

BUSINESS PLAN 2022



MEET THE
UNEXPECTED
Buffalo

visit
Buffalo Niagara

VisitBuffaloNiagara.com

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON FEBRUARY 9, 2022

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TOURISM MASTER PLAN & STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2021, Visit Buffalo Niagara commissioned a Tourism Master Plan to develop a platform through which destination partners can work together seamlessly to strengthen Erie County’s destination product and increase overnight visitation over ten years (to the year 2032). Visit Buffalo Niagara engaged MMGY/NEXTFactor to facilitate and lead the nearly yearlong countywide planning effort which culminated with the November 2021 release of the Tourism Master Plan final report and presentation to the Visit Buffalo Niagara board of directors.

For Buffalo and Erie County to realize the Tourism Master Plan’s bold vision for the future, the public and private sectors must work in unison to achieve the four major goals and strategic initiatives. The goals are aligned around elevating the long-term viability of the visitor economy, developing a competitive positioning for the county as a destination, maintaining the community’s authentic character and improving the overall destination experience for both visitors and residents.

Tourism Master Plan Goals and Initiatives:



The Tourism Master Plan was also the guiding document for the MMGY/NEXTFactor produced three-year Strategic Plan. Throughout this 2022 Business Plan, department objectives, audiences and strategies relate to the three-year Strategic Plan’s four primary goals for implementation with tactics and measurable goals.

Strategic Plan Goals:



The VBN Board of Directors ratified the Tourism Master Plan and Strategic Plan on November 17, 2021.

VBN Mission, Vision and Branding Statements

Mission Statement

Transforming our community by inspiring visitors and locals to discover Buffalo and Erie County.

Vision Statement

To be the most surprising destination you'll ever visit.

Brand Positioning Statement

Buffalo Niagara provides authentic and unexpected experiences to inquisitive explorers. The region's revitalized waterfront, restored architecture, thriving arts scene, culinary renaissance, vibrant neighborhoods, outdoor activities, and historic charm make it a not to be missed treasure for visitors and residents.

Visit Buffalo Niagara Committees / Task Forces

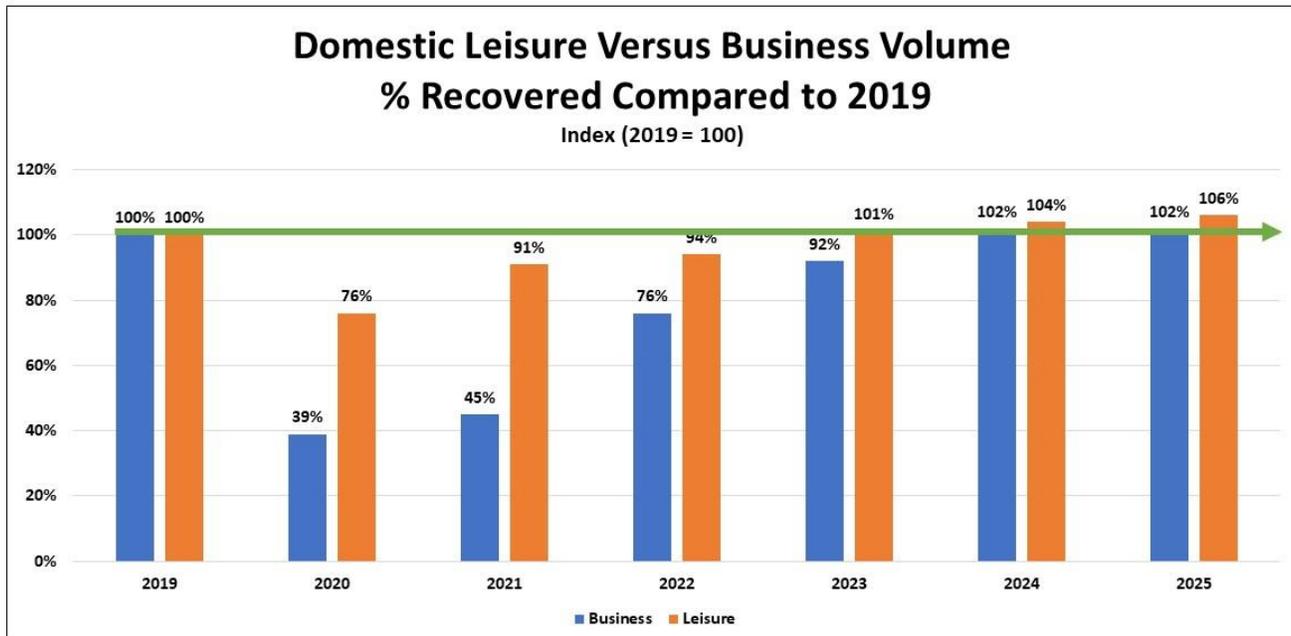
- Executive Committee of the VBN Board of Directors
- Audit and Finance Committee
- Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission – Advisory Council
- Marketing Committee
- Sales and Services Committee
- Destination Development / Industry Relations Committee
- Convention Center Advisory Committee

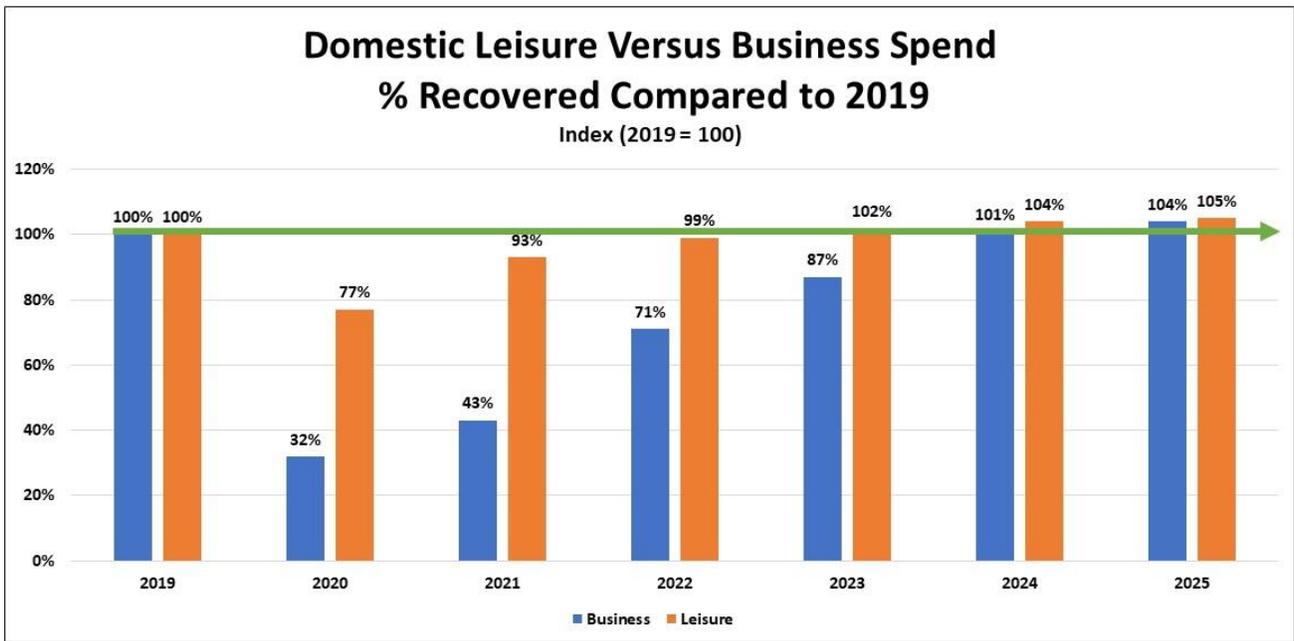
Marketing, Sales and Tourism Trends for 2022

 United States Hotel Forecast Key Performance Indicators				
METRIX	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Forecast
Occupancy*	66%	41.6%	57.6%	60.1%
Average Daily Rate	\$131.22	\$103.65	\$123.67	\$117.34
Revenue Per Available Room*	\$86.67%	\$42.88	\$71.87	\$70.57

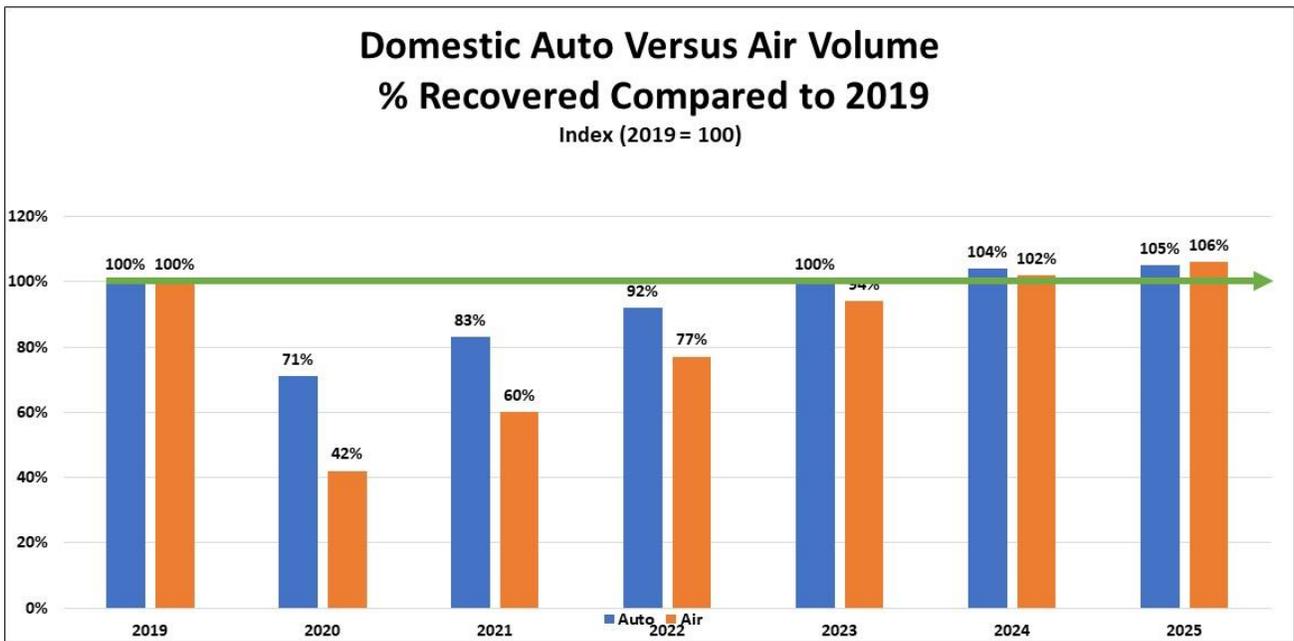
 Erie County Comparison Key Performance Indicators				
METRIX	2019 Actual	2020 Actual	2021 Actual	2022 Forecast
Occupancy*	61.6%	32.8%	52.1%	Report being produced by STR.
Average Daily Rate	\$106.85	\$87.41	\$107.60	
Revenue Per Available Room*	\$65.84	\$28.67	\$56.10	

* This assumes no temporary hotel closings





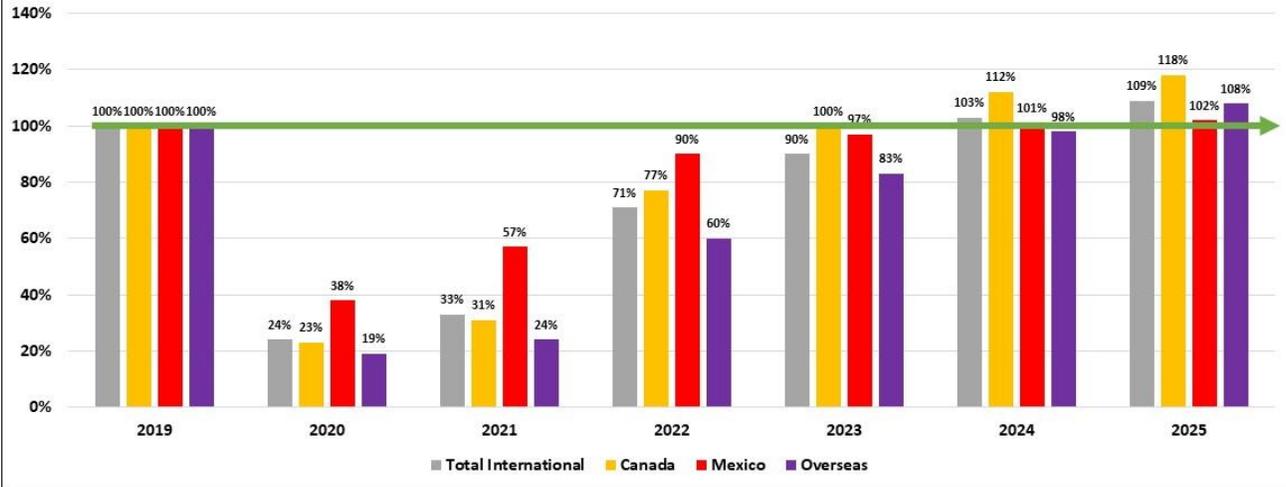





International Inbound Travel % Recovered Compared to 2019

Index (2019 = 100)



Visitor Profile for Buffalo Niagara Region

Longwoods International 2019 Overnight Domestic Visitor to Erie County

- 3.2 million person-trips
- Average daily per person expenditure: \$187
- Average # of nights spent in Buffalo: 2.9
- 63% traveled to Buffalo by car
- 34% planned their trip in one month or less
- 52% stayed in a hotel
- 62% of visitors were between the ages of 25-54
- 70% had a college degree or more
- Top 5 States of Origin: NY, PA, OH, FL, NJ
- Top 5 Activities: Shopping, State Parks, Landmark/Historic Sites, Bars/Nightlife, Museums

Longwoods International 2019 Daytrip Visitor to Erie County (Canada excluded)

- 4.4 million person-trips
- Average per person expenditure: \$59
- Average length of trip: 4.9 hours
- Top 5 Origin Markets: New York, NY; Rochester, NY; Syracuse, NY; Cleveland, OH; Boston, MA
- Top 5 Activities: Shopping, Casino, Bar/Nightlife, Landmark/Historic Site, Hiking
- 61% of visitors were between the ages of 25-54

(2019 Longwoods Int'l research commissioned by VBN)

New Developments for Fiscal Year 2022

- Buffalo Niagara Convention Center façade and interior capital improvements
- State-level Tourism Improvement District legislation
- Determination of the future Buffalo Bills Stadium
- Continuation of EC 200 – Erie County’s Bicentennial
- Return of Rounds 1 & 2 of NCAA Men’s Basketball Championship
- Continuation of Statler Hotel and Mahoney Building transformation to hotel accommodations
- Revitalization of hotel/event product at the Richardson Complex
- Launch of Seymour (See More) Buffalo mobile visitor center
- Washington DC-based VBN/BNCC sales office
- Freedom’s Footsteps – A Journey Through Buffalo’s African American History
- Unveiling of the African American Veterans Monument at the Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park
- Expansion of the Colored Musicians Club
- Visit Buffalo Niagara destination booth and media marketplace participation at IPW
- Expansion and Relocation of the West Side Bazaar
- Expansion, Reopening and Renaming of the Buffalo AKG Museum in 2023
- Renovation of the Hyatt Regency Buffalo
- Opening of the Silo City residences
- Expansion project at the Buffalo Transportation Pierce Arrow Museum
- Re-opening and new branding of the hotel at the Richardson Olmsted Campus
- Completion of the Broadway Market renovation
- Unveiling of the Central Terminal master plan
- Redevelopment planning for DR&L Terminal
- Construction of an amphitheater at the Outer Harbor
- Fall meeting planner and tour operator FAM tour to coincide with Goo Goo Dolls concert at Key Bank Center
- Start of construction of the Ralph C. Wilson Centennial Park
- Ongoing implementation of the Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative
- Resumption of work on the Trico adaptive re-use at the BN Medical Campus

Marketing Department Business Plan

The Marketing Department is responsible for increasing awareness, interest, and desire for travel experiences in Buffalo Niagara. Using data-driven insights into the path of purchase for potential visitors, the team determines the most effective channels and platforms for our messaging. Our goal is to reach the right person with the right message at the right moment to deliver maximum visitation to our partners throughout Erie County.

Situation Analysis

“The data clearly shows how the pandemic has profoundly changed the U.S. travel industry, not only the number of people traveling, but where they are going and what they are doing when they do travel,” said Amir Eylon, President and CEO of Longwoods International. “What we don’t know yet is how many of these changes are temporary, and how many will be the new normal for both travelers and the industry.”

Amir Eylon’s comment on the state of the industry as we approach the last quarter of 2021 offers a cautionary tale for destination marketers making plans for the coming year. There are many “known unknowns” that make placing bets on consumer behavior a highly speculative endeavor going into 2022. With that caveat in mind, we can make a few basic assumptions based on recent consumer sentiment surveys: many travelers are choosing drive destinations over fly destinations and domestic trips over international trips. While the pandemic continues to present many potential pitfalls for Buffalo’s hospitality industry, we are well positioned to cater to domestic travelers who are within a day’s drive of Western New York. This includes the millions of residents in the greater New York City area.

Looking eastward toward New York and turning our attention to another piece of research – the destination brand study conducted for Visit Buffalo Niagara in 2021 by Destination Analysts – we find reinforcing data that New York City residents represent a significant market opportunity. According to the report, “nearly half of New York city metro area residents surveyed are High Potential Visitors for Buffalo.” Other markets that reported a strong likelihood to visit Buffalo include other portions of New York State and Toronto/Southern Ontario.

This knowledge – both of consumer sentiment regarding the influence of the pandemic on travel decisions and perceptions of Buffalo as a destination – clearly suggests that VBN’s 2022 consumer marketing initiatives should remain close to home and focus on the opportunities represented in the key feeder markets of Southern Ontario, New York State, and the NYC metro.

In addition, the Destination Analysts report identified the Arts & Culture Traveler as another high value opportunity for Buffalo. According to the report, “respondents who consider world-class arts and cultural attractions to be important in selecting the leisure destinations they want to visit in the Northeast region of the U.S. rate Buffalo as good or very good for this attribute.” The profile of the Arts & Culture Traveler suggests an extremely high likelihood of finding many of these consumers in our targeted geographic areas, particularly New York City and Toronto.

Coincidentally, the heightened interest in domestic travel and changing perceptions of Buffalo as a potential destination in nearby markets is converging with the opening of the newly expanded, reimagined and renamed Buffalo AKG Museum in Fall 2022. The largest investment ever made in a Buffalo cultural institution and tourist attraction, the reemergence of our world-class museum of modern and contemporary art is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reset the narrative about Buffalo and decisively take our place among the first tier of art, architecture, and culture destinations in the United States.

This opportunity represents the culmination of years of investment in new and refurbished tourism assets at locations throughout the community, including the Darwin Martin House, the Colored Musicians Club, Shea’s Performing Arts Center, Graycliff, the Roycroft Campus, and, of course, Canalside. Looked at in context alongside our already vibrant culinary scene, the emergence of Buffalo as a center of craft brewing and our growing strength in outdoor recreation experiences, Buffalo has never been better positioned to appeal to potential visitors, particularly the younger Gen-Xers and older Millennials who were identified by Destination Analysts as our best potential customers.

New consumer data, improved data analysis, sophisticated targeting tools, a better product to sell and a far better story to tell should make 2022 a genuine inflection point and year to remember for Buffalo’s tourism industry.

Objective 1 – A Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity

The re-opening of the expanded and newly renamed Buffalo AKG Museum in 2023 is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for Buffalo to relaunch its brand, reframe its narrative and re-engage with potential visitors, particularly consumers of cultural experiences. Although the AKG is not scheduled to open until Spring 2023, the seeds of future visitation and media coverage need to be planted throughout the months preceding the opening.

Strategy 1: Create an integrated marketing campaign targeting the younger Gen-Xers and older Millennials identified by Destination Analysts as our best potential prospects who have an affinity for art, architecture, and culture. Target high potential geographic markets, including New York City and the surrounding Tri-State metro; Toronto and Southern Ontario; Rochester, Syracuse, and New York State outside of NYC.

Strategy 2: Launch a media relations initiative positioning Buffalo as a must see stop for lovers of art, architecture, and culture. Employ media newsletters, pitch letters and attendance at the IMM media marketplace in New York to lay the groundwork for future coverage. Host media luncheons in New York and Toronto in Spring 2022 to facilitate press trips.

Objective 2 – Boosting the Shoulder Seasons

According to STR, the months of June, July and August represent the peak of Buffalo and Erie County’s hotel occupancy in any given year. With demand often exceeding supply in these summer months, hotel operators naturally look for opportunities to fill rooms when demand is softer. The Spring shoulder months of April and May and the Fall shoulder months of September and October have the highest potential to attract off-peak visitation.

Strategy 1: Create a campaign promoting Buffalo as a great short break (36 Hours in Buffalo) destination, targeting high potential travelers in the 25-44-year-old cohort in our key feeder markets who have an affinity for outdoor recreation, culinary experiences and craft beer, and live music.

Strategy 2: Create a campaign promoting Buffalo as a great short break (36 Hours in Buffalo) destination, targeting high potential travelers in the 45-65+ cohort in our key feeder markets who have an affinity for performing arts, culinary experiences, and historic sites.

Strategy 3: In concert with Sales and Industry Relations departments, create unique promotional opportunities and packaging for industry partners to increase overnight visitation.

Objective 3 – Leveraging Regional Partnerships

Visit Buffalo Niagara was the lead partner in launching two multi-site regional initiatives in 2021 – the Upstate Eats Trail and the Great Wright Road Trip. These products were launched in response to research indicating that road trips would be more popular than ever with consumers who had curtailed traveling due to the pandemic. While websites and

landing pages were built for both products in 2021, the time and resources to promote them was in short supply. In 2022, we will take both products to market.

Strategy 1: Create an integrated marketing campaign targeting food lovers 25-65+ in New York State, Ontario, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Strategy 2: Create an integrated marketing campaign targeting Frank Lloyd Wright fans 45-65+ in New York State, Ontario, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Strategy 3: Explore opportunities with other in-state and regional destinations and their DMOs to identify other partnership opportunities to take to market.

Objective 4: Tapping New and Emerging Markets

In recent years, Buffalo's value proposition as a Family destination has taken huge strides forward with the ongoing redevelopment of the waterfront. The opening of the Explore & More Children's Museum, the Buffalo Heritage Carousel and the Longshed have made Canalside an appealing stop for families, while multifaceted attractions like Riverworks continue to add family friendly amenities such as ziplining, rock climbing and in 2022, a new Ferris Wheel. In addition, the Outer Harbor along Fuhrmann Blvd. continues to evolve at sites like Wilkeson Pointe, Tiff Nature Preserve and Buffalo Harbor State Park. With the enduring appeal of Niagara Falls State Park as a family destination as a starting point, Buffalo should now be well positioned to actively attract families with children in greater numbers than ever before.

Buffalo's value proposition as a destination for African American heritage experiences has been enhanced in recent years with the opening of the Underground Railroad Heritage Museum in Niagara Falls, as well as a renewed commitment to developing and leveraging the assets found in and around the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor in downtown Buffalo. Visit Buffalo Niagara is working with the Corridor leadership and anchor attractions like the Colored Musicians Club, the Michigan Street Baptist Church, and the Nash House to create and implement an African American History Makers experience that we will take to market in 2022.

Buffalo has also seen the very visible emergence of its LGBTQ community in recent years. Pride Week has evolved from a weekend featuring a few modest events in the Elmwood Village to a week-long series of events that bring thousands of participants to the Buffalo waterfront. Pride flags fly year-round throughout the city and LGBTQ-owned businesses have proliferated in city neighborhoods. Given these developments, there has never been a better time to promote Buffalo as an LGBTQ-friendly destination.

Strategy 1: Create an integrated campaign targeting families with children in New York State, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Strategy 2: Create an integrated marketing campaign targeting history lovers and African American heritage buffs in New York City, elsewhere in New York State and Southern Ontario.

Strategy 3: Create an integrated marketing campaign targeting 25-44-year-old members of the LGBTQ community in New York City, elsewhere in New York State, Toronto, and Southern Ontario.

Sales & Services Department Business Plan

The primary goal of the Visit Buffalo Niagara Sales Department is to promote Buffalo and Erie County as a convention, group tour and amateur sports competition destination, thus initiating direct economic impact by increasing hotel room night production for area hotel partners and incremental sales for restaurants, cultural attractions, and transportation companies.

Situation Analysis

Industry experts predict that face-to-face meetings will not go away, but how associations deploy in-person meetings may shift. Networking and experience have long been valued components of in-person gatherings, and they may become the central rationale for conducting in-person meetings and conferences moving forward. However, meeting planners cite concerns over attendee health, mask mandates, cost of conducting hybrid meetings and lower attendance as reasons for proceeding cautiously at least for the near future.

Selling activities and strategies will look differently as the pandemic continues to impact the hosting of group business. The development of a robust and engaging virtual site visit platform has been added to our priority list to help address and support how business decisions are being made. Through the end of 2021 we have seen specific group market segments begin to return and conduct meetings and events at a much smaller level of attendance. VBN sees this trend continuing over the next 12-18 months and will prioritize sales and marketing efforts toward these and other market segments. Amateur athletic competitions often considered recession proof can now also be referred to as pandemic proof as these tournaments continued at a lesser scale but never really stopped. Amateur Sports, Group Tour & State Association groups are the segments to return the quickest; VBN will continue to concentrate our resources within these markets.

The finalized sale of the Hyatt Regency, considered to be the convention hotel due to its connectivity to the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center, will undergo extensive renovations. The connectivity and partnership with the Hyatt Regency cannot be overstated; the two facilities must work closely to have a positive impact on bookings. Most recently, more encouraging news an announcement by Douglas Development, the new owner of the Statler Towers, is planning to put over two hundred hotel rooms in mothballed facility with a pledge of completion in 10-12 months. The Buffalo Grand Hotel continues to struggle with its commitment to renovations, food service and housekeeping deficiency's. To date, the ownership has not presented an overall plan for the future of this property. The Buffalo Marriott Hotel Amherst, considered to be the suburban market leader for medium size association and corporate business, has also undergone a sale, we are uncertain as to the direction the new ownership will take. In addition, the Millennium Hotel also in the suburbs is also undergoing an uncertain future as the current ownership struggles with what to do with the property.

Conversations relative to replacing the current Convention Center have stalled and will be periodically reviewed as the convention meetings market returns to normal activity levels. In the meantime, the County is proceeding with much-needed renovations so operations can continue at the current facility. Presently, an exciting proposal for a new façade, entrance way and interior upgrades are being planned.

In response to these changes the Sales department remains in communication with clients and prospects with virtual sales calls, carefully managed in-person events, creativity in the response to request for proposals and hybrid sponsored events to get their attention. We plan to resume traditional sales missions, and face-to-face industry tradeshows this year. The Sales department will continue to deploy these strategies throughout 2022.

Objective 1- Reconnect and Rebuild Customer Engagement

Reconnect with the organization's qualified customer base and generate renewed interest to bring a meeting/convention, tour group, or sporting event to Buffalo.

Strategy 1: Create consistent communications engaging the full database of leads: meetings, tour groups and sports events, conveying knowledge and assurances of the Buffalo Cares initiative, where over two hundred local businesses have pledged adherence to the Erie County Health guidelines and Buffalo Niagara Convention Center's GBAC designation.

Strategy 2: Bring the VBN team to the planner by hosting virtual sales calls and attending virtual one-on-one meetings, industry events and conferences, and resume attendance at in-person customer and industry events, and tradeshows.

Strategy 3: Continue to engage with customers through participation in the "Buffalo Book Club". Focus literature on Buffalo stories, engage author when possible and prepare discussion content that will serve the purpose of promoting the destination for Group Tours, Meetings and Conventions. "Read the book, Take the Tour"

Strategy 4: Collaborate with NYS CVB partners at industry tradeshows such as: American Bus Association, Connect Sports, Association and Specialty, PCMA, IPW, and Connect Northeast, when possible, to increase awareness of NYS meetings, Sports and Group Tour opportunities.

Strategy 5: Partner with Buffalo Ambassadors from local and regional universities, associations, and corporations. Work toward a common goal of selling our destination alongside these connectors who serve on boards and council of national and regional organizations, as identified by Backyard Marketing.

Strategy 6: Develop Legacy strategies for convention, meeting, and sporting groups to participate in, this initiative should address benefits for both the organization and the community.

Strategy 7: Retain Talley Management Group, an in-market engagement agency located in D.C. market, to allow us to have the advantage of an in-market mailing address, phone number, and use of a private conference room for appointments.

Strategy 8: Continue to share destination experiences with the planner through the video content and video conferencing technologies in situations when in-person is not feasible.

Strategy 9: Conduct an in-person familiarization tour, inviting meeting planners from targeted National and State Associations, Tour Operators and Sports Event planners. Develop and distribute leads to Erie County Hotels.

Strategy 10: Work closely with the Destination Development/Industry Relations department to develop an educational program for the local public, aiding us in our quest for local connectors' support.

Strategy 11: Convene the ninth annual Customer Advisory Council meeting; use this brain trust to keep a cutting edge on the convention and meetings sales initiatives.

Strategy 12: Buffalo Niagara Sports Commission will convene in person quarterly meetings, networking opportunities and a host speaker series event in conjunction with the NCAA tournament.

Objective 2 - Reevaluate and Refine Research and Market Specific Data Analysis

Research and adapt to market shift and business trends in response to the post-COVID19 industry climate to effectively communicate to clients at every stage of the sales funnel.

Strategy 1: Utilize data and intel from US Travel Association, Destinations International, Destinations Analyst, and Customer Advisory Council to assess new standards for layouts, contract terms, cleanliness standards, AV and technology changes, site visit protocols and expectations. Use this information to create relevant sales and marketing messaging.

Strategy 2: Work closely with the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center, competition facilities, attractions, and key hotel partners to identify and solicit city-wide conventions, sporting events and group tours that have the potential to come to Buffalo.

Strategy 3: Continue targeted account outreach to the national, state, and local customers who were solicited previously with updates to the Customer Confidence Program version 3. Updates include: a longer booking window, individual hotel property incentives, and robust VBN incentives to drive business to 2022 and 2023.

Strategy 4: Review target accounts and markets in addition to new size and other standards, committing to an ongoing process of identifying emerging trends and recalibrating, as necessary.

Objective 3 - Review and Reinforce Marketing and Communications

Remind and inspire planners that Buffalo is a safe and smart choice for meetings/conventions/group tours and sporting events.

Strategy 1: Leverage Unexpected Buffalo branding, promoting community assets which include area attractions, great food options, low cost of doing business and dedicated hospitality team.

Strategy 2: Promote use of the 360 videos of meeting hotels, area attractions, sport competition sites to facilitate the sales process. Videos will be embedded in sales proposals or used in prospecting when calling on meeting/tour/event planners.

Strategy 3: Continue use of Vidyard video format when leaving messages for prospects and current customers, while also exploring other unique technological platforms for engaging customers.

Strategy 4: Become an Events Council Preferred Provider to offer continuing education credit hours to CMP's, during FAM, virtual events, etc.

Strategy 5: Build tour operator "influencers group" that will assist in reposting and promoting VBN packaging and messaging to their constituents and potential client base to increase bookings by increasing reach and frequency.

Objective 4 – Provide Stellar Event Services

Strategy 1: In order to maintain a high standard of event servicing and related economic impact, the sales department will share client feedback gained through planner surveys.

Strategy 2: Successfully host the NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Tournament, Rounds I and II. Conduct host hotel, restaurant, and attraction meetings to keep the community informed and prepared for the tournament.

Strategy 3: Leverage our involvement in the Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA) to provide the most up to date convention, meeting, and sport services in a safe and effective manner.

Strategy 4: Use input from our new post-event questionnaire to evaluate services provided to our clients and make recommendations and updates where necessary.

Strategy 5: Coordinate use of mobile visitor center at conventions, meetings, and sporting events where appropriate.

Strategy 6: Deploy sales and services questionnaire to solicit specific feedback from clients and lost business.

Industry Relations Department Business Plan

Situation Analysis

During 2020-21, Visit Buffalo Niagara led several crucial community recovery initiatives and provided up-to-the-minute COVID-19 resources for our partners. We broadened our reach to non-traditional organizations expressing an interest in tourism, further solidifying ourselves as an integral partner in the destination's organizational make up. Ad hoc requests from a variety of county individuals and organizations were answered, demonstrating how we are efficiently and effectively the resource for stakeholders: residents, civic organizations, hotels, businesses, attractions, restaurants, and other regional and local influential organizations.

It is more important than ever that Visit Buffalo Niagara monitor movement within the industry, lead with regular, timely communications and offer professional development to those entering the field for the first time or those who are more seasoned looking to remain current on industry trends, post-pandemic.

Objective 1 - Industry Communications

VBN proved relevance to its stakeholders during the pandemic with regular communications to report national, state, and local regulations, policies, procedures, and advocacy. Open rates consistently averaged 30%, proving that content received was useful and actionable. Communication with stakeholders will continue to be an important function to share industry updates on the national, state, and local levels.

Strategy 1: Utilize existing industry communication and engagement to reach a broader audience with relevant industry information. Tourism Insider is a snapshot of activity affecting hospitality and tourism, including business openings and closings, an events calendar, Smith Travel, and other relevant information. Links to Travel Pulse, Buffalo Niagara This Week, the Destination Performance Report, Annual Report and 2022 Business Plan will be included in the appropriate Tourism Insider issues.

Objective 2 – Education and Outreach

As the destination's visitor economy continues the recovery phase, we look forward to reinstating our industry related education programs.

Strategy 1: Offer educational training for partners interested in learning more about the importance of the industry, its relevancy to the local economy, what makes Erie County attractive to meeting/event planners and visitors and best practices for customer service, sales and marketing and public safety. Whether virtual or in-person, this will be accomplished through quarterly industry meetings and industry nights, volunteer mixers and training and guest speakers throughout the year, paying special attention to improving DEI practices in all outreach efforts.

Strategy 2: Continue to offer monthly extranet training to fully reap the benefits available through the partnership with Visit Buffalo Niagara. Ensure partners are adding their events to the events calendar, communicating staff changes, updating their listings via the extranet, attending quarterly industry meetings, and understanding various reports the organization makes available to its constituents.

Objective 3 – Product Development

The pandemic has provided the opportunity for VBN to explore new product that appeals to leisure visitors, group tours, convention attendees and residents. A focus on assisting industry partners and businesses to reach residents and consumers through packages and experiences will be facilitated by VBN.

Strategy 1: Through engagement with The Veneto Collaborative, work with the industry partners to conduct an assessment that will lead to the development of a packaged experiential experience.

Strategy 2: Develop and create market-ready collateral materials for inclusion in sales missions and fresh website content.

Strategy 3: Produce a framework and strategy to identify and conduct similar neighborhood/product specific development in Buffalo/Erie County in future years.

Strategy 4: Reach out to top attractions and restaurants throughout the county to assess and identify those that meet the ADA minimum requirements.

Strategy 5: Working with the County and select industry partners, offer disabilities' training at a quarterly industry meeting.

Strategy 6: In conjunction with the marketing department develop experiences and priced packages for consumers during shoulder seasons as well as extend their stays to help drive greater visitation and spend in the county.

Objective 4 - Reimagine Visitor Services and Engagement Strategy

Provide the comprehensive engagement tools and mechanisms to engage visitors and residents to experience the destination as a day trip or overnight as well as influence extended visitation.

Strategy 1: Implement a comprehensive plan of “Seymour Buffalo” mobile information center to travel throughout the county during special events and high traffic areas. A dedicated calendar, guidelines, and reservation mechanism for Seymour will be available on the VBN website.

Strategy 2: Complete a comprehensive assessment of existing and potential new distribution locations of annual touring guide, focusing on a drive market of 200-300 miles.

Strategy 3: Explore new opportunities to install branded Visit Buffalo Niagara messaging throughout the county, modeling the kiosks recently installed throughout the business district in the city.

Strategy 4: When appropriate and restrictions are relaxed, reinstate volunteer/ambassador program to distribute VBN materials, answer questions and offer guidance at large gatherings and events held in the destination.

Strategy 5: Explore opportunities to recruit new volunteers for visitor engagement opportunities, including large corporate participation, in anticipation of the return of large-scale events with high visitor and resident attendance.

Objective 5 - Reinstate Relevant Industry Partner Recognition

As the destination navigates post-COVID-19, the opportunity to develop appropriate and relevant recognition of industry, individuals and businesses achieving elevated levels of service and success will be implemented by the organization.

Strategy 1: In concert with U.S. Travel Association, coordinate activities to recognize Erie County's hospitality industry during National Travel and Tourism Week taking place May 1-7, 2022.

Strategy 2: Identify an appropriate time and venue to present 2020 Tim Russert Award recipient.

Administration Department Business Plan

The primary goal of the Administration Department is to provide managerial vision, guidance and necessary resources to all Visit Buffalo Niagara departments related to staffing, management, operational efficiencies, organizational strategic planning, research and data collection, education, and community-based initiatives that position VBN to be the leader in hospitality and tourism-based economic development in Erie County.

Situation Analysis

Visit Buffalo Niagara enters the 2022 fiscal year as a remained, reorganized, data-driven, socially, and equitably conscious, and highly measurable company. The organization's personnel and financial resources have been strategically aligned to focus on continued post-Covid recovery within the functional departments of sales, marketing, and industry relations to meet and exceed organization, stakeholder, and resident travel and tourism expectations.

In 2021, the organization engaged with MMGY/NEXTFactor on the creation of a ten-year Tourism Master Plan and a three-year strategic plan. These documents provide the guidance and focus for the continued and future leadership of building back the destination's success in the tourism economy.

Objective 1 – Research, Industry Reporting, and Measurement Best Practices

Utilizing COVID-19 tourism industry recovery best practices, evaluate and implement revised organization-wide initiative-taking reporting, measurements, and formats of monthly, quarterly, and annual tourism data, establishing a new comprehensive reporting and benchmarking system.

Strategy 1: Maintain engagement to provide weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting and benchmarking data dashboards as appropriate for all VBN departments to be shared with industry partners, community stakeholders for forecasting, budgeting and feasibility studies and ROI measurement.

Strategy 2: Through engagement with third-party research providers, continue to evolve organizational and department benchmark strategies that follow industry best practices and standards.

Strategy 3: Host partner meetings with tourism industry and other interested partners specific to VBN designated projects, programs and initiatives noted in the fiscal year 2022 Business Plan.

Strategy 4: Host a Marketing Outlook Forum event to highlight industry research and organizational plans in a day-long professional development event for Erie County stakeholders, government officials and industry partners.

Objective 2 – Reemphasize Organization Functions and Operations

Provide essential human resource, finance, and overall compliance support services for Visit Buffalo Niagara structurally and within individual organization departments.

Strategy 1: Continue to enhance the proactive reporting, measurements, and formats of monthly, and yearly tourism data through the acquisition of third-party research and economic metrics to better communicate tourism economic impacts to media, industry, and policymakers.

Strategy 2. Foster a hybrid work environment option that inspires employees through recognition and open communication.

Strategy 3: Oversee and monitor all accounting functions and controls of the organization to ensure operational budget is maximized and that timely financial transactions and compliance with fiscal policies and reports are delivered.

Objective 3 – Reinforce the Exploration of Supplemental Funding Sources

Explore funding models and revenue generating opportunities used by other destination marketing organizations to supplement existing VBN funding sources and to grow the organization’s resources.

Strategy 1: Continue working with our elected state and county officials and their staffs, New York State Destination Marketing Organizations, New York State Hospitality and Travel Association and their lobbying firms, and our hospitality partners regarding the reintroduction of state-wide Tourism Recovery Improvement District (TRID) legislation.

Strategy 2: Produce related electronic collateral materials including a microsite related to a local Erie County TRID and develop an outreach plan to engage members of the region’s state, county, and local municipality government officials in addition to countywide chambers of commerce, economic development agencies and lodging partners.

Strategy 3: Reevaluate organizational revenue generating programs (e.g.: advertising, cooperative marketing, industry tradeshow participation, visitor center, etc.) for fiscal year planning.

Objective 4 – Reinforce Overall Organizational Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Visit Buffalo Niagara is committed to implementing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategies and best practices and promise to collaborate with our stakeholders, board of directors, staff, and industry leaders to be the catalyst for change. There is much work to be done and we must all come together to advance these sometimes difficult, but important, conversations to drive solutions.

Strategy 1: Build and sustain an equitable, diverse, and inclusive VBN workforce led by executive leadership and our board of directors.

Strategy 2: Collectively share best practices for growing equity, diversity, and inclusion industry-wide, and hold one another accountable for measuring action and progress.

Strategy 3: Share the lived experiences of marginalized and underrepresented communities that are disproportionately unseen in Erie County tourism marketing and storytelling.

Strategy 4: Support actions in our community that seek to achieve equity and justice for everyone, including travelers, stakeholders, and residents.

Strategy 5: For Erie County’s tourism industry to thrive, it needs to reflect the diversity of the destination, build equity, and promote inclusion. Key to those efforts is for VBN to explore the establishment of a Tourism Accelerator program to provide resources for businesses owned by people of color, LGBTQ+, women and veterans to be led by the VBN executive leadership.

Strategy 6: Leadership commits to remain personally invested and committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Objective 5 – Reimagine and Plan the Destination’s and Organization’s Present and Future

Implement strategies focused on destination opportunities and community support and engagement through the implementation of the Tourism Master Plan and Strategic Plan utilizing DestinationNEXT standards.

Strategy 1: Utilize the VBN Ten-Year Tourism Master Plan to guide and prioritize destination experience and organizational function and relevance.

Strategy 2: Implement VBN Three-Year Strategic Plan through actionable and measurable goals and objectives.

Strategy 3: Maximize the opportunities and resources of VBN’s membership within national and state organizations for the benefit of the organization and our partners. Utilize their resources to gain and share knowledge and industry best practices.

Objective 6 – Renew Stakeholder Relationships and Strategies

Work with state and local economic development allies, regional and community chambers of commerce, as well as county and city government officials to ensure that VBN has a voice and input on tourism related projects and plans.

Strategy 1: Continue to seek and secure a place at the table with state and local governmental agencies regarding tourism issues and initiatives.

Strategy 3: Serve and engage in an initiative-taking partnership and advocacy role with local economic development allies on post-COVID projects, regulations, and issues with tourism related implications.

Strategy 2: Utilize the expertise and resources of stakeholder relations for input on the development of Destination Master Plan.

Objective 7 – Refocus the Future of the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center

Continue to advocate for improvements in the immediate and new construction in the long-term for the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.

Strategy 1: Utilize VBN’s resources, affiliations, and institutional data to advocate and advise for the future improvements or new construction of the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center.

Strategy 2: Utilize the organization’s strengths of industry/partners expectations and standards, stakeholder resources and community outreach and education to assist in forming opinions and strategy.

Industry Membership and Leadership Positions

Patrick Kaler, President & CEO

- U.S. Travel Association, Board of Directors
- U.S. Travel Association, Destination Council, Board of Directors
- U.S. Travel Association, Destination Council, Immediate Past-Chair
- U.S. Travel Association, PAC Board
- Destinations International, Member
- Destinations International, DMAP Board of Directors
- New York Destination Marketing Organization Association, Chair
- New York State Hospitality and Travel Association, Board and Executive Committee
- Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Board of Directors
- Buffalo Civic Auto Ramp, Board of Directors
- Frank Lloyd Wright's Darwin Martin Complex, Board of Directors
- Olmsted Conservancy, Long Range Planning Committee
- Leadership Buffalo, Member
- Western New York Sports Advisory Council

Drew Brown, Marketing Manager

- Reddy Bikeshare, Marketing Committee

Emma Carlo, National Sales Manager

- Young Professionals for Olmsted Parks - Member, Class of 2022

Mike Even, Vice President of Sales and Services

- Destinations International Certified Destination Management Executive
- Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives, Board of Directors
- Buffalo Niagara Sales & Marketing Executives, Executive of the Year Committee
- Chippewa Alliance Board of Directors
- Chippewa Alliance Streetscape Design Committee
- Destinations International Sales Advisory Committee
- Meeting Planners International, Member
- New York Destination Marketing Organization Association Sales Committee Coordinator

Karen Fashana, Director of Marketing

- Kevin Guest House, Marketing Committee
- Graycliff, Marketing Committee

Pete Harvey, Director of Sports Development

- Sports ETA Board of Directors
- US Sports Congress Advisory Board of Directors
- Sports ETA Sports Legacy Committee, Chair
- Sports ETA By Laws Committee
- Wings Flights of Hope Board of Directors

Ed Healy, Vice President of Marketing

- Innovation, Creativity & Entrepreneurship Advisory Council at SUNY Buffalo State
- Darwin Martin House Marketing Committee
- Lipsey Architecture Center Buffalo Board of Directors

Cindy Kincaide, Director of Destination Development & Industry Relations

- Buffalo Green Fund, Inc.
- Buffalo Niagara Visitor Experience Group
- WNED-TV, Community Advisory Board Member
- Erie 1 BOCES, Culinary Advisory Group Member
- Member, Leadership Buffalo
- Maryvale Academy of Hospitality and Tourism Advisory Council
- Buffalo Place Retail and Safety Committees
- Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance Steering Committee
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County – Master Gardener
- Erie County 200 Bicentennial Committee

David Marzo, Chief Financial Officer

- American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), Industry Member
- Certified Global Management Accountants (CGMA), Industry Member
- NYS Society of Certified Public Accountants (NYSSCPA), Industry Member
- NYS Golf Association (NYSGA), Member
- Buffalo Green Fund, Treasurer
- Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart, Past Treasurer

Leah Mueller, Director of Tourism Sales

- I Love New York, International Marketing Committee
- Ontario Motorcoach Association, Supplier Council
- Ontario Motorcoach, Conference Committee

Heather Nowakowski, Business Intelligence Manager

- Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA), Member

Lauren Vargo, Sports Services Manager

- Event Service Professionals Association (ESPA), Member

Meaghan Zimmer, National Sales Director

- Empire State Society of Association Executive, Membership Committee
- Meeting Planners International, Member
- MPI Upstate NY, Member
- New York Society of Association Executives, Member