



**PARTNERSHIP  
FOR THE  
PUBLIC GOOD**

Partnership for the Public

Good is a community-based

think tank that builds a more

just, sustainable, and culturally

vibrant Buffalo Niagara

through action-oriented

research, policy development,

and civic engagement.



Pastor George Nicholas, CEO of the Buffalo Center for Health Equity, speaks at a press conference joined by PUSH Buffalo, Clean Air Coalition, WNY Law Center, and others.



## OUR PARTNERS

PPG unites 340 partner groups: a diverse array including nonprofit organizations, neighborhood associations and block clubs, labor organizations, advocacy groups, faith groups, academic institutions, businesses, museums, and more. Partnership is free and open to any organization that endorses PPG's mission, vision, and principles.



## **Policy Development**

PPG works with our partners and government officials to craft and advance policies that serve the public good. Each year, PPG and partners develop a Community Agenda of ten policy change priorities.

## **Research**

PPG offers a wealth of reports, policy briefs, fact sheets, and other resources on policy issues affecting Buffalo Niagara; all are available in the Buffalo Commons library at [www.ppgbuffalo.org](http://www.ppgbuffalo.org).

## **Civic Engagement**

PPG offers public forums and other events to engage the public on policy issues. Our workshops teach partners and residents civic skills, from how to write a letter to the editor to how to speak in a legislative hearing.

## **Public Good Radio**

PPG's weekly radio show, the Public Good, features timely conversations with partners and others building a better Buffalo Niagara. The show airs weekly on Power 96.5 FM and Mix 1080 AM, and is also a podcast on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and YouTube.

## **High Road Fellows**

Each summer, PPG and Cornell University ILR School bring 20+ Cornell students to Buffalo to study local issues and serve as interns for PPG partners. Students complete a project requested by the partner organization over an eight-week placement.

PPG supports our partners, community groups, and residents to have a stronger voice in public policy.

“When nobody else is fighting for our issues, PPG is always there supporting us, encouraging us, and giving us data to make change happen.”

Jerome Wright,  
Co-Director HALT Solitary Campaign

Pictured to the right





# AN AGENDA BY AND FOR THE COMMUNITY

Each fall, PPG invites our partners to submit proposals for the Community Agenda. Partners meet, collaborate, and consider ways to change local or state policies to advance equality, sustainability, and cultural vibrancy in the Buffalo Niagara region. The partners take a vote, and the top ten proposals become the focus of PPG's work for the coming year.

“PPG’s advocacy has played a vital role in policy victories achieved at the state and local level. They put issues at the center of public debate, allowing elected officials to propose laws that address those issues. PPG and its partners are the backbone that moves us to take a stance.”

Erie County Legislature Chairwoman April Baskin



For each issue on the Community Agenda, PPG trains partners on public policy advocacy skills, schedules meetings with elected officials, publishes needed research, and co-hosts community conversations and media events.

Dr. Leah Angel Daniel, Founder and Executive Director of Fostering Greatness, speaks at the Community Agenda Vote.

Alongside our annual Community Agenda, PPG's principles guide our work. It is these principles that a partner endorses in order to join PPG. We believe that building a better Buffalo Niagara means cultivating our region's existing assets while addressing our most serious problems at their roots.



DeAnna Eason, Executive Director of Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), speaks in front of the Freedom Wall.

# OUR COMMUNITY'S ASSETS

## **Tradition of activism, abolitionism, organizing, and resistance.**

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Buffalo Niagara was at the center of social movements including abolition, the Underground Railroad, labor organizing, civil rights, women's rights, LGBTQ rights, environmental justice, and many other forms of grassroots activism. Residents and community groups continue to resist injustice and organize for a better future. Extensive work in and with local communities, including Indigenous, Black and immigrant communities fighting systemic oppression, continues this legacy. A robust ecosystem of nonprofit, community, labor, and faith-based organizations work together to provide mutual aid and advocate for meaningful change.

## **Diversity.**

As the second largest metropolitan area of New York State, Buffalo Niagara's population is ethnically and racially diverse. Our strength is rooted in many groups' cultures, including the Native American communities of the Haudenosaunee, immigrants who arrived during Buffalo's industrial expansion, Black participants in the Great Migration, migrants from Puerto Rico to the mainland, and refugees from around the world.

## **Historic architecture, urban fabric, and the Olmsted Park system.**

Buffalo's economic history as an international trading hub and center of industry created the "good bones" of a well-planned, vibrant, and prosperous city. The legacy of this period remains in our urban fabric, landmark buildings, beautiful parks and parkways, and architecturally diverse homes.

## **A wide-ranging, vibrant cultural scene.**

Buffalo Niagara has an expansive presence of musical, theatrical, visual, literary, and other artists and arts organizations. Buffalo has grown significant artistic movements in areas like jazz, literature, and hip hop. Our museums, public art, and cultural festivals are flourishing.

## **Abundant natural resources and the Great Lakes.**

Buffalo Niagara has an abundance of natural resources that prime the area for sustainable green energy, resilience, and ecological regeneration, centering on the Niagara River corridor and the Lake Erie watershed. Our geography means that the region has rich biodiversity and excellent farmland for fruits, vegetables, and dairy. Extensive civic work has preserved, renewed, restored, and reclaimed many of these resources.

## **Many colleges and universities.**

Buffalo Niagara is home to twenty institutions of higher learning, which bring diverse educational opportunities to students, serve as major employers in the local economy, and offer extensive research facilities and resources for community partnerships and projects.

## **Many local, independent businesses and support for entrepreneurship.**

Buffalo Niagara has a strong presence of small shops, locally-owned restaurants, and independent businesses. There is increased training and support available for community members to develop, expand, and sustain small and cooperative businesses. These are important pathways to economic independence, mobility, and a democratic economy that works for all residents.

## **A skilled and organized workforce.**

Buffalo Niagara features an educated, skilled workforce with high graduation rates. One of the most unionized regions in the nation, it has a rich history of labor organizing, innovative workplace practices, labor-community collaboration, and advocacy for economic democracy.

# OUR COMMUNITY'S CHALLENGES

## **Economic inequality.**

Economic inequality is the worst problem affecting Buffalo Niagara. Forty percent of households do not make enough to afford the cost of living. Yet, New York state is home to the largest concentration of the nation's wealth. Due to systemic racism, economic inequality disproportionately impacts residents who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Effective poverty-fighting tools include minimum and living wage policies, progressive tax policies, support for labor organizing, well-funded public assistance programs, and protection from predatory lending and other exploitative practices.

## **Discrimination and segregation.**

Buffalo Niagara is one of the most racially segregated regions in the nation. A long history of racist land policy and ongoing discrimination contribute to a lack of housing choice and inequitable neighborhood investment. Illegal discrimination based on race, source of income, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and other classifications is also rampant in crucial areas like employment and banking. We must prioritize making quality housing, jobs, and other economic opportunities accessible to all.

## **Education.**

The most severe problems in our public schools are symptoms of the extreme inequality described above. For example, far too many students were recently evicted, were exposed to lead in their home, or have an incarcerated parent, and live with trauma as a result. That being said, major improvements in public education are possible, starting with universal, quality pre-kindergarten, enhanced after-school programs, more equitable financing for high-needs schools, expanded literacy programs, improved workforce training, and more affordable higher education. Language access, trauma-informed services, and performance-based assessment are particularly critical areas for improvement, given the large numbers of refugees and Limited English Proficiency students.

## **Environment.**

Buffalo Niagara has major environmental problems with sprawl, air quality, water quality, and brownfields. We are experiencing the negative impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events. However, with our abundant water, wind, and solar resources, our region can be a refuge for climate migrants and a major hub for clean, green energy. We must ensure the safety of our residents and ecosystems by promoting green infrastructure, restoring our waterways, and protecting our biodiversity.

## **Housing.**

High rents, inadequate wages, and poor housing quality mean that many residents can't afford their housing costs, live in unsafe housing, or end up unhoused. Everyone deserves access to safe, affordable housing. Top housing priorities should be de-commodifying housing to ensure that it remains affordable, limiting rental costs to prevent further displacement, providing lead remediation, and improving housing quality. Any new housing units should be sustainably built to reduce energy costs, decrease pollution, and withstand extreme weather events.

## **Health.**

Buffalo Niagara suffers from unusually bad health outcomes closely linked to poverty, segregation, disinvestment, and environmental problems. Examples include lead poisoning and asthma, which disproportionately affect people of color and people with low incomes. Within the City of Buffalo, the life expectancy of Black residents is 12 years shorter than that of white residents. There is an urgent need to eliminate these racial, economic, and geographic-based health inequities.

**Community safety.**

Local governments over-rely on policing while underinvesting in public and behavioral health. This makes our communities less safe and particularly harms residents who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color, with persistent racial disparities in arrests, sentencing, and incarceration. Investing in alternatives to policing, such as the use of civilian responders for incidents involving mental health and other nonviolent situations, can reduce unnecessary interaction with law enforcement. Funding should be redirected from responding to violent crime to preventing it. Community-led safety initiatives, including parent networks, violence intervention, drug user health, and restorative justice, should be recognized as proven building blocks of public safety, worthy of significant public investment.

**Development.**

Our region's economic future lies in sustainable, community-controlled development that supports local, independent businesses, living wage jobs, and environmental responsibility. Development resources should be concentrated in high-need areas where they will have the greatest impact, not squandered on greenfield sites in areas experiencing development pressure. Municipalities and developers should center residents as experts and decision-makers in their own neighborhoods.

**Transportation.**

Buffalo Niagara lacks accessible, timely public transportation. One in every four households in the city of Buffalo does not have access to a car, and they often miss out on quality job opportunities, housing, education, and healthcare due to lack of accessibility. As a state and region, we must reorient our policy decisions to prioritize public transportation, which is more equitable and sustainable than private vehicle use. This includes creating robust dedicated funding sources for public transit, investing in electric buses, increasing bus service, expanding the metro rail system, and incentivizing use of public transit.

**Cultural support.**

Arts and culture organizations are critical community assets in Buffalo Niagara. They provide neighborhood services and spaces of belonging for children and adults, drive economic and tourism activity, and create a vibrant quality of life. The arts and culture sector, however—especially small and medium organizations and those serving people of color—has been severely under-funded. Smaller and “frontline” groups in particular need transparent, equitable, and sustainable government funding. In addition, local governments should support Buffalo Niagara's cultural history by moving quickly to preserve landmark architecture and by valuing Native American historical sites and culture.

**Taxes and government revenue.**

Major reform is required to (i) reduce the tax burden on people with low incomes; (ii) increase taxes on products and activities that cause pollution in order to reflect their true social and governmental costs; (iii) reduce wasteful corporate tax subsidies; and (iv) provide greater, more equitable, and more predictable support to high-poverty cities and counties.

**Representative, accountable, and transparent government.**

Making state and local government more democratic, efficient, and accountable will require campaign finance reform, the curtailing of independent authorities, and increased regional cooperation, along with close attention to issues of patronage, contracting procedures, ethics, public input, transparency, and the enforcement of existing laws and regulations. Elected officials and government offices should recognize the value of public participation. Broad resident input results in better policy that is more likely to be implemented successfully. To strengthen local democracy, residents' voices should be heard and valued by the elected officials that represent them.

617 Main Street Suite 300 Buffalo NY 14203  
716-852-4191 | [info@ppgbuffalo.org](mailto:info@ppgbuffalo.org)  
[www.ppgbuffalo.org](http://www.ppgbuffalo.org)