erie County, assesses why Census 2020 matters for our region, and points to community assets that can support a complete count.



Where we're going: PPG and our partners will continue to be involved with efforts of the Buffalo and Erie County Complete Count Committee, ensuring community groups have a voice in census outreach and advocacy. With support from a statewide Census Equity Fund, PPG will offer three Census 2020 training workshops in July and August. To inform a local "get out the count" toolkit, we are carrying out community-based research on residents' concerns and barriers to taking the Census.

4. Invest in the FB Community Land Trust

What we've done: Neighborhood leaders in the Fruit Belt and the FB Community Land Trust (FBCLT) continue to reshape the narrative in Buffalo around community-controlled development and neighborhood identity. City government is in an active dialogue with the FBCLT on the **transfer of 20 city-owned lots** to the land trust this year. We're researching legal options for the city to transfer properties it owns to non-profit housing developers, such as FBCLT and Habitat for Humanity, below market rate.



Where we're going: We'll continue to work toward the transfer of 20 city-owned lots to the FBCLT and to promote affordable housing development in the Fruit Belt and other neighborhoods. To learn more, **join the FB Community Land Trust and the Fruit Belt Advisory Council for their annual Community Update on Saturday, June 29.**

5. Improve Language Access and Inclusion in Erie County

What we've done: The Language Access Working Group has set two priorities for 2019—improving language access at the **Erie County Auto Bureau** and developing language access plans for **priority Erie County departments**.



Where we're going: We are researching the experiences of local residents and speakers of other languages at the Erie County Auto Bureau DMV to inform our advocacy. We will continue to work toward the expansion of language access in county departments, through both language access plans and hiring more people who speak languages in addition to English.

6. Provide Child Care Subsidies for Income-Eligible Persons in Workforce Training or Education Programs

What we've done: We've continued to meet with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, the Childcare Resource Network and the Workforce Development Initiative to quantify the scope of the problem. We're in touch with our Monroe County allies to understand how their childcare subsidy program has been impacted by **expanding eligibility to those in workforce development**.



Where we're going: We are currently re-evaluating our demands based on the current political climate and best practices for childcare policy statewide.

7. Adopt a Good Food Purchasing Program for Buffalo Public Schools

What we've done: The Good Food Buffalo Coalition developed a resolution for Buffalo Public School Board to express support for the **Good Food Purchasing Program**. The group led a significant engagement process around the comprehensive resolution, gathering input from many coalition partners (local and national), and engaging Buffalo School Board members to champion the resolution.



Where we're going: The resolution will be reviewed in committee and voted on at an upcoming School Board meeting. It commits the district to work with the Center for Good Food Purchasing to conduct a baseline assessment of institutional procurement practices (a key first step toward implementation) and to work with the Good Food Buffalo Coalition to develop an action plan.

8. Pass the Climate and Community Protection Act to Ensure a Just Transition for All New Yorkers

What we've won: Last week, New York State passed one of the strongest and most ambitious climate plans in the country—the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The bill sets mandates for **significant emissions cuts**, including a zero emissions target for the electric sector. It requires a large portion of **benefits from energy efficiency programs** and state spending be invested in **“frontline” communities** – those impacted most by climate change.



Where we're going: While the CLCPA is a major win, there is still work to be done to ensure a just transition from fossil fuels and into a greener economy. We will continue to support advocacy to realize the intent of the original bill—direct investment, job creation, and training in communities most impacted by climate change and most vulnerable to adverse health and environmental effects.

9. Prevent Childhood Lead Exposure in Erie County

What we've done: Through the Buffalo and Erie County Lead Safe Task Force, city and county officials are working toward our policy change priorities: increasing **proactive inspections of housing, rental registration by landlords, and regulation and education around home renovations.** We expect significant announcements in the weeks ahead on rental housing inspections and landlord licensing. Together with our partners, we've continued to engage local residents who are renters, parents, healthcare workers, and more to link lead exposure prevention to a broader set of child, family, and school wellness issue.



Where we're going: Ujima Company has created and performed a short play, based on our interviews with individuals impacted by lead exposure, that is being performed at school and community meetings. In the months ahead, we will continue this interactive in-person education at the neighborhood level and continue to monitor policy changes to improve the housing inspection regime.

10. Improve Public Transit in Buffalo-Niagara with Financial Contributions to Achieve the Paris Climate Accord

What we've done: We met with local elected officials and experts to evaluate and understand the distribution of county sales tax, as this plank calls **for additional NFTA funding** from that source. In meeting with almost every Western New York state legislator, our partners have increased support for the NFTA to **study the extension of Metro Rail and zero-carbon transit,** particularly in connecting to the airport and increasing routes and services through the East Side. The NFTA has taken the step of adding this study to their plan, but they've set it for 2028.



Where we're going: We will continue to meet with elected officials to explore additional sources of funding for the NFTA. We will continue to ask the NFTA to complete a study of airport extension options that focus on expanding through the East Side. This study is currently in their plan for 2028, but we will work toward making it happen far sooner.



Access the 2019 [Community Agenda](#), take action through our [Citizen Toolkit](#), and find more ways to engage at www.ppgbuffalo.org.