

4.8.08

BUFFALO BRAINSTORM:

Major problems/ issues facing Buffalo?

Ann - Negativity from Buffalonians, about Buffalo, Jaded population, holds things back

Steve - have become butt of our own jokes/ and our lack of productivity

Stephanie - power structure also jaded and stuck in old methods of thinking

Market strength of people

Brian - in thriving cities, there is not a reliance on politicians to fix, there can be good political interventions, on the economic side.

Whitney - areas on west side doing well is where community groups have stepped into strategic role

Kirk - have input from all voices. Go around for top one or two - personal responsibility does come into play, esp. in neighborhoods, organize and act around localized issue

Jayne - quality of life does come down to an aesthetic, always facing question of why did you move to Buffalo from Maui? Has to do with what calling is and who you are supposed to be around, etc. Are incredible assets (i.e., lake), that lack connection to city life

Michael - doesn't buy into 'the way it's always been perspective', from perspective of community organizing, there will be people who don't agree and always agree, you don't spend much time on - it's the people in the middle we need to convince. Not reliant on gov't, but need accessibility to the process, places at the table on strategic interests, wants enablers/ collaborators, not barriers. Need not just strong private investment, but social investment.

Monica - all advisors told her she would not get a job here - people don't want to relocate, but it comes down to job market

Joseph - people's jaws drop when he says he came here for a job

Disparity of vacant houses and ex-urban development

Walkability and transit promote own sense of environmental consciousness, but People hate the train, blame it for fall downtown

Anthony - Pace of change glacial, lack of overall strategy, fear of change

Jayne - ability to be a home owner and have a sense of place, ownership, and history, walkability

___ -- legacy of racism, increasing polarization, overcoming is incentives for people to move back to Buffalo

Ann - immense poverty - 2nd largest poverty rate

Monica - public schools are a huge problem

Positives/ Solutions -

Post-secondary institutions are becoming more marketing/ promotion savvy, influential

Community Organizations - difference between failure and success is being more strategic, forward-looking, and proactive

Groundswell of community participation, hope is that the bottom has been hit, and rebound is happening, now more collaboration, interest in furthering CoB

REPLY FROM COLUMBUS:

Similarities -

1. People ask us the same question - Why did you move back to Ohio or Columbus?

2. Image needs improving - Corn Town, Cow Town, College Town
3. Columbus Public Schools have issues. People believe that they have to move to the suburbs in order for their children to get a good education.
4. We do not use our river/water front to its fullest capacity.

Differences

1. Columbus is seen as being a very excepting city for different cultures, races, and the GLBT community
2. We are working to build a 2.8 mile street car connecting Ohio State with the downtown
3. We do not have a lake.

What do we know/think about Buffalo:

1. Buffalo Bills
2. Its on Interstate 90
3. Snow Belt
4. Niagara Falls

Anything positive we know:

1. They have a fabulous free summer concert series that brings in national acts
2. They have a special improvement district

Anything we have seen or done in Columbus that Buffalo might be interested in:

1. Our recent street car plan
2. Citizen Summit that the mayor hosted to get new ideas and gain immediate knowledge from 1000+ people, learned that everybody values our midwest values and are concerned about the arts community, city planners and government learned what are the priorities of the community.
3. Bicentennial 2012 Bond Issue
4. Organizing the different neighborhood commissions to get them together to talk and have a summit to compare issues and solutions
5. Establishing a Downtown Residents Association