



**WINTER CITY STRATEGY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

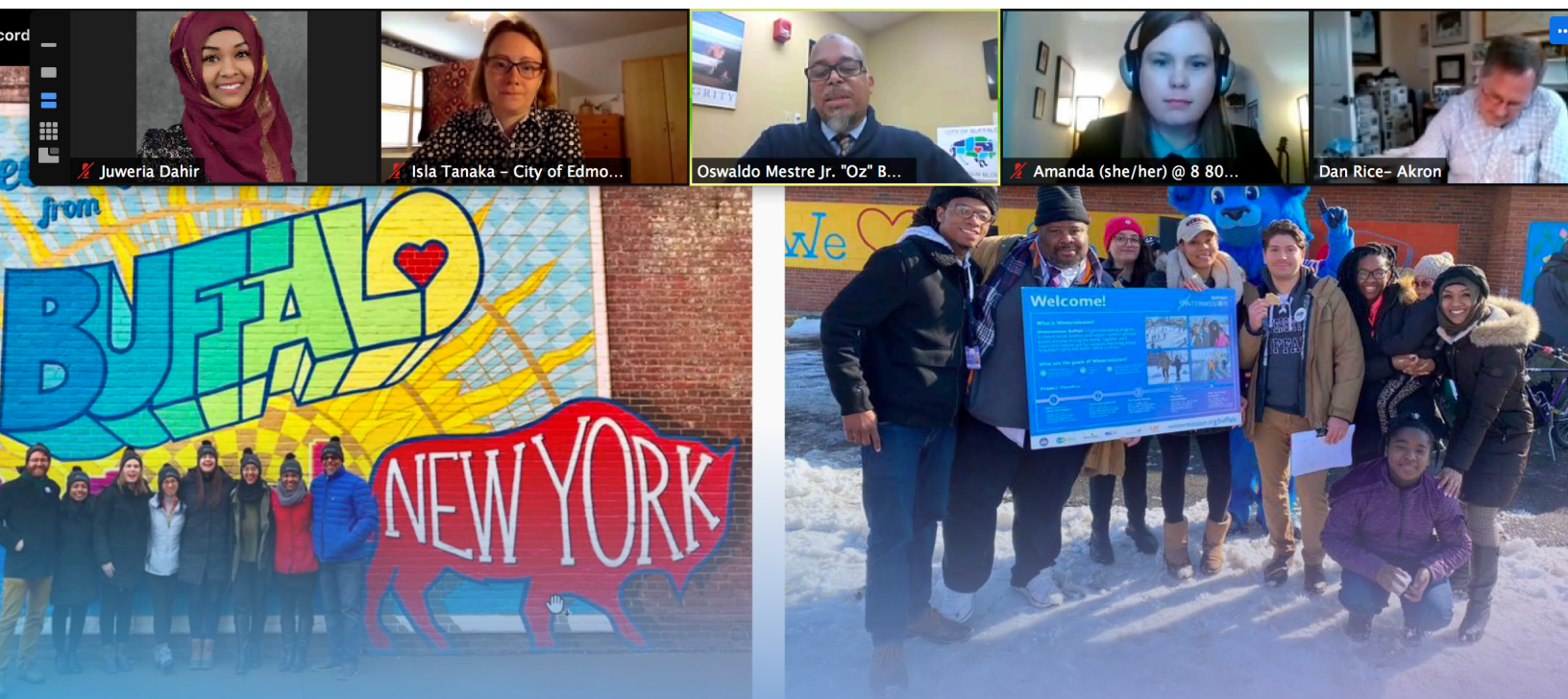
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Wintermission is a nationwide initiative led by 8 80 Cities, a Toronto-based nonprofit organization, in partnership with Children and Nature Network and National League of Cities. The project is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and CAF America. In the fall of 2018, 8 80 Cities put out a call for program partners and challenged American cities to assemble diverse teams that would advance the goal of reducing social isolation during winter. The response was astounding, with 62 cities of all sizes submitting applications. Buffalo, New York, along Eau Claire, Wisconsin and Leadville, Colorado were selected as the three winning cities.

The Wintermission Buffalo team is lead locally by representatives from the City of Buffalo's Division of Citizen Services, GObike Buffalo, and Wellness Institute of Greater Buffalo, in collaboration with a long list of community partners. Over the past two years, Wintermission Buffalo's activities have included:

1. **Convening** with the Eau Claire and Leadville Wintermission teams at the Winter Cities Shake-Up Conference in Saskatoon, Canada to workshop winter city ideas with leaders from other cities and get inspiration for their own winter city work.
2. **Engaging** over 600 diverse residents on how to improve winter life in Buffalo through an inclusive community consultation process.
3. **Piloting** four community ideas for enhancing public life in public spaces and reducing social isolation during winter through a series of short-term pilot projects.

The Buffalo Winter City Strategy lays out a common vision and recommended actions for improving the quality of winter life in Buffalo's residents over the next 10 years. It was created using Buffalo's existing strengths as a winter city, feedback from community engagement and pilot project activities, and lessons learned from other winter cities around the world. Buffalo's Winter City Strategy is about capitalizing on its community assets, creating new programs and policies to fill existing gaps in winter design and public life, and ensuring the city is welcoming and inclusive for all.



VISION

Buffalo is a city where people celebrate and embrace winter as an opportunity to connect across generations, languages, classes, and cultures. We envision a future in which Buffalo's city and community leaders alike generate and participate in winter initiatives that empower our most vulnerable residents to be active in winter. Ultimately, our hope is that Buffalo will be seen as a welcoming destination to live, work, and play year-round.

Winter City Strategy

Community members identified four priority areas for increasing social and physical activity in winter, forming the four pillars of the winter city strategy: 1) Winter Accessibility, 2) Winter Programming, 3) Winter Warmth, and 4) Winter Inclusivity. Each pillar includes its own vision and associated recommendations. The recommendations reflect the need to build on existing winter programs and policies that have already seen some success in Buffalo as well as community-based desires for brand new winter initiatives.



Pillar I: Winter Accessibility

Vision: Buffalo is a city that prioritizes mobility and safe access in winter, reducing barriers so

that vulnerable residents and visitors are can get around more easily and stay active year-round.

Recommended Actions:

1.1 Provide sidewalk clearing services after heavy snowfall:

If snowfall accumulates beyond 4", the City should take responsibility for clearing all sidewalks within 24 hours. Below 4", it is the responsibility of the property owner. This service would be funded through a surcharge on property owners' property tax bills.

1.2 Increase awareness and enforcement of snow clearing bylaws and policies:

Create a central webpage on the City of Buffalo website containing a comprehensive overview of municipal snow clearing bylaws, policies, and resources for residents, and promote 311 as an avenue for reporting and enforcing uncleared sidewalks.

1.3 Establish block club-based shovel corps:

Extend the Wintermission Microgrant pilot program and continue providing annual microgrant opportunities to block clubs to coordinate volunteers to clear neighborhood sidewalks.

1.4 Improve snow clearing at transit stops:

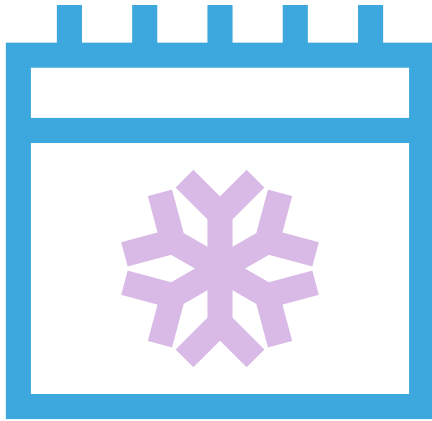
Coordinate with NFTA to take responsibility for clearing snow from sidewalks surrounding transit stations and bus stops within 24 hours of snowfall.

1.5 Clear snow along park paths and recreational trails:

Identify priority parks and recreational trails to include in a pilot for snow clearing.

1.6 Provide a real-time map of streets, sidewalks, parks, and trails that have been plowed:

Post the live map on an easily accessible website hosted by the City of Buffalo and promote the live map via social media during major storms and snow events.



Pillar II: Winter Programming

Vision: Buffalo is a city that creates opportunity for collaboration with and between local partners to animate and activate parks and public spaces across the city year-round, with a focus on neighborhood parks that also includes educational and social components.

Recommended Actions:

2.1 Expand Winterbash dates and locations:

Building on the success and lessons learned from the Winterbash pilot project, create a regular Winterbash schedule at the four pilot park sites and over time, expand the program to other neighborhoods.

2.2 Support and promote small-scale neighborhood-based activations in winter:

Develop a simplified and streamlined application process to make it easier for residents and local organizations to host public programming in local parks and public spaces.

2.3 Provide economic incentives for winter programming and business activation:

Continue using the the Love Your Block mini-grant program to fund small-scale, community-based solutions for improving winter life an pilot an annual winter innovation grant that funds brand new approaches to improving winter life in Buffalo; promote among community organizations, event organizers, and Business Improvement Districts.

2.4 Increase provision of and access to adaptive and accessible winter recreation:

Work with members of the adaptive sports community and Parks and Recreation Department to identify opportunities to offer adaptive winter recreational activities in both indoor and outdoor settings.

2.5 Include “Park Winterization” as an option in the Adopt-A-Park Feature program:

Allow sponsors to adopt winter maintenance activities of a park that would allow for it to remain open, accessible, and inviting throughout the season.

2.6 Provide afterschool winter programming in parks:

Hire activity leaders to supervise and host winter-appropriate games, activities, and programming in parks during afterschool hours and encourage community centers, schools, and other after school programming providers to bring their activities outside to parks.

2.7 Pilot a winter gear share program:

Provide free winter gear rentals to lower the barrier to winter recreation. This program can be hosted at locations such as public libraries, community centers, neighborhood skating rinks, etc.





Pillar III: Winter Warmth

Vision: Buffalo is a city that ensures that residents and visitors have access to warmth and security from the elements during the coldest season of the year with the purpose of allowing citizens and guests to enjoy our unique winter culture.

Recommended Actions:

3.1 Expand home winterization

resources: Build on the weatherization kit pilot project by formalizing and expanding the distribution of weatherization kits aimed at helping people keep their homes warm, increasing the efficiency of their home heating systems, and reducing home heating costs.

3.2 Distribute resources to educate tenants about their rights during winter and year-round:

Provide specific winter-related information such as landlord responsibilities pertaining to home heating, snow removal, and repairs and include legal information and tips on how to negotiate the court system and negotiations with landlords.

3.3 Create more winter-friendly bus shelters: Work with NFTA to identify opportunities to improve the frequency

and/or wind resistance and/or heating of bus shelters including piloting heated bus shelters.

3.4 Install permanent pavilions in parks and public spaces:

Provide shelter for people to find reprieve from wind, sleet, and snow as well as amenities such as winterized bathrooms, changerooms, seating, and vendor areas.

3.5 Install temporary “warming hut” art installations:

Host an annual competition inviting artists, architects, and designers to submit creative warming hut concepts; winners will receive funding to build and exhibit their installations in parks and public spaces.

3.6 Use year-round plantings in parks, public spaces, and transit waiting areas to provide shelter from wind in winter and sun in summer:

Identify and prioritize streets, parks, and public spaces in the city that experience harsh winter microclimates.

3.7 Install winterized bathrooms in parks and public spaces:

Retrofit existing park bathrooms to support winter use and require that all new public park bathrooms be winterized.

3.8 Amend the open fire bylaw and create a new fire pit policy:

Incorporate community fire pits and fire bowls into park programming and design; require fire pit operators to book the fire pit ahead of time and undergo a simple fire safety training session.

3.9 Use pedestrian-scale lighting to improve safety and provide visual warmth:

Use creative yet context-sensitive lighting to make streets, parks, and public spaces more whimsical, inviting, and magical in winter.

3.10 Support public art that uses color and light to brighten up the long, dark days of winter:

Fund public art that responds to the need to increase warmth, light, and sense of safety and comfort throughout the year; encourage artists to develop interactive, site-specific works.



Pillar IV: Winter Inclusivity

Vision: Buffalo is a city that works closely with our vulnerable and historically marginalized populations through programs that facilitate access to resources so that all residents, visitors, and communities can connect and thrive in winter together.

Recommended Actions:

4.1 Develop a comprehensive online winter resource guide: Target information in guide towards both longtime residents and newcomers who are unfamiliar with living in a winter city. Include practical information such as dressing for the weather, keeping a house warm, getting around safely in winter, as well as information about affordable recreational programming and events

4.2 Pilot a Seniors in Service Friendship Program for Newcomers: Connect seniors with newcomers to introduce them to winter activities and resources, teach them how to brave the cold, even invite them over for winter holidays.

4.3 Increase accessibility of existing winter events and programming for people with low mobility and disabilities: Require that winter event organizers and their staff receive education, training, and/or resources on how to support participants with disabilities from their arrival to their departure from the event.

4.4 Expand indoor winter recreation options and spaces for people of all ages and abilities: Work with disability advocates

and Division of Senior Services to identify opportunities to expand year-round indoor accessible and adaptive recreation for all ages and abilities.

4.5 Expand reach and impact of block club meetings and Block Chats through virtual channels: Continue using the block chats and block club meetings to engage residents about winter challenges and opportunities and to share winter-related information and resources. Even as it becomes safer to conduct meetings in person, continue to allow virtual participation in these meetings to reach a wider audience.

CONCLUSION

Winter affects all aspects of life in Buffalo and the journey towards becoming an even more inclusive and accessible winter city will require all hands-on-deck. The Division of Citizen Services will lead the implementation of the Buffalo Winter City Strategy, which provides a path forward to capitalize on the energy built up over the course of the Wintermission project. By leveraging winter as a time for social connection and wellbeing instead of social isolation and hardship, Buffalo has positioned itself as a foremost winter city vanguard, and in doing so has trailblazed a path in the snow for winter communities across the country to follow in its footsteps.

