**1. Please select the top five challenges which are unique to Western New York, keep the regional economy from growing and could be met and solved in the next 5 years. Please select up to five challenges from the list below.**

* Pollution- sacrificial zone- higher cancer rates
* Self defeating, parochial “leadership”
* Stagnation in leadership & pessimism / lack of vision
* Lack of visionaries/inability to follow-thru or get past -- government in the way
* Absence of a state planning office and a physical state plan
* Environment/pollution
* High suburban property taxes
* Hydro-fracking will negatively impact our long-term economy, tourism, agriculture, & property value. This leads to population decrease, contaminated resources, and is NOT economic development.
* Manufacture things we need/can trade
* Too many layers of government & overlapping agencies – paying for all of this government
* Too many regulations on businesses- have to be careful but there is duplication
* Lack of focus on green jobs
* Public Unions are a scourge
* There is no efficient and effective "process for success"
* We have Niagara Falls and the Power plant. Why are we not benefitting in Niagara County regarding lower utility rates?
* lack of political leadership and drive to access funding for our area
* High health care costs.
* High Cost of transportation
* Lack of sustainable planning
* Erosion of agricultural land
* Unfunded Mandates and High percentage of the population employed by public unions
* Increase in residents that come here to utilize NYS public assistance
* Lack Of targeted work on identified problem areas
* Lack of communication
* People complaining about the snow
* high cost of gasoline
* Lack of safe, decent and affordable housing for families and seniors
* Aging Affordable Housing Stock
* NYS helps the snowmobile trails / development by targeting the gasoline sales made to snowmobiles, but not for boats & lakes...
* Age of housing stock
* High property taxes
* Spotty access to high-speed internet in rural areas
* Multiple IDAs and economic development agencies not producing results
* LACK OF BILINGUAL PROFESSIONALS AT THE STATE/ LOCAL LEVELS
* Lack of Rural transportation to get workers to city employers.
* Lack of living wage jobs and the need to increase taxes on the wealthiest in NYS and ask them to pay their fair share
* Lack of good paying/ living wage jobs
* Aging housing stock in the Chautauqua County Region, High vacancy rates in the Jamestown and Dunkirk areas
* Lack of spreading some of the focus on the I86 corridor
* High gas bills because of hold housing stock!
* Aging Housing Stock
* Inertia-Failing to Acknowledge Fact: FREE Energy is Passing By Daily
* backward beliefs about non-whites/racist practices
* Failure of Educational System
* Lack of political will and creativity!!!
* the entry level wages are too low and no benefits making it impossible for someone on disability to become a productive citizen
* Lack of a comprehensive plan to create jobs in urban centers, specifically the City of Buffalo
* Dysfunctional/always divided government/terrible educational system
* Erie County Industrial Development Agency
* Too many IDAs in Western New York, that compete, and that don't hold the corporations responsible for hiring as promised.
* Too many unfunded mandates for local governments
* Lack of well-paying, full-time jobs with benefits
* The threat to agricultural and recreational waters by fracking.
* Lack of entrepreneur support and development
* High percentage of non working residents which draw from and do not contribute
* Lack of effective, progressive political leadership
* BORING! - NO VIBRANCY
* Uncoordinated/unaccountable development regimes (IDAs); Client service model of workforce pipeline = not connected to community
* Highway tolls and gas taxes are highest in the nation. I know of warehouse companies that have closed here because of this. I also think some decisions should take regional factors into account such as population, ed. facilities, and demographics.
* Lack of US-based revenue
* The State of NY is not "upstate friendly", is plain dysfunctional
* recreational water quality on Chautauqua Lake
* aging population
* Entrenched "leaders" who fail to lead, a lack of vision, too much corruption and cronyism and nepotism in both govt. and bus.
* Support for the Main Street and startup entrepreneurs in the area.
* too many unfunded mandates
* Lack of educational resources and planning k-12th
* Governments that are mostly unresponsive to innovative solutions

**2. Please select the top five opportunities for economic growth which are unique to Western New York and where you feel the region should focus its efforts to develop over the next 5 years. Please select up to five opportunities from the list below.**

* Capitalize on very high number universities and college per capita (I.E: brand WNY as the teacher education capital of the US
* Solar energy for homes
* Promote tourism/conventions beyond region
* Food system- production, processing and retail
* Abundance of land & existing infrastructure
* Promote water as natural resource/asset
* Buffalo tourism! Not just Niagara Falls & “regional” – architecture, food, neighborhoods, Olmstead Parks etc.
* Develop region as a manufacturing center, again.
* Develop region as a manufacturing center – energy.
* Public education K-12
* Do NOT allow hydro-fracking
* Promote quality of life & access to higher education
* Buffalo is a “College Town” – promote the assets of culture and the arts = quality of life
* Capitalize on grassroots energy to rebuild central cities.
* Promote agriculture helping the local farmers organic and dairy reducing their costs
* Quality of life
* Cut government costs
* Promote as Arts Destination
* Create the Western New York Greenway connecting the Buffalo-Niagara Greenway with Allegany State Park
* Promote availability of area "back to basics" non-urban family living linked with good paying jobs.
* Invest in the infrastructure of our rural counties to promote tourism away from the cities. Invest in regional Arts & Culture as an economic driver and QOL feature
* Any of the above is pointless if Albany does not take major steps to cut back spending and allow us to lower property taxes.
* Recreational opportunities
* Improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged
* Develop and promote water FRONTS...We have numerous NOT just Buffalo!
* Workforce Development
* Workforce Development
* Utilize regional planning and development boards to help poor, rural municipalities better manage their infrastructure.
* Promote investments in Agriculture Infrastructure
* Develop Class A Office space for high tech, low impact industries such as social networking, video gaming etc
* Promote Chautauqua County as the 5th highest taxed County in the Country and wonder why nobody wants to live here...?
* Capitalize on the I86 corridor and the assets available in the southern tier
* Improving housing and promoting historic preservation!!
* Drastically reform the welfare system.
* Targeted neighborhood investment and development
* MEANFUL PROGRAMMING FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH
* Remember Western New York includes more than Buffalo, Niagara County.
* We go all the way to the PA line.
* Develop opportunities presented by the I-86 corridor, Develop Chautauqua County's industrial region
* Developing the opportunities presented by the I86 corridor create green jobs by investing in housing revitalization.
* Capture FREE energy (wind, solar hot water, LEED Building Retrofits)
* Develop infrastructure in the southern tier - Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, & Allegany counties
* Tourism is the only growing "industry" so use all the assets that are tourism related to best advantage
* Focus on the influx of young people attending one of the many colleges in the area and try to get them to stay after graduation
* Promote our vibrant arts and cultural assets! (How did the survey miss this?)
* buffalo was 3rd(behind Chicago and Montréal in railways at one time rebuild them as effective Bway to move goods
* Substantively Lower Property Taxes
* Develop agricultural processing potential to add value to raw products grown here
* Develop and promote WNY as an arts and cultural hub
* Focus on zoning restrictions to manage sprawl and revitalize the City of Buffalo Renewable: Ag / bio waste to methane --> electricity via turbines.
* Developing our small main streets
* Support the arts and architectural preservation
* Look to Seattle and Portland for how to promote whole regions positive factors
* Develop large employer spinoffs from the developing BNMC and a more aggressive recruiting strategy for Canadian companies
* Agriculture
* Western NY has diverse growing climates and is the center of major population centers of Toronto, Boston, New York
* Massively invest in energy efficient affordable housing and reform the PSC
* Hydro-fracking is not welcome here
* Improve the agricultural regions and help out farmers.
* We will have a greater ROI cheap hydro power and abundant fresh water supply.
* Promote our world-class fresh water fishing for sports/recreation dollars
* Reduce taxes by eliminating government duplication
* Promote our history like Williamsburg VA does
* Promote and develop small independent niche businesses such as bookstores and coffee shops - they give an area character Low commute time to work and wide variety of recreation
* Promote historic architecture as an asset to region's tourism campaign
* There needs to be a focus on cultural diversity and more help for small cottage industry and employee owned businesses
* Increased diversity in agriculture and supports for existing agriculture
* Promote water as natural resource/asset
* Focus on promoting our hub of small local businesses
* Promote our creative class, incentive programs for young creatives (see Detroit)
* Promote Arts & Culture as a magnet for new business and tourism
* Fund and promote preservation of our historic churches

**3. Please select the top five assets which give Western New York the greatest opportunity for economic growth and represent economic advantages as compared to other regions in New York and the United States. Please select up to five assets/resources from**

* Quality of our public school system – Suburb city schools need help!
* Niagara Falls could be a MUCH nicer destination
* Marcellus Shale Development brings jobs & money – DEC has a good handle on regulating it
* The many higher ED institutions
* Terrible public school system – nothing to promote!
* I feel safe walking in Buffalo and WNY
* Family oriented and Midwest values
* Clean living and back to basics yet able to reach amenities. The public wants now... away from drugs and crime
* Low cost recreational activities both winter and summer
* ability to collaborate and create
* Manufacturing
* The Concord Grape Belt
* Promote the waterfront, i.e. build a boardwalk
* The I86 corridor from NYC to the Midwest
* Developing the opportunities presented by the I-86 corridor, Affordable Housing, and Historic Preservation.
* Chautauqua Institution and the spacious park system in the Southern Tier.
* Chautauqua Lake Region, Chautauqua Institution cultural assets,
* Developing the opportunities presented by the I86 corridor
* Blue collar workforce/strong work ethic
* Shipping to the Entire North Coast (Great Lake system)
* Lake Erie/Great Lakes
* tourism assets
* Vibrant and growing arts and cultural environment.
* Quality and Diversity of Existing Manufacturing Base in WNY
* Affordable Housing and Affordable Cost of Living
* Outdoor recreational assets that could be promoted to drive the tourism industry.
* Bio gas turbine / regional electric infrastructure jobs.
* Main Street
* Architecture
* The volume of chronically un/underemployed in the region, long winters, old housing stock
* Our public school systems are not that great. Did you ever go to Europe and check out the demand on those students?
* our transportation infrastructure, ( roads, rail, water) while aging, is still ready to handle much more than it already does,
* Music communities
* Our history dating back to Revolution and Native American
* Availability of electrical power
* Historic architecture
* Cultural assets should include our Landmark churches

**7. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please tell us about any other ideas or concerns you have with regards to the Western New York Regional Council.**

* I think we need to expand the metro rail to take inner city residents to their jobs; rail to Toronto.
* Get land developers to develop SMART growth! Save Agriculture – especially organically grown products.
* We should promote/cultivate WNY as a center for innovation & creativity by explicitly facilitating creative thinking & problem solving as a response to economic challenges. NEEDED: Leadership willing and able to break the shackles of calcified state thinking.
* Ideas: Annual Update/Evaluation of effort/ New strategies & promotion of exports (products and educated people)/Promotion of our diversity. Concerns: “control” in the hands of few/ Urban Crime/Lack of quality urban public education/ Greed
* The Southern Tier is ripe for new industry. The average income of residents here is approx $19,000 – We have 3 great colleges – A.U., ASC & Haughton college. The area of Allegany is approx 36 sq miles, rural and beautiful. It s infrastructure is behind the times (roads & internet). We have one of the best small airports of WNY in Wellsville ready to ship & receive goods for any incoming industries.
* Consolidate IDAs, use the one IDA to R&D for manufacturable technology in capturing the renewable energies. In a temperate climate, when the wind isn’t blowing, the sun is shining! Tourism is another way to generate dollars.
* I cannot emphasize enough how detrimental hydro-fracking is to our area. Tourism, our agriculture, and fresh water are only a few of our assets that jump to mind that would suffer from its contamination.
* A commitment from everyone, businesses and government, to insure that we are educated, creative, and forward thinking citizens (youth) to become the workforce and leaders for our region. Emphasis on very exceptional public transit that unifies the entire region, allows workers to access jobs in more areas, diminishes the effects of weather, improves access to the airport; rail, etc. by public transit from all areas. Control energy costs – how can National Fuel have the profits that they do from a community of our minimal economic status?
* Why is gov. Cuomo inviting in an industry that contaminates land, air, and water – gas drilling? This is not “economic development” and as Christopherson from Cornell found, it is a “boom/bust” cycle that outsources our jobs and depletes our resources.
* I think the council should bring investors in from other states or countries. I think Asians would be interested in developing the tourism in WNY.
* Same basic assumption – No hydrofracking. Time to move to more renewable resources now, not later. NYS should lead the way. Hydrofracking is a business to promote health problems. Energy development needs to be evaluated and measured by its contribution to long-term sustainability and resilience of region. Be leaders in moving from fossil fuels to wind, solar and conservation towards the creation of jobs. Need regional planning and to reform the IDA. Tax reform – progressive. Tax Wall Street exchanges to raise revenue.
* Both nationally and regionally, we need to stimulate aggregate demand for made in USA/made in NY items and to quit wasting money/exporting money on fossil fuels – notable, petroleum and not gas. There are ways to ramp up the demand for renewable energy that stimulate the demand for renewable energy devices/systems/components. These require no new taxes or tax avoidance schemes. Done correctly, this will naturally lower electricity prices/stabilize long-term prices. These are proven ways to create jobs which in turn increase the demand for other, often regionally supplied, goods and services. All that is needed to make REprojects bankable is long-term viable prices. This will lower the economic risk for these projects. Right now, banks & equity investors really hate risk, especially after ruining the world/national economy with financial speculation and bankers gone wild…
* As a 25 year + resident of the city, by choice, I would like others to know and value what WNY has to offer. Grew up in Olean, lived in a Buffalo suburb for many years, moved to DC for several years, and then moved back – even though, like many others here, I have no family here. It is a livable city – easy to get around, so much to offer (other than employment), and friendly people, young and old.
* Our greatest asset in this region is water and we should be cleaning it!
* Front page of website, no mention of other counties of WNY, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, or Allegany.
* Investing in programs such as the civilian conservation corps and in closed loop geothermal systems for our power plants creating jobs in construction. DO NOT INVEST IN HYDROFRACKING! It will only worsen the economic and environmental conditions of NYS. Our water, agriculture, and tourism are what keep people in NY. Many say they will leave the state if it comes here. Use six sigma analysis to streamline processing.
* Get rid of the 1001 local IDAs that piss away tax dollars by giving tax breaks to lure businesses from town X to town Y 2 miles away.
* Regional land use planning is parliament.
* My concern is this statewide process will result in more government bureaucracy. Downstate should become the 51st state and upstate NY should stand on its own. Combine Erie & Niagara County and make it the WNY region.
* “Leveraging energy resources” must not overlook the negatives of any given potential resource. Specifically, many oppose high-volume horizontal hydro-fracking to access potential shale reserves because it will degrade our water resource and our agricultural produce. I quote from Lucas Vineyard: “What kind of financial restitution will you have arranged for people who lose their farms/jobs when the chemicals find their way into agricultural products? When the gas companies don’t want to pay damages, how much of the cost will be passed onto the taxpayers?” W.N.Y. is full of thriving vineyards. Don’t kill them with hydro-fracking.
* COuncil maintains focus on transformative projects – many of which are in existing regional plans.
* Cultural opportunities and historic architecture are draws for tourism, which is an engine for economic growth.
* The development of renewable resources and water protection, I believe to be crucial to solid economic development in WNY. The solid foundation of true economic success will lead to long term job growth; the growth of research institutions; college and university leadership; population growth; and the possibility of making Buffalo as once again, a desirable city to move back to. May I also mention - I don’t believe in bringing a large casino to Buffalo will stimulate sound economic growth. Casino business can easily weaken economic infrastructure. And one last comment (maybe), I am extremely grateful for the waterfront development thus far. It is wonderful! Keep it going!
* The one over-looked factor that stands out the most to me is the lack of focus on prisons, prisoners and crime. The fundamental fact that we do not entrust citizens who have “paid their dues” to society to guide that society with their voice by voting with their enlightenment of “hard-life education” says, quite simply, that system is flawed and has failed everyone. We need to focus on reducing recidivism in our urban centers, and providing enlightened hope to former criminals.
* I want to make it clear that drilling for natural gas, hydraulic fracturing is neither a renewable nor sustainable energy resource. It is a limited energy resource that is extremely risky and dangerous. It is much more likely to bring destruction to our land and water than to bring economic benefit to the state.
* By appointing the council, this has become a top-down process and while it may provide quicker plans & proposals, when structured with deadlines it also loses impact. How can we make this a bottom-up process? How can we make community development promoting small business & entrepreneurship the centerfold of our WNY ED plan?
* Stop sprawl; living wage jobs; green criteria for development; targeted business tax breaks & subsidies don’t work; better to invest in public goods that benefit the entire region (infrastructure, education & health); focus investment in cities, neighborhoods.
* Thanks for accepting our input for this survey. I understand that Genesee County is not part of the WNY regional council, but do not think that the line drawn on our Western Boarder should cut us off from our strongest partners we utilize to attract companies to our County. The Genesee County Economic Development Center is a member of the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, we work closely with the University of Buffalo and all of the WNY IDA’s to promote WNY as a great place to do business. Below are just a few key selling points for the entire region.
125 Million Customers w/in 10 hrs, 2.1 Million workforce w/in 1 hour, Includes Buffalo & Rochester Metros, 42 Colleges and Universities, Well educated and trained workforce, Redundant/Abundant resources (electric, water, gas), Hydro power or blended rate electricity, 1st class Infrastructure & Transportation/ major highways, and Low cost land
Some challenges to economic development attraction project include preconceived notions about debilitating winter weather, high unionization rate, and over regulation of business.
Challenges that economic developer’s face includes overzealous regulatory state agencies that work against development projects, slow the process, and have no flexibility to achieve common goals with developers.
* I think the city slogan of "Buffalo. For real." is not doing justice to our city. Buffalo has been overlooked by much of the rest of the country since the decline of the steel industry which the city has seemed to have never recovered from. I think Buffalo and its suburbs have a lot to offer people who are looking to move to a new location - there are plenty of tourist attractions and the area is considered a safe city. The job market does need to be enhanced and expanded, but with promoting Buffalo in the right way, with advertizing all that Buffalo has to offer, the population can grown and more jobs can be created, which will benefit our economy and standard of living. I feel that Buffalo will continue to be overlooked and the population will continue to decline until we start telling people about what we have to offer in terms of the developing workforce, tourist attractions, safety aspects and the rich history of our city. Our city has a lot to offer and we need to start informing people of that.
* Cooperation is key along with a regional plan for growth and development. This needs to be followed by a consistent support and promotion of the area by our legislators. With their loyalty to the region and those who live here and not their party.
* We have such a high volume of good producing farms in this area and we are losing them d/t over taxing, high cost of operation, and loss of workers. Think about where your food is going to come from in 5 years when there are no more farms, thinks about fruits and veggies coming from petri dishes, or milk being synthetic, where is the nutritional value going to be, or will it later be discovered that the synthetic like early sugar replacements, that they are unhealthy. All natural in moderation is the best and from renewable sources are the most reliable sources. That has been what has kept this country profitable for many years and truly will for many more.
* I just moved back here from Tampa and the things I missed the most about Buffalo can and should be developed and exploited for economic development such as the waterfront and the area around the arena, rich cultural background, and cheap real estate. The city of Buffalo's old, abandoned buildings need to either be used or demolished. The fact that we spend so much time debating what should be done without anything getting done in the end also needs to be fixed. If a new peace bridge is wanted discuss the necessity and the feasibility of a project that grand then make a decision and move on. If old buildings have bacteria and are dangerous, destroy the building and decide on innovative ways to use the space that could bring business into the city, instead of away frOm it. There is just too much talk and not enough action.
* Buffalo needs to improve the public school system.
* Why do we need a Regional Council? Don't I pay politicians to represent me? /sarc Tell NY State and Buffalo/Erie County to stop spending my hard earned tax money on free-loaders, politicians, and public union workers. Cut government and cut government spending. How hard is that to understand?
* The Regional Council should focus on developing a strategic vision for the REGION and not one city, town or community at the expense of another. The economy and markets respond to regions and WNY needs to position itself regionally versus the rest of the world. Also, strategic positioning should include adjacent regional councils under the Upstate umbrella. If the Council turns into a project funding entity only, then the opportunity for meaningful impacts are squandered and this effort can be thrown in with the rest that have tried to change the fortunes of WNY over the past 40 years.
* Thank you for giving everybody a voice. I think the process is off to an extremely encouraging start.
Potential concerns:
1) I am very worried that downtown revitalization will suffer outside the urban cores. Oftentimes the most important funding in a small city is $150,000 to go toward the start-up of a new restaurant that brings a different population into town or $200,000 to leverage a boutique hotel. I hope those small (but often very important) projects do not get lost in the shuffle.
2) CDBG funding being diluted based on geographic distribution when it has worked well as an "as needed" economic engine in the small cities and non-entitlement counties. Also, the related implementation of stringent and specific eligibility requirements
* Lower economic area, needs to be taken into consideration when dealing with taxation in the area. Currently taxes are too high!
* Thank you very much for this survey. Hoping for the best for our Region. We are happy to help and assist anywhere we can. Thank you.
* Taxes and Medicaid spending are crushing our state, particularly Upstate NY. This is driving out businesses and our population for over 25 years. Something in our political processes and systems needs to change or this economic starvation and population shift will continue. This exodus sadly involves our kids and some of our most successful entrepreneurs. There are no surprises here, only a lack of involvement by our business and community leaders to organize and drive changes to overcome the embedded commitment to status quo by our political systems
* This is an important task being undertaken. Planning for where we want to go as a region (finally) will have long lasting implications. What will help those who live here now? What emerging trends are the right currents of thought to follow as we chart our future course? How can consensus be achieved in a very fragmented environment politically?
* Our organization would like to give a presentation to the council on the National Comedy Hall of Fame. We feel this could be a major economic driver in the City of Niagara Falls. We have the cooperation of the board of directors from the National Comedy Hall of Fame and many details on the economic impact. The location is already selected for a Main Street address in the City of Niagara Falls and the job creation it will produce will be tremendous.
	+ There is a great need to focus upon the revitalization and redevelopment of the City of Buffalo's core and Eastside areas.
	 A specific idea to begin addressing the need for jobs and economic development are community based incubators. These innovative high impact clean technology incubators would be dedicated to new energy efficiency technologies for the creation of new jobs and economic growth. The growth of energy efficiency technology and building performance has also been shown to provide clear pathways out of poverty for distressed communities. This emerging field is providing new labor intensive employment coupled with new opportunities for workers and career training through a range of skilled professions.
	 The neighborhood and community based incubators will also have the capability for interdisciplinary research and commercialization especially around energy management and conservation.
	 I view the City of Buffalo as a potential hub for the development of these new technologies because of its history of manufacturing and industrial innovation.
* Keep on involving as many leadership-type people to the table. Keep on sending out the info you receive; good communications. Info from the top leaders of these Councils has to be forthcoming. We know NYC and Long Island will dominate, and every region needs its fair share of contributing, being listened to and HELPED.
* I remain hopeful that the Regional Councils will focus on strategic planning for our region, rather than specific projects to fund...
* Okay you asked so here are some capsules of concern and possible success:

1.Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany County have only rudimentary internet access they need a healthy, complete and real world broadband system to be connected to Erie and Niagara counties and the rest of the world.
2. Why not use the abandoned rail road beds as "new corridors of commerce?" Use them not only as rails-to-trails but corridors for waterlines, broadband, gas transmission and new technologies. The Marcellus Shale gas has to get from the well heads to distribution, use the Rail Road Beds. Don't duplicate infrastructure make it "multi-use".
3. At the county level I have yet to see advertised courses on how to be a legislator in New York State. The only real qualification is "are you electable" not if you can do the job. Why don't we have courses and certification for our politicians? Maybe then we could get some better qualified people.
4. We need term limits at all levels of government.
5. I have lived out west and they are more risk oriented than New Yorkers, who seem to want to hold on to the past and not reach for the future.
6. If you go to a bank for a business loan they ask for your business plan but we have counties that have no business plan and wonder why they are not making progress.
7. Inventory what is in the box before thinking outside the box. See what assets are just being wasted that we can leverage.
8. Somewhere along the line the media needs to start talking positive about WNY.
9. We pay more taxes on our house in Cattaraugus County than in Erie County, yet at a recent class reunion I talked with an individual who had a $750,000 home in NC and they were only paying $3,500 in taxes. Real Property Taxes are a "2nd Mortgage" that over 20-years will exceed the original 1st mortgage. It never goes away it only gets larger and this is driving people to other states and when they move to other states it means that their estates will be in those new states not NY. So we create a legacy situation that debases the future of NY.
10. The public is getting fed-up with the 2 major political parties blaming each other and in the process America is being destroyed either learn real quick how to promote a constructive process for success or be doomed to the race to the bottom that WNY has been on for the last 50 years.
11. Community governments are being overwhelmed by regulations and mandates that don't seem rooted in common sense.
12. The new land banking law for communities is a good idea.
13. Cheap power from Niagara Falls for NYC is great but expensive electric for WNY is debases a fair and level playing field for developing business.
14. WNY needs a "Red Ball Express" program for implementing new or good ideas.
15. Look my organization up on the internet we are an all volunteer organization that has raised over $4,000,000 for our area and owns approximately 1,000+ acres in NY. We also have a small revolving loan fund for small businesses we understand grassroots and volunteers.
16. Cattaraugus County believes that Tourism is their number one economic engine but it does not provide high paying jobs. They need to be shown a 2nd opportunity for an economic engine that would be unique to this county and provide good paying jobs. The closing of the digital divide could provide that opportunity.
* Hopefully the State will take your suggestions and ideas seriously and will not dismiss them as so many government agencies have in the past.
* Regionalism needs to be promoted first and foremost. As a region, we could stand on our own, but there are far too many confrontational relationships between the cities, rural areas, and suburbs which undermines the actions of community groups. We also need to stop building outward and invest in our existing communities; growth needs to be within our cities, older suburban areas, and in preservation of rural areas, not in new suburban growth of fresh developments at the expense of the rest of the region.
* Many funds are wasted by those in halfway houses and supportive living, who are able to work at least part time, but are not allowed to. Many are complaining of the lack of structure in these programs and frustration of not being able to work in these settings. In another state I lived in it was not only encouraged to work, but required to work full time, attend school, or volunteer if unable to do either while in the halfway house. Also, there are many people who are on social services who are selling and using drugs that are not being drug tested. This is a waste of taxpayer dollars, as the ability to make improvements to work toward greater health and financial independence dissipates. Also, there are many who want to work at least part time, but as soon as they do, they lose social services benefits. This deters people from seeking gainful employment or seeking employment under the table. These people could reduce their dependence on taxpayer dollars and also provide more in the retail market if adjustments were made in the contribution to income rate system.
 Also I would encourage regarding all who are on Medicaid and utilizing substance abuse services that providers be required to send DSS updates upon discharge from substance abuse services.
These suggestions would encourage those who can work or want to work to look into these options and reduce the cost to taxpayers. This could potentially increase the number of taxpayers and free up tax dollars to offer businesses tax break incentives for opening new businesses or expanding existing ones.
* Nice to see the improvements in Niagara Falls area and the increase in tourists/locals.
* I am concerned that Niagara/buffalo will be taking too much of the regions funding and that the rest of us rural folk will be continued to be overlooked as we always are. The $$ always goes urban... housing standards are low.
* Regional, County, and State awareness of protecting our lake (Chautauqua) and the watershed. This is a primary economic driver for Chautauqua County both within our daily workforce environment as well as our tourism industry.
* A (Erie and Niagara Counties) differs radically from B (Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Allegany Counties) in economy and culture. I suggest fractionation of the two groups in this and future studies. My answers apply to B. I include agriculture in the life sciences.
* The survey does not reflect the scope of the area and its problems or assets. The Western Region includes cities and tourist attractions but also farms and very poor communities. These were not represented in the survey.
* I'm very concerned about the possibility of hydrofracking occurring in Western NY and the effect that will have on tourism, water supplies, and future environmental issues and with people wanting to live in the area.
* #1) Every tax requires a government bureaucracy to collect, enforce and distribute; so the more kinds of taxes we have the more taxes we have to collect to pay for collecting taxes. Work together to eliminate sales tax and property tax etc. One tax - income tax - is equitable. No one would pay more (total) in taxes if we go this route but NYS will become much more prosperous as businesses flock here and more shoppers and tourists too. DO THE MATH. ...... #2, Unite to stonewall Albany. Do not send any payments for unfunded mandates.
* Labor representation is low. Needs to create quality jobs, not just any job.
* There are existing employment, training, literacy, community development and technology transfer opportunities which are poised to augment and serve this effort. The use of block grants to each of the participating counties for enhancement and strengthening of local foundation projects and programs will go a long way toward meeting the goals of the Council.
* I would hope any resultant funding considerations will be distributed with equity and not necessarily awarded to urban/suburban areas.
* This is being called a Regional Council and it seems like it is more Buffalo, Niagara Falls then the region....there is much more to WNY than these two "cities"...we need to lead by example, get the across the board high taxes reduced, get the education quality up and consolidate the services which can then provide higher quality education, promote volunteerism throughout the area the people of WNY are the best ambassadors for the area that offers four seasons of recreation, build/enhance the existing recreational offerings and promote- With the environmental areas of concern in the area in can be a research "lab" for remediation and new technologies for green living...our farmers seem to be left out, which is sad and should not be allowed to happen we have a very large offering of foods that are local and need to be promoted, supported and celebrated and provide education/grants to continue to bring people in/back to farming. I have lived here all my life and it is so sad to see it become a "ghost town"...it can be a model of rebirth if and when the leaders begin to work towards a goal....it's time or we will be turning out the lights in WNY.
* Concerns have been raised that the Western New York Regional Council wasn't aligned properly; and that population density will cause Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Allegany Counties to be overshadowed by Erie and Niagara counties.
* Look at ways to allow low income populations to gain entree into employment that pays self-sufficiency wages.
* All mail boxes in rural routes Should have the NAME printed on the box of the resident
* I have a concern about hydrofracking. I think it probably can be done correctly, but I don't think it is, or that we can trust the promises of commercial institutions that there will not be a huge negative impact to our community.
* Protect agriculture especially farm land. Land base is shrinking while population is on the increase. Food will soon become a problem.
* We need to regionalize our small town governments and get more cooperation between towns sharing of duplicated services such as highway departments and fire departments. With the money saved it could be used to develop tourism for our areas. Until we shrink our size of government we will not be able to shrink taxes which keep people and businesses from locating in our area.
* I have great hopes for this Council. Do more listening and in more places throughout the region. Seek to hear the ideas and concerns of ordinary people. And be a clear conduit to the Governor. Act now for a 5-year window, but make sure that any actions taken now also support a vision for sustainable living 20 to 50 years in the future.
* I feel clean pure water is one of our most valuable resources. I have a concern about hydrofracking for Natural Gas in our region. The counties that border Pennsylvania are especially vulnerable. I don't trust the Natural Gas company not to pollute this water supply which feeds 3 major water sheds - Susquehanna/Chesapeake, Lake Ontario and Allegheny/Monogahela/?/Mississippi.
* It's important to utilize the resources Erie County and the City of Buffalo have, not spend money in the hopes that new resources (like a giant fishing center on a lake full of in-editable fish) will boost our economy. Buffalo has so much potential- let’s put it back on the map!
* Need to reduce the size of government across the board so that the burdens placed on individuals and businesses may be reduced. Allowing us to reinvest in our infrastructure at the appropriate level.
* AHPC is a Rural Preservation Corporation and we assist low income people with home repairs that they are unable to financially do for themselves and have low income rentals. If no funding is out there to assist people with this type of funding homes will continue to deteriorate and thus make the home unlivable. Those with small incomes not having safe and affordable housing. Without agencies like us where will the people be?
* Economic Development has to be more flexible and speedy to keep the ideas and technology here to create jobs. New businesses have incredible intellectual technologies that are portable and demand a different response than traditional manufacturing. This must be realized!!!
* If Chautauqua Lake could get the Gasoline Tax purchased by Boats (like the Snowmobilers Gasoline Taxes get to use to maintain their Trails) using Chautauqua Lake to help Maintain (shoreline cleanup) and cut the Weeds, then I believe Tourism would be Higher thus generating more Sales Taxes, more Employment, more Vacationers spending Monies on the Area's Economy, more Development, More 2nd Home Purchases, etc., etc., etc.... But as long as NYS and Chautauqua County cannot agree on how to fund Lake Maintenance, then it is the same old same old Politics at work, where nothing gets done. As a Lakefront Property with 8.5 acres and living here for 45 years, we feel our County Taxes that we pay should be enough to maintain our Lake like a Town's Highway Department is funded by a Town's Tax Base (we don't live on a Town Road but pay Town of Chautauqua taxes), but there is no Lake Maintenance budget in place anywhere around Chautauqua Lake from its Towns or Villages which takes it from the already supplied Town Taxes from their Lakefront Property owners to pay. This plus the Gasoline Tax which goes to Roads & Bridges and in a Lake's mind set should be spent on the Road of the Lake's Maintenance would help Tourism and 2nd Home Purchases. All of this needs to happen without endangering fishing...
Affordable Health Insurance is terrible for our Family and Family owned Business known as We Wan Chu Cottages. It is a Disaster in expense which went off the wall with the most recent renewal of May 1st, 2011. Who do we get to thank for this...?
I for one would be in favor of annexing Chautauqua County from NYS and go it alone or attach ourselves to PA. We have always felt that we pay for NY City's expenses and problems... And of course, we have been paying without Representation for years... Everyone west of the Hudson feels the same, I am sure... So get us some back years of Monies that have been spent on the East side of the Hudson to play Catch up in our Economy and lower our Taxes (The 5th Highest Taxed County in the Country) and Health Care expenses would be a Fare Start...
* Western NY includes the southerntier! We have development needs down here too!
* With the growing income/property/school tax burden, many middle class families do not have the disposable income available to invest in the basic maintenance of their homes. This, in part, is adding to the deterioration of neighborhoods in WNY. State government needs to reduce spending and cut taxes. The property tax cap will not succeed if state mandates aren't reduced and the local governments should NOT be allowed to circumvent the cap. Tax cuts will allow tax-paying citizens to keep more of their income which in turn would stimulate the economy. Also, the welfare system needs drastic revisions. NYS is the joke of the nation when it comes to welfare.
* It is critical that the WNY Council and all of the Council's across the state set precedent for other economic development agencies in terms of adopting clear and enforceable standards. Such standards should include - anti-sprawl measures, green building measures, quality job standards (family sustaining and prevailing wage requirements), local hiring provisions, claw back measures. Moreover, the council should advocate for further rationalization of our economic development structures and for increased community representation and participation in such structures. Specifically, IDAs in WNY should be consolidated.
* I WORK AS THE HISPANIC SERVICE NAVIGATOR AND AS AN ENGLSH PROGRAM INSTRUCTOR FOR ADULTS. ALOT IS SAID THAT THE HISPANIC POPULATION IS ONLY COMING TO OUR AREA FOR THE STATE BENEFITS. HOWEVER PROGRAMMING THAT ENCOURAGES INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY GROWTH AMONG THIS POPULATION IS NON-EXISITING, OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL/ EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS LACK TREMENDOUSLY IN OUR AREA. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (AND WHEN THE PERSON IS AVAILABLE) NONE OF OUR LOCAL OR STATE OFFICES HAVE BILINGUAL STAFF AND IT IS KNOWN THAT IN JAMESTWON ALONE THERE ARE OVER 2,300 HISPANICS. AS OUR COMMUNITY GROWS OUR STATE AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO ADDRESS THIS GROWTH AND SOON.
* The two major industries in our town are employing fewer and fewer workers. We have many educated and experienced workers without steady full time jobs. The number of people on public assistance is increasing. Our location is beautiful. The natural beauty of the area could be opened to tourist trade if there was more advertising and better roads to get here.
* Homeowners cannot continue to bear the tax burden. Alternate power needs to be developed such as Wind power and plant based fuel. Agriculture is a renewable resource not being tapped. Dairy farmers can barely survive. I am not a farmer but realize they need as many incentives as any other business. Let's support agriculture as well as manufacturing and technology.
* Concern: The WNY Regional Council will not focus enough on creating good, sustainable, living wage jobs and ensure that worker and community protections (health & safety standards, environmental standards, etc.) remain intact.
* My major concerns are focused around a large population of unemployed citizens in my neighborhood combined with a lack of opportunity to rise above this while staying within legal and ethical boundaries. Meanwhile, the area between my neighborhood and the major tourist areas is mainly abandoned buildings and pot-hole filled streets. To develop this area in a way that provides living wage jobs to local residents should be the top priority for Niagara County.
* Western New York encompasses several counties. The survey appears to focus on the Niagara and Erie counties. Many of the basic issues that affect Niagara and Erie also affect the other counties. Our diverse agency works with low-income families, many of whom live in older homes which were once build by local craftsmen, and are now in need of myriad repairs, which may not be possible without the assistance of grants. We have also begun to help towns repair and improve main street facades, which helps to bring a community together. These avenues of grant assistance are necessary due to the lower incomes of the area and the age of the buildings. The Southern Tier was once a manufacturing area, which employed skilled people, and supported a greater population. As the manufacturing found its way outside our boarders, the skilled workers also left. Our region is in need of quality jobs which pay living wages plus a skilled workforce to make it sustainable. Please visit our beautiful region, graced with both Lake Erie and Chautauqua Lake as attractive tourist destinations, and consider our many similar and unique needs as you make your decisions in awarding funding by which this area can greatly benefit. Thank you.
* It appears that this survey is more geared towards the Buffalo-Niagara areas and Erie County....don't forget Chautauqua County and the other WNY counties...
* We need to create an economy that benefits everyone, not just a few at the top. Let’s make sure that economic development doesn't just mean subsidies for big corporations anymore, but real job creation and community revitalization that turns our region around from the ground up.
* Targeted strategy areas and linked resources will be important in a city that needs to 'right-size'. Jobs need to be within walk able distances for urban populations to thrive. Stop expanding ever outward in an area of dwindling population. Repair/re-build existing infrastructure instead of creating new. Restore NY was an excellent use of NYS resources to re-use existing structures for new use. Be Green!
* The WNY Regional Council needs members who can think outside the box and not the same old way.
* Our lack of a regional multi-county planning committee with enforcement powers is our greatest disadvantage over other metro areas in and out of state. NYS should encourage metro government and consolidation of services between smaller municipalities within.
Also, an increase in wind farms along the Lake Erie shore line and encouragement of local wind turbine production would be a wonderful boost to our economy.
* You must find less expensive sources of energy and use them. Public transit will become mandatory as energy prices continue upward or else job erosion and unemployment will continue.
* Promoting architectural tourism will bring a lot of money to the area. People who travel to see architecture spend money in other areas including: hotels, food, gifts and tell others who will do the same.
* Too much puffery gets attention in this area. UB will get to destroy a vibrant, stable, safe low-income Black neighborhood because a construction company has the clout to push the citizens out. No one questions the assertions of the UB2020/ NYS SUNY 2020. For example, there has been no objective impact study of the Bioinformatics Center that was going to save Buffalo yet it costs millions and we are still bleeding people, property tax generating revenue, and not meeting the needs of Black, Hispanic, Arab American, and Native American disenfranchised populations. Andrew Rudnick, Jeremy Jacobs, Chris Collins, and Satish Tripathi do not have the answers for this region. Look what a few gardeners on the west side of Buffalo did for this city with Buffalo Garden Walk.
* Good paying jobs
* Solar-, Wind-powered or alternative-fuel arboretum, botanical garden, aviary on the waterfront next to Dunkirk Clarion Hotel, open in the winter for a respite from the cold weather.
* I would like to ensure that Cattaraugus County and its wonderful assets are not overlooked. We have many attributes to offer that cannot be obtained in larger populated areas.
* The strategy does not have any obvious interest and direction for improving and increasing water, wastewater, and broadband-high-speed communication infrastructures. It is a huge missing piece and needs to be addressed in both the strategy and the grant system.
The New York State Laws and especially the regulations promulgated by the agencies need a complete review and removal of old out of date regulations, laws and regulations that are too broad and require too many steps for citizens and businesses to comply with; wholesale deletion of "nanny laws" that presume that citizens are too stupid to make rational decisions or have been proven to be ineffective. The laws should be reviewed to determine if they are enforceable given the resources available today and if it makes sense to bother enforcing them even if we have the staff. No law should be developed without a complete plan for funding the implementation of the law; if there are no funds then it should not be pushed onto the lower levels of government and business.
Education needs to be looked at from a broad brush encompassing attitude rather than simply "higher education". Include other methods of education including vocational training, military training, apprenticeships, etc.
Almost all of the statements that we reviewed at the Alfred meeting need to be rewritten more carefully to be inclusive of the rural communities that exist in all five counties. Example: if urban means to include the villages then it needs to state it without the use of "urban" as rural communities do not consider their villages as urban centers but as center blocks to their communities.
It does not appear that Allegany County has been very well included in the work groups in general and that we are severely limited in our voting capacity on the Council itself. While we have a low population, we cover a large area that needs additional jobs, workforce development, venture capital and infrastructure investment. We have lost 4% of our population and are considered one of the least affluent Counties in New York State. Therefore, the Southern Tier Counties of Allegany, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua need to be given a stronger position rather than being lumped into the needs of Erie and Niagara Falls. Much of Niagara County on the east side suffers similar issues as we do and those rural areas need proper consideration.
Lastly: Many communities, Counties and agencies of these counties have worked long and hard on Strategic Plans and Comprehensive Plans. The references in the document on line show places like Florida but not what our communities consider the important issues for us. You need to collect all plans and try to utilize the existing work to develop your Strategic Plan. Your Council is made up of CEO's and Presidents who may know their business but do not have a complete picture of our area's needs if they are not privy to the information in the various plans.
* I think focusing money on the communities with small colleges in rural areas of Western New York would be advantageous to the colleges and the people living there. Help them create and sustain retail and restaurant business in the area to attract students and others to the towns.
* I would like to see the region focus on developing what we already have and avoid investment into one hit wonder projects whether they be bass pro or millions in tax subsidy for a few Google jobs. Fix the infrastructure so we are ready for business, stop subsidizing Greenfield suburban development. Focus on the city and first ring suburbs where infrastructure and services already exist. We cannot continue to spread roads, sewers etc for a declining population. We have lots of fresh water and cultural tourism let’s use that to our advantage. One step at a time. There are no silver bullets.
* Buffalo should work for Buffalonians- let's focus on meeting the needs and expectations of those who live here before we start talking about trying to lure more people or businesses. The grassroots organizations have done a fabulous job of protecting and promoting Buffalo. And every time we listen to our communities, we end up with a great solution. The waterfront is a perfect example of how I expect this committee to employ itself. We don't need to be the next Pittsburgh medical center or the silicon valley of the east, we just need to focus on our local communities and with your support, and they’ll do the work for you!
* There should be more emphasis on support for micro- and small-businesses. These can be a significant part of sustainable long-term plan. It also has the potential to tap into the skills and abilities on newly arriving refugees and immigrants.
* Make sure jobs are high skilled and meaningful with commensurate wages and benefits ( the state mean of the past president of the IBB)
* My suggestions would include getting the crime in western NY under control, and the counties to control their own welfare, and not have the state especially NYC dumping their part of welfare on western NY. Cut down on the amt. of services welfare recipients get, and build up for businesses to come in. We should have never lost Verizon coming to Niagara Co. cut the taxes on everyone, and see how fast companies come to western NY. Also, if you would like our students to stay after graduation take how much in taxes especially our energy costs us. We in Niagara Falls have the Power Authority in our back yard and we don't even get our energy from there. NYC gets cheaper costs then we do. Think about that. I would love to stay involved with this process.
I hope the panel really listens to the citizens with other suggestions.
* Why not put some shopping centers in Niagara Falls on the waterfront. Or how about new houses or condos or something that will get this area out of the shitter. Maybe an indoor water park or an amusement park. You wonder why people are leaving; nothing is here.
* We need to focus on transportation, more multi-modal facilities and funds, less rail bottlenecks, and build the damn bridge already!
* The local meetings are a fantastic thing because the makeup of the council seems to be very heavily concentrated in the Buffalo metropolitan area and without these local meetings, the rural and even somewhat suburban parts of the region would be left without much of a voice.
* Any economic development plan should focus on the lower-income people, because the paychecks they receive will actually be spent here in WNY, not in the Bahamas or Europe. Also, the polarization of rich and poor in the State is alarming and needs attention. We have a lot of the wonderful aspects that Chicago has used to revive itself, so we should look at their successful work for examples, but focus mainly on our own strong points. Cultural institutions need financial support, including the public libraries, where people go to educate themselves and to look for work. They are an essential building block, maybe more important than highways.
* First we should not grant massive tax cuts to the rich who are unaccountable for job creation. The focus must be on hiring from the local communities with local prevailing wages and living wages. There must be real IDA reform with claw back agreements to insure that the tax payers are not bilked as in the past with any real jobs created.
* It's imperative for Western NY to seek "high road" development, to develop the region's assets to promote industries that will contribute by providing good jobs and benefits, not solely for a small group of professionals (as in finance) but rather across multiple occupational categories and income groups. The built environment is an incredible asset here as well, with immense potential to innovate green technologies and implement them throughout the region in the existing residential and office buildings. What we need is vision!
* I believe this is the perfect opportunity to drastically reform/change/redo the REAL PROPERTY TAXATION LAW/REGULATION. Perhaps the system should be completely discarded and redone from scratch. The "over taxation" comments at the forums and from taxpayers around the State are paramount, and this may be one of the reasons. The real property taxation and assessment system in New York State is terrible. Understanding that local governments and school districts derive their revenue from real property taxes, and understand that it is necessary, the WAY it is done is terrible.
The real property tax laws, I believe, cause inequity among the various municipalities, regions and real properties. The administration of this system is expensive, the burden of that expense is shouldered by the local real property taxpayers, and the system is so entirely confusing that most taxpayers are not aware of how the amount they owe is determined. Further, many property owners circumvent the building code, refuse to obtain a building permit and shy from making improvements to their property out of fear that the Assessor will increase their assessment, thus increasing their tax bill.
I believe the State should adopt law and/or regulation that would start this reformation process by first allowing municipalities to submit plans for a "test" project on how they might like to raise real property taxes in a different manner! Out of those proposals, perhaps a team of legislators and others would be able to arrive at an idea for a much fairer and simplistic real property taxation system.
* Southern Erie, Cattaraugus, Wyoming, and Chautauqua Counties represent a tremendous tourism opportunity if properly coordinated and marketed. We have excellent skiing, world class whitewater rafting and fly fishing, great golf courses, outstanding wineries, first class gaming, historic and culturally important Chautauqua Institution, boating, camping, the finest parks in the New York State system (Allegany and Letchworth)and a large Amish community. If we can add strategically placed lodging and engage all of our stakeholders in a coordinated marketing effort, the Western Southern Tier of New York could become a vacation destination for the entire world. It's all right here on the table for us!!
* I think this is a positive step and the rights start. My only criticism for the Western New York Regional Council is in the representation of Chautauqua County. I believe there is more to promote and to concentrate on promoting than just Jamestown NY. The representation on this committee should adequately and appropriately address the entire county. Not just Jamestown. The County Executive is a great guy but he's from Jamestown. Cummins representative makes sense too but also, a Jamestown Business. What about Westfield, Mayville, Clymer, Brocton, Ripley, Sherman, Panama, Cherry Creek, South Dayton, Portland etc. I think this has to be considered or at least two more representatives from the Northwest and Western part of the County should be included.
I also think you should research a recent article in the summer 2011 Edition of the NYS Government Finance Associations (GFOA's) Newsletter written by John Savash and Jim Twombly of Elmira College. The title is "An Alternative to Residential Property Taxes in New York: A Modest Proposal" pp 6. Of the above referenced newsletter. This article sets forth a solid argument for changing the tax structure in NYS by eliminating a residential property tax and instead, utilizing a local income tax. It’s a good read and great food for thought for the Western Regional Counsel. Another excellent and very comprehensive resource which should be required reading for everyone on this regional committee is a document from the NYS Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials entitled "Connecting the Dots: A Blueprint for Revitalizing Our Communities and Our State." By Barbara J. VanEpps, NYCOMS Director of Intergovernmental Finance, 2006. If you truly want to understand NEW YORK Based on facts and strengths already, please read this. It’s not that long, it’s easy reading and it is right! IF you would like a copy, please contact me or NYCOM at 518-463-1185 or www.nycom.org Thanks for the opportunity and good luck!
* Please build on the model that NYSERDA has created to invest in environmental businesses and infrastructure. NYSERDA helped to launch our organization into a self-sufficient non-profit that now sends nearly $1M back into the state economy in direct and indirect impacts.
This model can be applied this to all sectors that have strategic value to the Region and State. As a public benefit authority, NYSERDA is considering continued invest in us because of the public good that our organization works towards. This is the way it should be for all state-supported economic development!
* School districts need merged into one county-wide entity. Volunteer fire departments need to be merged into one county-wide entity. Towns need to be merged into 4 per county. Villages and cities should remain as they are. Medicaid options and administration should be governed by the County as long as the County pays the bill.
* Get rid of the risk of fracking and preserve ag lands and water by using manure digesters with bio gas turbines. This will provide manufacturing, installation, maintenance, and infrastructure jobs, as well as recapture methane (a greenhouse gas) which would have gone to waste. The excess electric output can be used for clean manufacturing. Finally, the system will pay for itself in a few years; maybe a lease to own program?
* Although there is representation from the smaller counties on the council, there does seem to be a lack of representation providing a "small" community viewpoint. In order to strengthen our Counties and our regions we must first ensure that our communities (the foundation for the larger area) are healthy and strong.
* Growing strong communities can be done with regional initiatives if they provide support and direction that can be built upon at the local level. Without that, accomplishing many of the great ideas included in this survey will be difficult if not impossible.
* I believe there is not enough focus on Chautauqua County, and too much on the Buffalo Niagara area.
*
* I am a previous business owner and a Small Business Advisor for NYS SBDC. I not only enjoyed the forum that I attended at JCC on September 13, but feel that I have a greater understanding of the needs of WNY because of the majority of what was discussed by the participants.
I do have a concern regarding the placement of the discussion about the importance of assisting the growth and development of entrepreneurial entities within WNY. It was interesting that the discussion regarding small businesses did not generate one remark, but was listed as the second highest priority. Because this topic was the last offered, I believe that the participant’s energies and attention spans were depleted on the earlier topics. May I suggest allowing the participants of the future forums to first prioritize the topics of discussion and then present the topics in that order.
* I am an ex-pat who is moving back to Buffalo next fall. Being quite familiar with the life science industry that has developed in the Boston area, I strongly believe that the nascent life Sciences companies that are developing around the BNMC being invested in and developed for their economic and job creation potential. I also believe that a much stronger strategy should be developed to offer incentives, land, tax breaks and credits, etc to Canadian companies to locate their US headquarters in the Buffalo area. The BNE does a nice job getting Canadian companies to establish an operation in the area but those operations are usually small potatoes located in an office or industrial park in Wheatfield.
* I have great hopes for this Council and would like to see it be as open and transparent as possible in its deliberations and decisions.
* Build a high speed CARGO train from Niagara Falls to New York City, connecting all airports within. This would provide unlimited cargo capacity for NYC and the state. Investors would pay for the construction as they make money from it. Additionally, please contact me as I am currently trying to develop the venture capital sector in WNY.
* I truly believe the key to a thriving WNY is in building local businesses - with owners rooted in WNY. If local businesses grow, the population will remain, and eventually attract outside businesses.
* Agriculture is a one of the growth industries of the world. It continues to grow and is a source of export to New York. The same benefits of low cost power and Tax Breaks given by IDAs and governments should be extended to active farms.
* NO HYDROFRACKING.. We have so many other opportunities to create job growth here. Help farmers grow corn and soy beans for biodiesel fuel if you are looking for alternative energy. it is safe and nonthreatening to our environment as well as an opportunity for job/business growth
* We have much to offer in this area, we need to cut things like NY disability insurance cost and the prohibitive costs of doing business in NY.
* The Aquarium is looking forward to working with the WNY Regional Council to assist with the future of WNY. We hope that this will include the vision of the Aquarium for expansion in the near future.
* Fracking for natural gas will not make New York State more attractive to industry, if anything it will make less attractive. It will ruin water supplies. Then there is the cost of the treatment of wastewater which is more expensive than traditional methods of wastewater treatment. Then there are the public eyesores they will create which will make New York next to worthless as a tourist destination.
* We need a more bike friendly city please!
* I think buffalo should be marketed as a college town like Boston...
* Ex-resident of Westfield, NY. Wonderful place but can't afford the taxes when there is no employment
* There is a need for collaboration among organizations and synergistic entities to provide the leverage for WNY to compete with other regions of the country.
* I have the same fear many people in this area have: the lower 3 counties will be forgotten.
* Focus on NF history and architecture
* Make NF a tourist destination just as Williamsburg VA has done

and they don't have the Falls or the Whirlpool!!!

* From a Niagara County tourism aspect, the Niagara Falls Heritage Area is our biggest asset. The city of Niagara Falls' Waterfront areas -- both the Upper River and gorge commercial areas are the most critical to tourism, as well as the economical development of the city
Therefore, removal/reconfiguration of the Robert Moses Parkway along the city's waterfront and development of the adjacent area is the NUMBER ONE opportunity for the city of Niagara Falls.
> It is already on the table -- and has been for some time.
> It is a critical part of the city's 2009 Comprehensive Plan.
> It will create immediate economic impact
And, It will spur both Public and Private Development for years to come.
* Our clean hydro power should be an asset to our region and should not be shipped out of all. All, including residences should enjoy the benefit.
* I hope that each county in the WNY Region will benefit - not just the large metro areas.
* As summer resident of Chautauqua Institution, I think that in your planning you need to be concerned about the quality of Chautauqua Lake as an economic engine for Chautauqua County. This past summer the sea weed was very bad in late August due to many factors. One being the sea weed cutters of the Chautauqua Lake Association had its budget cut by 1/3 due to a budget cut by the State of New York.
* Please put more effort into sustainable green economies, recycling, and local food production.
* Regionalize local government! - The state can provide incentives. Reduce urban sprawl. Encourage mixed use development in the city- i.e. change building codes and provide tax incentives. Canadians already come here to shop. Get them to spend the weekend with entertainment/ hotel packages. Demand results from non-profits such as the Buffalo/Niagara partnership and Buffalo Place whose mission it is to spur economic development. It is my opinion that these groups have not performed well enough. Big developers such as Benderson have monopolized the market and therefore need more regulation and oversight. Above all, be creative- don't simply copy what's been done in other cities. I see very few CREATIVE solutions by anyone in government. Our goal should be for other cities to want to copy us. Thanks.
* 1. Smart Growth is important to consider with regard to existing failing infrastructure. Rather than spend money on new infrastructure to accommodate sprawl, we should renew the existing water and wastewater infrastructure to solve pollution problems and encourage infill development.
2. When promoting the region for tourism, it is important to do so in an environmentally sustainable manner. Green the hospitality industry, which is one of the most polluting industries, and ensure they operate efficiently and responsibly. Green hospitality venues will attract visitors and conventions and money.
* Non-profit groups owning historic buildings need government partnerships to preserve these Western NY landmark buildings for the enjoyment of future generations. Historic preservation promotes tourism and economic development in our community. Historic preservation should be included in the strategic plan of the WNY Economic Development Council.
* Lack of Labor representation in the process. Concerned that we will be too much about Academic pie in the sky theory as opposed to the reality down in the trenches. Feel that schools are not presenting the alternative jobs opportunities that are needed especially jobs in the Trades (Technicians, electricians, skilled workers, etc.). Too much infighting between all areas and groups, need to work better as a single area, not as series of independent fiefdoms. We need to work on our strengths, i.e. location, fresh water, natural beauty and recourses.
* The council mentioned "back-office" support and my experience over the past nine years is that such "jobs" are not real opportunities for individuals in many cases. I am a single mother with a bachelor's degree from UB and I have personally been exploited in such positions to such an extreme of abuse that I am worse off now than I was when I moved back here nine years ago. I had successfully developed myself as a freelance writer prior to moving back here, interviewing business owners, community and business leaders, mutual fund managers and high level executives, in a variety of industries. My freelance writing business grew substantially over a four year period while living in a rural area. But after my husband's death, I chose to take what I viewed as a more stable path of working for someone else, and I chose the financial industry. I obtained insurance licenses and series 6 and 63, and advanced through several positions until the economy collapsed. But the first position was in a call center for a large bank. I hoped it would be a career position. However, first, as the single mother in the pool of hires I was offered only a choice of 2nd or 3rd shifts. I accepted based on lies I was told about training lasting 8 months, then I was given the bums rush to find child care sooner for those shifts, which was extremely difficult and stressful due to a complete lack of understanding by management. I got sick and had my direct report manager changed on me while I was out, and made a negative report due to my not reaching the person. Then my son was injured in day care and I was told I could not take time off to care for him. I pleaded with them to change my shift and they refused. I was lied to about how to move forward in my position toward the licensing I was later to pursue on my own outside of that company. I ended up taking my children out of daycare when my daughter was 12 to leave the kids at home (to become latch key kids) and she and I and my son are suffering from behavior and emotional problems developed under all this stress. Now my work record looks like "job hopping" but the point missed is that most of the time I managed to works somewhere? The call center lends itself to fast hiring but fast turnover as well. If the view was toward companies that allow parents to work from home (the technology is available for call centers to do this) and more "back office" companies were employee owned and operated this might be a viable medium for economic development, but please bear in mind, if jobs are not living wage, and not otherwise supportive of family life, there will be no economic growth as a result. The companies who get incentives for job creation need to be held accountable for really creating jobs and for treating employees with respect, not just "exploiting" them. Better to promote small business run by local residents than waste any more time or money trying to "attract" outsiders. When we create a good community, people will want to come and live here. Most of my family has left.
* Those resources get fairly divided and that the rural areas of all these counties get a fair share of assistance. The lack of clarity on how housing resources fit into this system raises concerns and how the council which seems pretty unaware of housing programs and requirements can make decisions for the region.
* Front page of the Western New York Regional Council website -- no mention of Chautauqua, Cattaraugus or Allegany Counties
* Pay attention to the needs of the broader population.
* 1) the council needs to find a way to encourage individuals to be proactive, creative and entrepreneurial, not wait for the "NYS plan" or "WNY plan" which will only empower bureaucrats
2) we need embrace wholesale changes in the way we educate our children from ages 4 through post-secondary
* Don't give a massive tax break to the wealthiest New Yorkers in a time of economic crisis. The Regional Council must advocate for IDA reforms such as local hiring and prevailing wage, living wages and anti-sprawl measures.
* Following attendance at the September 14, 2011 public workshop, we respectfully submit the following comments on why investing in housing should be part of any plan for economic development:
	+ Building new and improving existing housing stock both create jobs and stimulate the economy
	+ On average construction cost for one owner-occupied rehabilitation unit is $18000- money that goes directly to small contractors and suppliers
	+ Multi-family housing construction or rehabilitation of rental housing creates construction jobs initially putting millions of dollars into the local economy, and after the property is occupied- it produces jobs for property managers, maintenance workers, service providers, ext. as well as pumping thousands of dollars annually into local economy for services, products and taxes.
	+ Affordable housing had been identifies as one of our regional assets. This is true in comparison to other areas of the country and for certain populations. It is not necessarily true for lower-income renter and home owners, nor does it take into account housing conditions
	+ A minimum wage earner can only afford rent of $377/month and the 2011 Fair Market Rent (established by HUD at the 40th percentile of area rents) is $605. Home owners particularly seniors, struggle with increasing real estate taxes and the cost of repairs
	+ One third of Erie County’s housing units are over 70 years old; 64% are over 50 years old. There is a significant need for capital improvements and repairs for both owner-occupied and rental units
	+ We would second the comments about the need to rehabilitate or demolish vacant units
	+ Investment in energy-saving repairs and capital improvements should be an integral part of a green plan, and add significantly to the affordability of a property
	+ Significant numbers of housing units require lead remediation
	+ Housing issues, particularly housing quality, are not limited to the cities in Erie County; they also exist in firs-ring suburbs and in rural areas.
	+ Decent affordable housing had a significant impact on the well being of every community. According to the attached brief by the Center for Housing Policy, “Research had shown that the stability of an affordable mortgage or rent can have profound effects on childhood development and school performance (Lubell and Brennan 2007) and can improve health outcomes for families and individuals (Lubell, Crain, and Cohen 2007)
	+ A sufficient supply of decent affordable housing is a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining workers
* Figure out something to support Kevin Gaunes downsizing plans. Like charge $100,000 per year to every town that does not consolidate and give that money to every tone that does merge with another town
* Develop waterfront of buffalo
* Niagara Falls THRIVES on the Canadian side. The American side looks like crap. Develop that
* I can't make the initial meetings, but wanted to share my thoughts. Please include manufacturing growth in your economic development growth plans. Too often, we are quick to label Rochester, New York as "high tech" manufacturing - we're much more into manufacturing than that!
* Please consider historic preservation as one of the priorities for Western New York
* I wonder if the following would be of interest to the council. <http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/0909_skills_unemployment_rothwell_berube.aspx>
* I attended a meeting called by sen. Maziarz to discuss the real Econ. Dev. Issues in e Niagara Falls area with Ken Adams, the new guru of USA Niagara. Ken asked for three things to have him come away from the meeting with. I suggested whatever he came up with, follow up on just one. We are tired of these meetings with appointees who can do nothing about the situation they have been appointed to address. Not only has Mr. Adams not followed up, he has stonewalled people calling his office, fails to return calls, and differs any questions to his equally non responsive staff. I'm done with these birds.
* I am a small business owner. I resent having to cover for Albany's misjudgments and having to pay per capita-for example the recent unemployment tax charges (2nd time). At least in Buffalo, there is very little big business left and if you tax and levy and charge the small businesses repeatedly, there won't be many of these left either.
* This is Paul Hutchins from Hutch Enterprises. We have a plan to bring the National Comedy Hall of Fame to Main Street in Niagara Falls. This project will create 50 new jobs just for the operations of the hall of fame. It will also produce construction and spin off jobs from businesses in nearby buildings that are currently vacant. We have letters of support from Sen. George Maziarz, Sen. Mark Grisanti, Assm. John Ceretto, Assm. Robin Schimminger and Mayor Paul Dyster. We have the numbers and economic impact this project would produce for Niagara Falls. We are prepared to give a presentation to the council at any time. We must add that time is of the essence for this project as we are in competition with the cities of Boston and Louisville.
* There are numerous State and Federal programs which sporadically provide financial incentives to businesses but no mechanism for this information to be shared with the business community. A newsletter providing up to date information on these incentives including advance warning of upcoming offerings as well as tips and one on one help in applying for specific grants would be of tremendous help as most companies don't have the resources to stay on top of these ever changing opportunities.
* Check out the Ministry of Ontario Economic Development--we just need to look over the border-pretty simple their model is winning-WNY has an advantage over the rest of Upstate-we just need to tap into the vast global opportunity of Southern Ontario
<http://www.ontariocanada.com/ontcan/1medt/downloads/ofb_overviewMay2011_en.pdf>
* I did the online registration which should have revealed the obvious: FREE energy would help make things more profitable versus energy from expensive, hard to get to, sources under oceans, mountains, or bound in rocky-sandy layers requiring massive surface destruction.
 More profit could generate a halt to ever increasing prices of goods and services. Most of the surface of the earth FREE energy capture systems would be made in The USA creating jobs in Western NY as well... It is CLEAR we are choosing to destroy capitalism. It is time to change.
* I wanted to provide a few thoughts I had after the program.
* The question on our border proximity to promote doing business with Canada: One gentleman said that while it was nearby, Canada didn’t represent a large enough market and we should look globally instead. I’ve read many articles on International Trade and many businesses that export globally used Canada as their first foreign market. The logistics are easier and this makes the payment time frames shorter. There is little currency risk, no language barriers for most of the country, and it’s easier to check out the credit worthiness of the customers. That makes our focus on Canada even more important. It’s the gateway market for many
	+ The question on fostering an entrepreneurial culture question: It’s not enough to just encourage people to start businesses and to improve their access to capital. We need to educate them on what their commitment needs to be. Many individuals that complain about not being able to access capital are not willing to invest any of their own money into the business. Many also have credit score issues. We need to do a better job of informing the public about the true personal commitment, dollar wise and time wise, that they must make to become an entrepreneur.
	+ Begin teaching entrepreneur ship in high schools. This is easy to accomplish. The SBDC has a free program teachers can tap into right now. To learn more go to [http://oe2.nyssbdc.org/News.php?news=NE](https://ecowa.exec.ny.gov/owa/redir.aspx?C=373d6ccca5de4c1a896de6fcb3f5a2b3&URL=http%3a%2f%2foe2.nyssbdc.org%2fNews.php%3fnews%3dNE)  I’m sure we can arrange a demonstration of the product for the council or working group if needed.
* I have additional comments I’d like to make concerning the importance of agriculture to economic development in WNY
	+ Foremost I would like to impress upon council members the synergistic nature of agriculture in the economy of western New York.  At the Olean meeting, a comment was made regarding concern that agriculture doesn’t contribute a significant number of jobs to the economy.  I’m not a good debater and I chose not to argue this statement in the public forum, but this couldn’t be further from the truth.
	+ Agriculture contributes to the economy through the inputs purchased (mostly locally).  This includes fuel, fertilizer, feed, seed, lumber, gravel, machinery.  Services such as veterinary, accounting, banking and trucking, to name just a few, are usually contracted locally as well.  Finally, products from the farm are often processed locally and always must be shipped in one form or another.  All of these entities represent a giant pyramid whose base is the local farm.  Yes, there are certainly direct jobs on the farm too.
	+ One participant asked about the jobs represented in such companies as Friendship Dairies in Friendship, NY and Empire Cheese in Cuba, NY.  I didn’t know off-hand but, these two dairy processing plants employ approximately 600 in rural Allegany County.  This is no small impact, especially in rural western New York.  Welch’s, Steuben Foods, Upstate-Niagara and numerous other processing facilities in our area employ lots of workers and rely upon local farms to supply them with raw products.  The impact to the local economy of farm input and service providers, farms, plus agricultural processing, is huge.
	+ Unfortunately there is no one simple solution that will enhance agriculture in our region.  There are a number of ideas that, if implemented, will improve agriculture’s situation here.  We simply cannot compete with many of the nations our agriculture is pitted against because our production costs are so high.  Fuel costs need to be contained and lowered if at all possible.  Group purchasing of fuel and any other mechanism that might reduce this cost would be welcomed.  Additional tax reform would be helpful to reduce this huge burden to farmers.  Providing regulatory relief to farmers themselves, input and service providers, as well as trucking/shipping providers will reduce the cost to farmers.  Promoting adoption of the Farmer’s Regulatory Relief Act in the New York State government right now will help give our farmers a little bit of a leg up on their competitors.  Development of new, or support of existing, value-added processing facilities will enhance agriculture in the area.  Adding new markets for products and helping farmers adjust to changing niche markets would also add to the stability of agriculture in the area.  These ideas are the tip of the iceberg and other ways that agriculture can be enhanced are as numerous as grapes in a vineyard.
* There was a good bit of concern that the needs of Erie/Niagara would overwhelm the needs of the rest of the region.  It is clear that a systemic approach is part of the council’s plan.
I want to mention two items that I think the council should consider.
1. Under the "Physical and Built Environment" section of your website, and specifically the WNY environmental snapshot; makes no mention of the presence of the West Valley Demonstration Project.   I urge you to consider the presence of that site in two ways; as a potential harm to our region through waterway and airborne contamination, but also as a potential resource for growth.
2. The West Valley Demonstration Project encompasses 3300 acres, of which approx. 250 are managed by the United States Department of Energy.  The remainder of acreage is owned by New York State, and some parts are in the process of being released for redevelopment.  In particular, a 13,000 square foot warehouse and land will soon be available.