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COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

July 10, 2015

Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: One Region Forward – Charter

Dear Honorable Members:

Enclosed please find a memorandum and proposed resolution seeking authorization for the County Executive to execute the Implementation Council Charter on behalf of Erie County. The document has been prepared by many of the original participants in the One Region Forward planning process conducted over the last four years.

Should your Honorable Body require further information, I encourage you to contact Thomas J. Dearing, Commissioner, at the Department of Environment and Planning. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark C. Poloncarz".

Mark C. Poloncarz, Esq.
Erie County Executive

MCP/cw
Enclosure

Cc: Maria R. Whyte, Deputy County Executive
Thomas J. Dearing, Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature
From: Environment and Planning
Re: One Region Forward – Charter
Date: July 10, 2015

SUMMARY

An important product of the One Region Forward (1RF) process was a February 2015 report titled One Region Forward, A New Way to Plan for Buffalo, New York. The document outlined a series of shared values, priorities, visions, and ideas for the future. It also defined over twenty performance measures that can be used to analyze how future projects, plans, and actions achieve 1RF principles.

In order to insure that the principles move ahead, many organizations from both the public and private sector are desirous of forming an Implementation Council. The initial membership would include representatives from those groups noted on Attachment A. The Council would meet periodically to monitor the region's progress in applying 1RF principles to decisions affecting physical development. The principles include reducing urban sprawl, building less infrastructure, conserving more natural green space, and creating more transportation choices.

The Charter is a written commitment by the signees to undertake development actions which further 1RF principles and concepts.

The proposed 1RF Charter would define the 1RF concept, its value to the region, and describe the implementation measures needed to move forward.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no fiscal implications to Erie County.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

One Region Forward is a collaborative effort to promote sustainable development in Erie and Niagara Counties.

The resultant Plan was adopted by the Greater Buffalo Regional Transportation Council on January 15, 2015 and serves as an important guide to transportation decisions affecting the Buffalo-Niagara region. The 1RF Plan reinforces the principles contained in a variety of existing regional planning documents, including the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council's A Strategy For Prosperity (2011) and Buffalo Billion Investment Development Plan (February, 2013). It also supports the priorities noted in the Erie County report titled Initiatives For a Smart Economy (June, 2011).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Erie County has worked closely with Niagara County, the Cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, Greater Buffalo Regional Transportation Council, Buffalo-Niagara Partnership, the University of New York at Buffalo and many others to complete the 1RF process. Formation of a 1RF Council guided by a governing Charter will help retain those partnerships and also provide a smooth transition to the implementation phase.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

Erie County would forego an opportunity to join with many other regional stakeholders in expressing their commitment to 1RF principles and priorities. The latter process engaged over 5,000 citizens and 700 local organizations in its development resulting in clear support for the 1RF Plan.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The County Executive will execute the Charter and direct County departments to adhere to 1RF principles when taking actions affecting physical development within the region.

A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY:
ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

RE: One Region Forward – Charter

WHEREAS, One Region Forward is a broad-based, collaborative effort to promote more sustainable forms of development in Erie and Niagara counties; and

WHEREAS, One Region Forward : A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara, a federally recognized Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”), was adopted on January 15, 2015 by the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council, the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization; and

WHEREAS, the Plan was guided by the One Region Forward Steering Committee, a partnership of public, private, and nonprofit organizations; and

WHEREAS, Plan goals include: (1) create a vibrant economy through efficient land use, (2) connect places by expanding and diversifying transportation options, (3) provide housing choices in neighborhoods that are great places to live, (4) strengthen food systems for a healthier population and economy, and (5) conserve energy, promote renewables, and prepare for the impacts of climate change; and

WHEREAS, a One Region Forward Implementation Council will be created to guide and measure the Buffalo Niagara Region’s progress toward implementing the Plan; and

WHEREAS, in 2013 the region adopted the 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan, a long-range transportation plan that calls for promoting smart growth through transportation investment in priority development areas and areas with existing infrastructure; fostering regional economic competitiveness through targeted transportation investment, creating an environmentally healthy, resilient region and promoting safe, equitable regional service for all residents; and

WHEREAS, the 2011 strategic plan of the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council (WNYREDC) – A Strategy for Prosperity in Western New York – recognizes smart growth as a key fundamental for improving the WNY economy by reinvesting in our urban centers, neighborhoods, and rural villages, by transforming brownfields from liabilities into assets; and by reducing the cost structure of local governments by following smart growth principles in infrastructure planning; and

WHEREAS, the 2013 Buffalo Billion Investment Development Plan recognizes efficient infrastructure, livable cities, and revitalized, inclusive communities, to be key enablers that will help expand labor markets and drive transformative growth; and

WHEREAS, One Region Forward: A New Way to Plan for Buffalo Niagara reinforces the above principles and recognizes the importance of coordinating with other regional planning efforts; and

WHEREAS, One Region Forward recognizes that communities throughout the region have unique roles, functions, and opportunities, and will develop with different uses at varying intensities; and

WHEREAS, One Region Forward believes that progress toward creating a vibrant and prosperous region will depend on active participation from a full range of cross-sector partners over the long term, including transit and planning agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations, as well as local jurisdictions to enhance economic and environmental resiliency throughout the region; and

WHEREAS, updates to local comprehensive plans and development regulations, transit agency plans, and the refinement of regional growth and transportation plans present continuing opportunities to implement the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Plan identified three alternatives to the “Business as Usual” development scenario; and

WHEREAS, all three alternatives, in varying degrees, advance the region in a positive, sustainable direction and espouse the priorities, values, and ideas defined in the Plan; and

WHEREAS, Erie County recognizes the need for an Implementation Council Charter which expresses the intent of its members to work together toward the achievement of One Region Forward goals, priorities, and strategies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that Erie County rejects the “Business as Usual” development scenario and commits to undertaking specific action strategies that further a land development pattern which advances One Region Forward and the principles of the Plan; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Erie County supports a continuing process of collaboration and coordinated action to advance smart growth and sustainable development; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Executive is hereby authorized to execute the One Region Forward Charter on behalf of Erie County government; and be it further

RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution be sent to the County Executive’s Office; the Comptroller’s Office; the Director of the Division of Budget and Management; the County Attorney; and Thomas J. Dearing, Commissioner of the Department of Environment and Planning, Rath Building, 10th Floor.

ATTACHMENT A

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION COUNCIL

1. The Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council
2. University at Buffalo Regional Institute
3. Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
4. Empire State Development
5. The County of Erie
6. The County of Niagara
7. City of Buffalo
8. City of Niagara Falls
9. Buffalo Niagara Partnership
10. Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Buffalo
11. Belmont Housing Resources of Western New York, Inc.
12. New York State Department of Transportation
13. Association of Erie County Governments
14. Niagara County Supervisors Association
15. Western New York Environmental Alliance
16. Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper
17. Niagara Falls Housing Authority
18. Seneca Nation of Indians