



RELEASE:

Buffalo aims to become inclusive climate haven through equity planning framework

The city is capitalizing on its moderate risk to climate change impacts while future-proofing its infrastructures to become a refuge for climate migrants.

Buffalo, New York, USA 09.11.2020. The City of Buffalo, USA, is exploring how to leverage its relative low risks to climate change impacts to become a safe, equitable and inclusive city for climate migration. Acknowledging the city's abundant access to water, moderate risk towards climate change impacts, and vacant housing and large scale infrastructures, Buffalo is positioning itself as a uniquely inclusive climate refuge, where all are welcome and residents are at the core of sustainability planning.

"Buffalo's geographical conditions are an opportunity to revitalize the city's economy and transform Buffalo into a future-proof climate haven. To achieve that, we cannot only pursue environmental protection and climate change mitigation, but adaptation when necessary. We also need to make sure this transition will be inclusive and consider the needs of all our people, especially of vulnerable communities" said Oluwole McFoy, General Manager of the Buffalo Sewer Authority.

The city is looking to incorporate a cross-cutting equity focus in its future-proofing measures to mitigate social inequalities, one of its main transition challenges. Equity components will be assessed and addressed in interventions such as upgrading old buildings and ageing infrastructure for current and new residents, which will risk aggravating trends of gentrification, as well as for the effects of increased in-migration and economic shifts due to the climate haven status.

Even as a low-risk city, Buffalo will pursue climate adaptation measures like strengthening pipes and sewers, which will be impacted by increasing temperatures and precipitation levels, and participating in local government programs such as [Climate Smart Communities](#) that guide and assess municipal climate action at the operational and community levels.

"Climate Smart Communities is a state-led program to support municipal governments in assessing climate change impacts and implementing meaningful mitigation and adaptation actions. The City of Buffalo's certification in 2019 as a Bronze Community highlights the extensive work of City operations over nearly



10 years to institute energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, while acknowledging the work we have to expand on within our communities to ensure Buffalo is an equitable climate refuge for all who call it home,” remarks Kelley St. John, Resiliency Grants Manager with the City of Buffalo.

The equity framework developed for Buffalo’s award-winning [Raincheck 2.0](#) program - an infrastructure technology toolkit to maximize stormwater, environmental, equity and economic benefits - will be adjusted to integrate an equity lens into the cities’ climate planning. Buffalo will receive additional input through the [Urban Transition Alliance](#), a city network and knowledge-exchange hub that supports twelve former industrial cities from across the globe to identify common challenges, share knowledge and develop solutions tailored to their individual transitions to a sustainable future. This year Buffalo is among five cities to develop an Urban Transitions Alliance 2020 Challenge, which will help the city to explore a path towards equity in their climate haven preparations.

“Buffalo is not alone in its journey. Dortmund, Germany and Katowice, Poland, are working to address the side-effects in their climate adaptation measures, while Pittsburgh’s resilience strategy, built on the four core values of people, place, planet and performance, and Cincinnati’s equity-focused sustainability planning will provide additional insights on inclusive design,” said Rebecca Wessinghaus, Transition Concepts Officer at ICLEI World Secretariat.

“We believe peer exchange among these cities will help establish a long-term perspective and improve Buffalo’s equity outcomes, especially for its goal of becoming an inclusive climate haven,” she continued.

The Urban Transitions Alliance is an initiative led by [ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability](#), a global network of more than 1,750 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development, and supported by the [Stiftung Mercator](#), a German foundation committed to solidarity and equal opportunities.

You can find Buffalo’s full Urban Transition Alliance 2020 challenge [here](#).

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About ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability



ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network of more than 1,750 local and regional governments committed to sustainable urban development. Active in 100+ countries, ICLEI influences sustainability policy and drives local action for low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular development. ICLEI's Members and team of experts work together through peer exchange, partnerships and capacity building to create systemic change for urban sustainability.

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