



About the Meeting

The second public workshop for Tonawanda Tomorrow focused on evaluating a set of initial strategies and providing input for developing them further.

About Tonawanda Tomorrow

Tonawanda Tomorrow is an economic action planning effort led by the Town of Tonawanda and several community partners. The goal is to create good-paying jobs, prepare people for those jobs, and reinvest in what makes the town a great place to live, work, and play. The result will be a plan that is grounded in data, shaped by the community, and capable of deepening the Town's role in the regional economy.

Overview

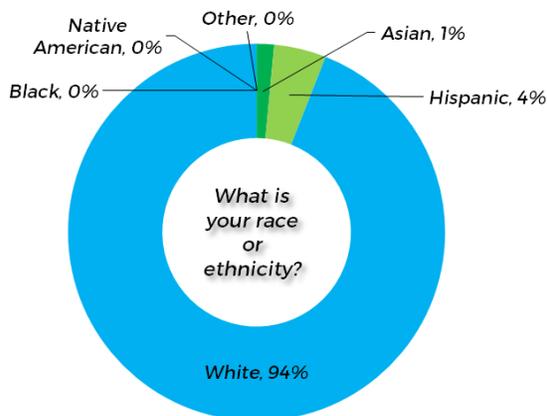
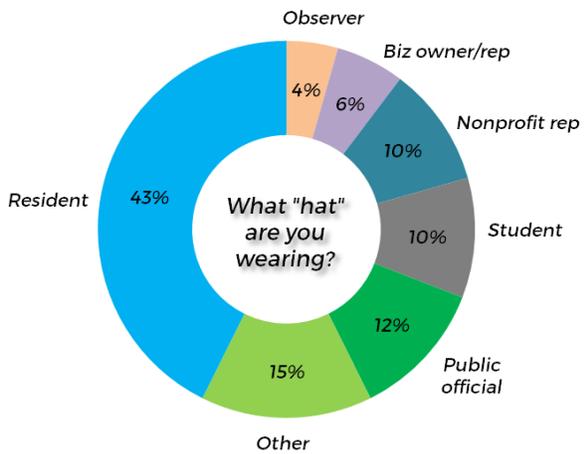
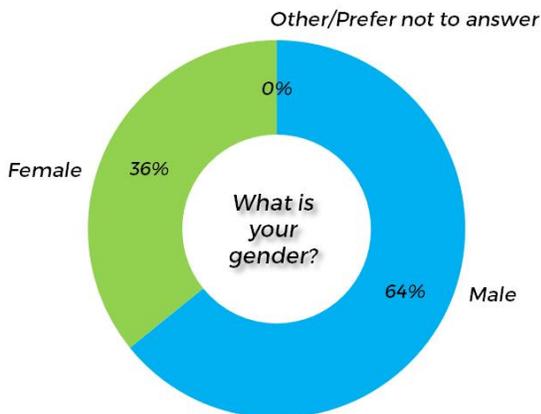
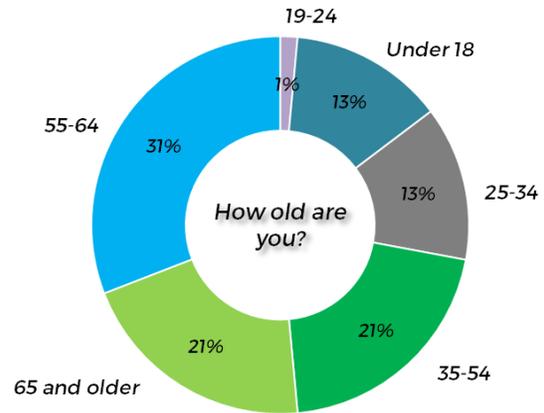
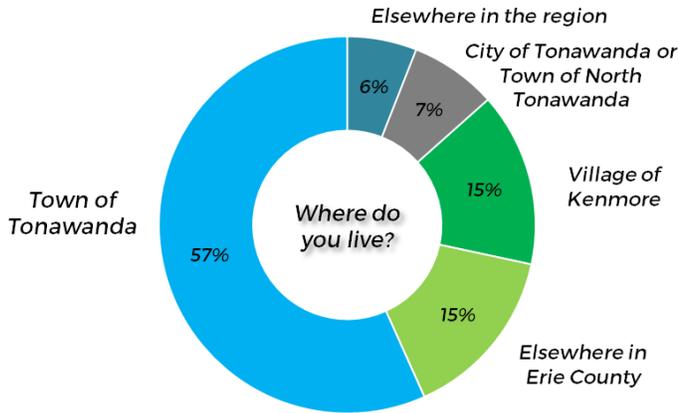
Town Supervisor Joseph Emminger welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reflected briefly on the importance of advancing the town's economic interests despite the uncertainty of NRG's plans for the Huntley Power Plant site. Bart Roberts, from the University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI), followed with an overview of the project and the goals for the workshop. Rebecca Newberry, from the Clean Air Coalition of Western New York (CACWNY), established the ground rules for discussion. Bart then introduced Cindy Winland, from the Delta Institute, who spoke about the Just Transition concept and showed examples of redeveloped coal-fired power plants in various communities in the US and Germany. After her presentation, attendees discussed what they most liked about those examples and what could be applied in Tonawanda. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to strategies to address Tonawanda's economy, workforce, and placemaking issues. Bart presented a series of draft strategies and gauged first impressions through an interactive poll. Volunteer facilitators then helped those at their tables respond to a set of guiding questions and ensured all ideas were captured on sticky notes. At the end, Jared Parylo from UBRI summarized the ideas received. Bart closed the meeting with a poll to evaluate the meeting and a brief description of next steps.

Who Participated?

75 people attended the workshop, including: Don Abbott, Susan Aitken, Carol Battaglia, Robert Battaglia, Don Blowey, Chris Borgatti, Nathaniel Breeze, Nicole Caputi, Claire Cavarello, Lauren Contorno, William Conrad, Natalie Cook, C. Deer, Joseph A. Demske, Carlos Diaz, David Diaz, Greg Emminom, Bob Eshelman, Diane Eshelman, Nicole Fields, Michael Fiels, Ed Flynn, Denise Grandits, Evan Haeick, Kevin Hardwick, Jim Hartz, Nora Hassan, Mary Jane Hayes, Jesse Herrera, Pat Hulse, Dave Hyny, Jim Jones, Tyler Kiblin, William Krier, Greg Kuhaneck, Walter Ludwig, Ron Malec, Lucinda Malkiewicz, Lynn Marinelli, Brian McGowan, Gerald McGuire, Pieter Metz, Fred Mikwec, Chris Monaco, Jessica Naguit, Roscoe Naguit, Sean O'Neil, Thomas O'Shei, Joanna Panasiewicz, Laura Quebral, Nick Reed, Mary Ricotta, PT Rubach, Ron Scott, Charlie Sickler, Rose Sickler, Dean Stanley, David Stinner, Diana Strablow, Peter Stuhlmiller, Denis Uminski, Madison Vallone, Stacey Watson, Lori Wende, Martin Wende, Sandi Wheaton, Sharon White, Philip Wilcox, Robert Wunsch, and Amy Zeller.

They came from 11 different ZIP Codes: 14223 (18), 14150 (13), 14217 (13), 14213 (2), 14032 (2), 14301 (1), 14702 (1), 14221 (1), 14020 (1), 14120 (1), and 14216 (1). Note: Some attendees are not accounted for here as not everyone provided an address or ZIP Code.

And had the following demographic characteristics:



Note: The preceding graphs show the results of a poll conducted before rating the strategies, as a way to practice using the polling devices. The data also gives the project team an idea of who was in the room and how future outreach efforts could be improved.

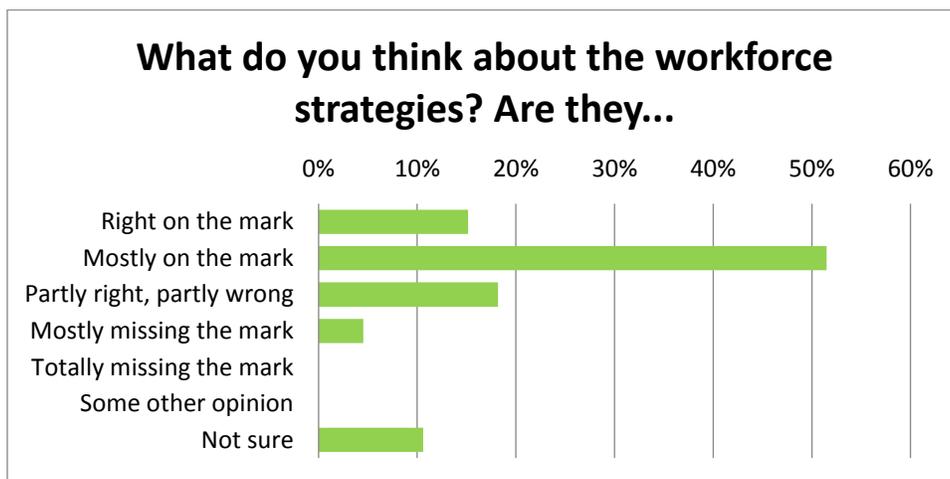
What did they say...

Examples of Structural Changes

Many attendees were excited to hear what other communities have done after a coal-related operation in their community closed down. The majority of comments received indicated an interest in recreational land use as a redevelopment strategy. The Project for Public Spaces “Power of 10” design principle also garnered a lot of attention. Other comments received include concerns about contamination on the land and desire to adaptively reuse existing buildings.

Workforce Strategies

The following chart shows attendees’ overall opinion about the draft workforce strategies. Most people liked the strategies, but thought there was room for improvement.



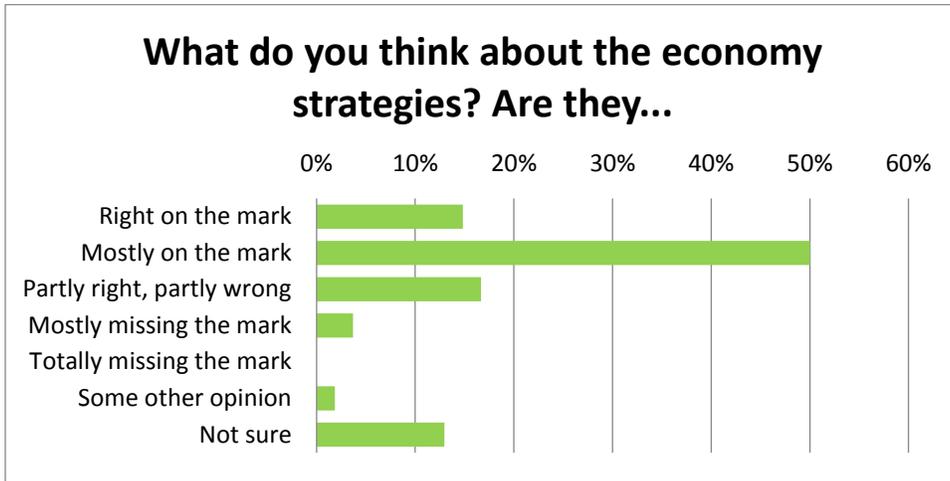
The notes from the discussion about workforce strategies reveals that there is great interest in making high school students aware of career opportunities in manufacturing and skilled trade jobs, which have a bad reputation attached to the image of industrial working conditions at the turn of the last century, even though many of these jobs today pay well, have many opportunities for advancement, and are high tech. Related to this, there was also great interest in having employers improve outreach to the general population about available jobs, internships, and apprenticeships, particularly through schools.

Another topic that was brought up by many attendees was the supports workers need to access and maintain jobs in Tonawanda. The majority of comments on this topic centered on public transportation issues, with calls for increasing frequency of existing bus routes, expanding bus services to more job centers in Tonawanda, and making streets safer so that residents can commute by walking or bicycling. A small number of people mentioned wanting supports of working seniors who need the extra income or want a second career.

Finally, there were several comments that mentioned improving business attraction and support efforts as a necessary condition for job creation.

Economy Strategies

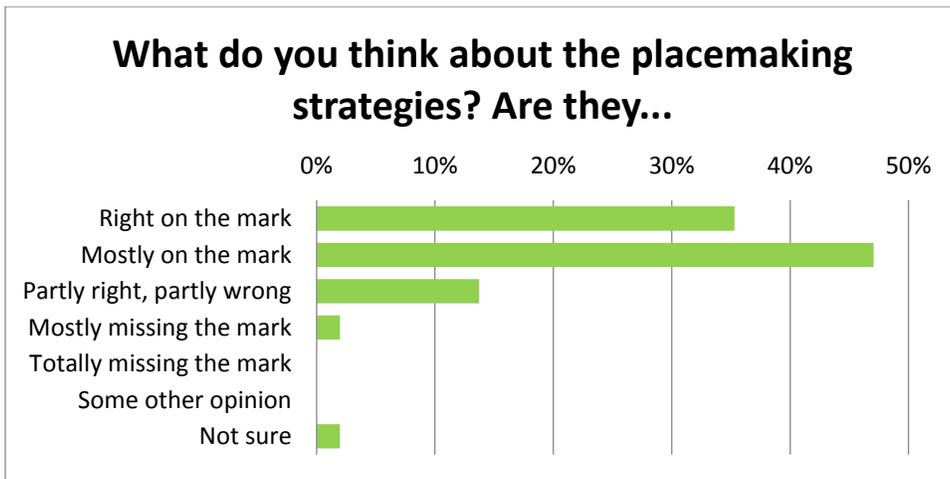
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The notes from the economy strategy discussion focus mainly on making the industrial waterfront a cleaner place by moving to renewable sources of energy and attracting businesses within the so-called “clean tech” industry. There was significant concern with losing business to the Town of Amherst and local tax rates and incentives were mentioned as a possible reason for Tonawanda’s lack of competitiveness.

Placemaking Strategies

The following chart shows attendees' overall opinion about the draft workforce strategies. There was overwhelming support for these strategies, though some improvements can be made.

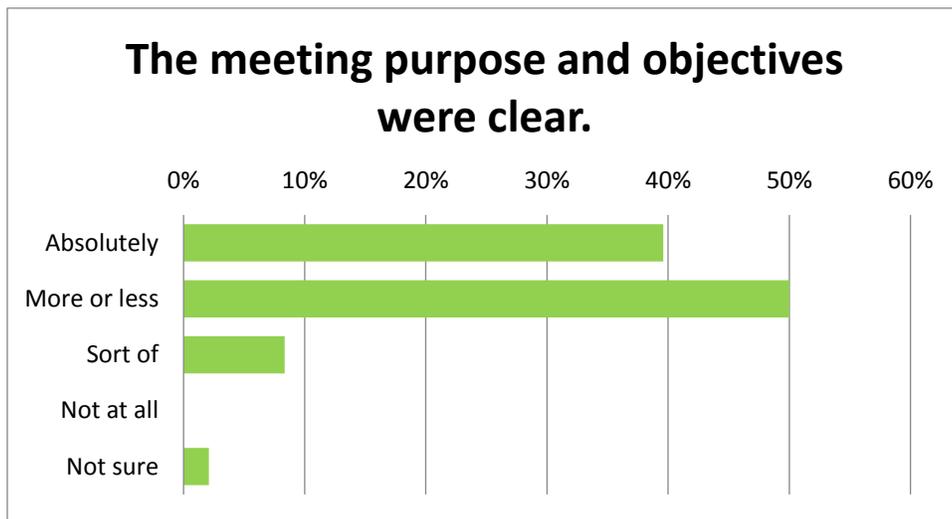
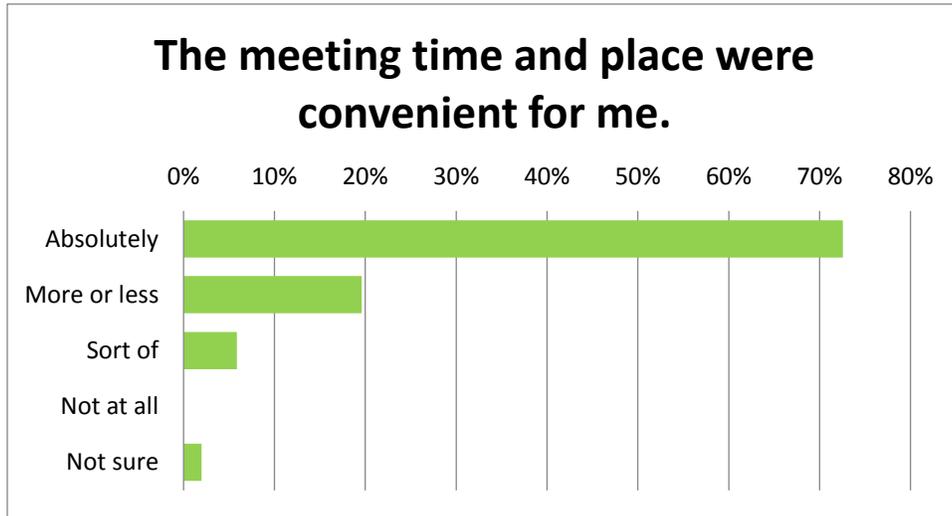


The discussion notes collected contained mostly ideas for improving the Town of Tonawanda waterfront. There were many calls for more public access to the shoreline and installation of recreational amenities such as walking trails and bike paths that connect the area to the Cities of Buffalo and Tonawanda and even Amherst. The ability to find food and live entertainment options was also important to many, and some were interested in exhibits about the area’s industrial heritage.

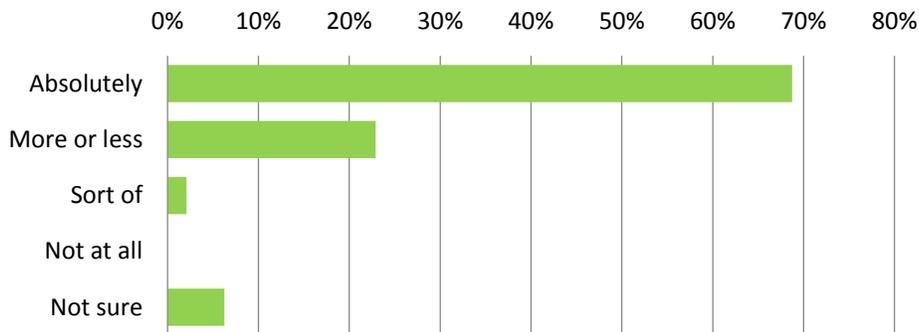
Other important topics included support for the light rail along Niagara Falls Boulevard, streetscape improvements for greater walkability and pedestrian/cyclist safety, more high density housing, and effective follow up to residential and commercial property maintenance problems.

Meeting Evaluation

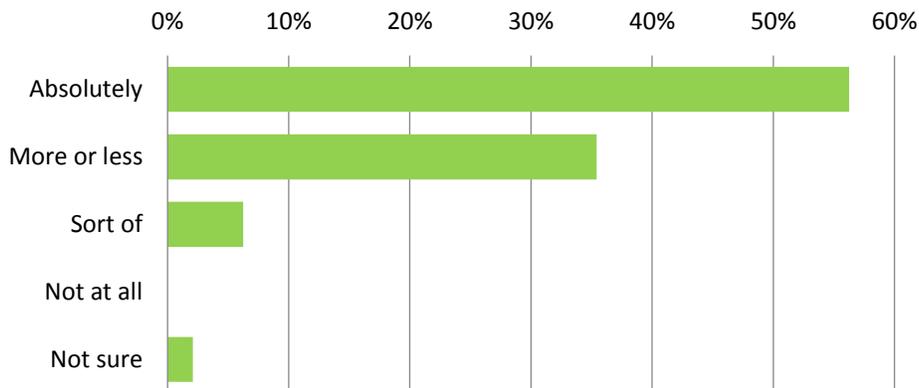
Attendees appeared to be generally satisfied with the way the meeting was conducted. The following graphs show the results from the interactive poll at the end of the meeting.



There were good opportunities to make my voice heard.



Time was used effectively.



Appendix

This section contains the original comments from attendees. Each bullet point represents an individual sticky note.

Intro discussion

- Repurposing sites that seemed desolate and dead.
- I like the idea of the “power of 10”
- Repurposing large buildings and plants that are no longer occupied into places that everyone can work in and visit. It provides more jobs and things to do.
- Refurb urban areas as in market squares in Pittsburgh, PA.
- Repurposing – it’s a great idea to take advantage of the spaces we are given and turn it into something exciting for members of the community.

- Multiple use to draw various interest.
- 10 ideas.
- Mixed-use (opportunities for arts, music, sports, passive recreation, restaurants, shops, etc.)
- New places and events in cities and towns – more activities and places for them to be held.
- + Cont. Heritage tourism.
- 10 points of interest.
- Park for passive recreations.
- Consider clean energy development.
- Engage Niagara River Greenway Commission for greater public access, celebrate energy, development history, restaurant.
- What is NRG environmental obligation? Re. clean up.
- Factories are interesting to see.
- People like to visit waterfront.
- Multiple venues are big people draws.
- I like from presentation: multi use facility, making use of its place on waterfront, providing public use features, cultural amenities, personally, I'd like to see a velodrome!, loved the "glowing" escalator, inside of Huntley would be great BALLROOM!
- State bike path along canal.
- Steel stacks Bethlehem steel PA
- Industrial tours.
- Bike paths and ferries boat to connect Canalside + Tonawanda.
- Contaminated trail who cleans it up?
- Re-purposing, re-cycling
- City of Buffalo has similar projects that we're proud of reuse/repurposing: Silos, central terminal, waterfront for all seasons, tri-main building, larkinville.
- Public space
- Creative reuse, prefect place for whatever museum large open space inside.
- Re-use of the building, potential due to the size and location. Children activities historical depiction of coal industry – worthwhile to document. Make an extension of the science museum.
- Waterfront in Austin + PGH
- Huntley 2 kids museum/swimming area (in the river?water park?)
- Public-private partnership
- Waterfront restaurants
- Boardwalk
- River boat tours
- Entertainment uses not good for industrial areas
- Concert venues near waterfront
- We can't be canalside.
- More entertainment near waterfront.
- Pay attention to new forms of energy (eg. Wind turbines)
- Challenge: competition from other cities in region
- + Cont. be unique because of our heritage (regional + historical uniqueness)
- Keeping chimneys as unique as architecture and landmark, ex. Silo city in Buffalo.

- Community spaces as destinations for events and gatherings.
- Concern about pollution
- Used to be big thing to swim in the river.
- Ways to open up the waterfront.
- Town control of NRG property!
- Understand the environmental issues?

Workforce

- Needs schools to bring back training for trades.
- Need more local programs.
- Need funding to get training programs started.
- GM dominates jobs/intern. Find out info from other major companies.
- Educate the younger people about what they have offered to them for the future.
- Connect larger employers to those looking for employment.
- Recent BN article includes stats that 130,000+ manufacturing jobs needed in WNY. Ex. Welders.
- Give people, esp.youth, opportunities to intern and explore jobs within the community and jobs currently thriving.
- Attract larger businesses to the town.
- Follow IDA rules. Don't steal companies.
- Need slide to re-cap 3 workforce strategies as voting is being requested.
- How to implement active engagement with youth.
- Better public transportation.
- Need slide to re-cap 3 choices during table discussions.
- Kids don't know much about jobs.
- Nice job with the Flats. River Road good job. Prepare other sites to be construction ready.
- Young people don't see industrial jobs as long-term jobs, something for the short term.
- Set up apprenticeships, connect to schools.
- Vocational training.
- Career fair for students.
- There needs to be employment (full-time and part-time) for older workers also, 55+. This is our community. Social security/pension needs supplement @ rising expenses in community/healthcare cost of food, etc.
- Town job/internship fair (similar to format of Town showcase that used to happen at Lincoln Arena)
- Require high school students to take a class that covers resumes, cover letters, college applications, personal finances, real-life skills (even things like changing a tire!).
- Created shovel ready properties for new businesses.
- Partnerships w/ local business – direct correlation.
- Connection to jobs + sponsorships.
- Adult education opportunities.
- Young people look more to Buffalo rather than Tonawanda.
- Tackle public transportation infrastructure.
- Ensure local employers, BOCES, EDC, align needs of employers with our workforce.
- STEM education.

- Location of industrial jobs are not along central corridors, should be more central.
- We need to get on the next wave with technology.
- Get students into trade schools.
- Concerned that current industries are phasing out.
- Buffalo maritime center. Reuse as an energy alternative. Energy makeover.
- Transportation to get to jobs. 3rd shift mass transit issues.
- Need trades training, opportunities outside of college, additional training, narrating career pathways.
- Hard to get access to job opportunities.
- Certificate programs.
- STEM.
- Nano-tech.
- What is unique to Tonawanda.
- Diversify education.
- Science center/museum.
- Continue to build on the momentum.
- Link to job training centers.
- Need comprehensive list of local business needs + local school programs. What are needs? Opportunities? Overlap of these?
- Mixed use development.
- Public transportation to jobs or bike routes.
- Capitalize on bus routes to downtown Buffalo.
- Add more routes to suburbs.
- More information for students on career opportunities.
- Public transportation.
- BN article mentioned workforce in WNY aging out.
- Cutting edge infrastructure. Electric cars.
- Bike paths for recreation + bike routes to work.
- Agree w/ strengthen career pipeline start freshman year in high school.
- Is there a stigma with students against vocational + BOCES?? We need these skills and they can be obtained more economically. Everyone doesn't have to go to college for 4 years to have a successful financial future here. Gov. Cuomo doesn't agree BUT he may need a tradesman.
- Public transportation would help get people to their jobs or trade schools.
- Where does the funding come from to get any prospect off the ground?
- Youth don't have to go to college but to trade schools. Electrical, carpenters, steamfitters. Trade unions need to work with youth.
- Conversion of disused industrial facilities leads to new jobs.
- Support older workers in second careers.
- Transportation (public) in and out of Tonawanda. Extend metro rail. Develop light rail line LaSalle Station to City of Tonawanda.
- Keep grads here, plug business into high schools on a regular basis. Internships, ex. Chevy Dunlop.
- Skilled trades. Strategies mostly on the mark. Apprenticeship programs need support. Work w/ school districts to educate work skills, vocational education. Expose youth to these vocations. Market demand exists now for vocational/skill trades.

- Take care of older workers (who still need living wages) and younger students/entry level workers and paths to sustainable earnings.
- Attract tech companies.
- Continue and expand in vacant business parks.
- Preserve what we have!
- Share opportunities with other city/towns vocational high schools like in Burgard (Buffalo).
- Need training for young people. Manufacturing, industrial arts. School system needs to expose kids to these. Not just BOCES.
- How to attract industries of the future?
- Ex. US lags Germany in preparing students for careers. Perhaps too much emphasis on college readiness, NOT ENOUGH ABOUT OTHER CAREERS + PATHS.
- Need more alternative pathways in education toward industrial jobs or tech. Better training.
- Have companies train new employees for those retiring.
- There is a huge need to improve mass transit.
- High school involved with industry by offering more connections to jobs, tours or talks by our town industrial employers.
- Access to vocational training w/in town, even town run.
- This area is changing landscape moving from industrial to unknown future.
- More preparation at younger ages for steps to be successful.
- Art exhibits, restaurant tours on brownfields and warehouses. Museums for kids, public/private partnerships.

Placemaking

- Bad sights and smells from landfill, gas towers.
- Consensus at table on significance of waterfront, increased public access.
- Tonawanda/North Tonawanda - Isle View Park as jewel around which development could benefit from.
- Golf courses, community pools good. No soccer complexes ☹. Little league baseball diamonds good.
- Replace the SPCA with another operator.
- Existing golf courses are a nice asset.
- Make the town more attractive – not all industrial land needs to be developed for industrial use.
- Walkability of neighborhoods is a critical investment in the future of pulling in the next generation. Highway budget must change to include sidewalks.
- Need job to keep people here. No jobs for kids.
- Lack of housing stock for growing families. Have so many amenities. Waterfront. Zoning. Yes on ridesharing
- The example of the conversion of the German coal plant could be followed here.
- NRG – What's their plan (eminent domain)?
- Retail centers, small stores clustered along spaces – waterfront restaurants? Or Spaulding Fiber Site (remediated – city Tonawanda? We hope).
- Clean energy development.
- Redevelop waterfront, put in breweries and restaurants.
- Waterfront needs public access – does it really need industrial space too?
- Connect City of Buffalo to City of Tonawanda with improved public access.

- Historical landmarks? (What do we have?)
- Area between Two Mile Creek Road and I-290 – Town own it? Can part of it be turned to recreational use?
- “Mini-museums”, Tonawanda industrial historical museums. Carriage rides along waterfront in summer. Multi-cultural center with immigrant families in town – Serbia, Iraq/Iran, etc. Horseback riding in summer by water. Multi-cultural food fair by water.
- Strengthen the career pipeline for students to access jobs. Succession planning.
- Use property to access waterfront.
- Keep affordability. Keep families.
- Love rail to trail. Need east-west spur.
- To continue to attract homeownership, need to help with capital investment on the aging infrastructure.
- Our forefathers were smart to set aside public spaces with parks – need to do some upgrades and enhancements!
- Glad to see the Lincoln Park loop coming up.
- Theater/playhouse - Reuse school building.
- Sidewalks for all ages – hopscotch, benches.
- A lot of waterfront already privately owned.
- Can use the space like used by Tift Farms.
- NFTA light rail proposal down Niagara Falls Boulevard would help access along east side of town.
- Make streets more bike friendly.
- Make Tonawanda an example! Green, sustainable, thriving, blue economy, highlight green infrastructure to replace aging grey infrastructure. Make waterfront a destination.
- Village experience. Rails to trails. AEC. Waterfront. Aqua park. Town services.
- Industrial tourism opportunities? Water plant? Coal plant? *Electric trolley* (from Niagara Falls thru Tonawanda to Buffalo).
- What we need: seasonal food vendors, entertainment venue, like Wilkeson Point, marina, beer garden, help with aging infrastructure.
- Upgrade house, mixed residential, 1st time homebuyer program.
- Waterfront access.
- Clean polluted areas.
- Light rail.
- Paths.
- Lower taxes.
- Is there any attractions in Tonawanda.
- More modern, “edgy” looking apartments and housing.
- Does Sheridan need to be 8 lanes.
- Lyft/Uber would be nice to help people get around.
- Placemaking – reuse of underutilized waterfront, connectivity, Sheridan crossings, traffic, 1000 employees @ KMH + LRT on NFB
- Hi tech, green, fuel cells, training.
- Greater access to waterfront.
- Corner of Sheridan near Delaware – Finish the statue of Sheridan (Started but never completed).

- Repurpose and revitalize. Get younger families to come and stay. Fear of turning into transitional area. Keep families here.
- Town should conduct more studies on how to improve walkability and neighborhood centers.
- Chicago's waterfront as example of destination.
- What we love: great aquatic / fitness center, good senior center, good parks, golf dome, great groups (neighborhood watch, churches, book clubs, gardening) and libraries, good neighbors, good schools.
- Needs improving: vacant/zombie properties, faster way to address problem properties, sidewalk repair.
- Key regional attractions/opportunities, waterfront, walkability, combine these to spur growth + progress + green development.
- Walkability still needs to be improved, but unsure how?
- Emphasize unique history and culture – we have a lot of culture.
- New recreation sites – hockey, soccer fields, prepare bike path.
- Promote town's parks and recreations + re-do, update/upgrade better amenities. Ex. Hockey in town needs re-do, etc.
- Open water is fantastic. Add more public access to water. Connect to other waterfronts.
- Become green town, be an example – electric charging stations, more bike trails. Connect bike trails on waterfront to State Street path, Delaware and Elmwood, etc.
- Historically, good restaurants at Sheridan Drive. Keep supporting them!
- Visitors and transplants see Tonawanda as “old school” – lacks forward vision, seeks to go backwards into the future.
- Engage local empl. Needs
- High-rise and high density housing is a lacking form of housing. Promote development of 8-10 story buildings by updating zoning. Attracting young residents from other regions expect it.
- Complete streets and bike path investment is critical to next generation of residents.
- Housing is affordable, but not attractive residential environments (e.g. ugly aesthetics, no places to jog).
- Need more attractive apartments.
- Events at waterfront – concerts, Iron Man, kayak, restaurants. Where do you go after golf game?
- Need more mixed use developments, especially closer to waterfront.
- Families don't stay in the town, not much to do – nothing new. We've done it all.
- Town has great assets (like parks, ice rinks, event centers), but we don't use it.
- Niagara Falls Boulevard is a hindrance, some people try to avoid it.
- Biggest attraction is Town's side of Niagara Falls Boulevard and Village of Kenmore.
- Walkability – Yes we can walk around, but we need more destinations to walk to.

Economy

- Need more Class A “prime” office space.
- Riverbend is great, but location is away from central areas of town.
- Need conference center, more business meeting places (e.g. hotels, restaurants).
- High tech incubator for small business.
- Solar should be the concentration.
- Big employers older heavy industry.
- Consider tax structure: Will industry locate here with current tax rates. What does it mean for residents.
- What are workers going to do? Need jobs for them.

- More recycling, sustainable business development.
- Keep big business we already have.
- A lot of industries and companies are downsizing.
- Losing businesses to Amherst and other areas w/ more office space.
- Support small business.
- Information technology.
- Repeal homestead tax, it hurts bringing new business to the town of Tonawanda.
- Solar park coming to Tonawanda on top of “old” town/municipal landfill (To be seen from 290).
- Tax rate on Amherst side of Niagara Falls Boulevard 1/3 of rate in Tonawanda. Therefore, less industrial investment (incentives?)
- Tie in w/ Solar City and batteries, etc. for higher tech manufacturing + supply jobs + companies.
- Consider the environment + the legacy of ex industries. Love Canal toxic waste. Ashland landfill nuclear waste.
- Like Kenton a destination for workers and students, goals for jobs.
- Solar energy. Water access to bring raw materials to plants. Waterfront is privately owned. Need to get the owners to invest. Attract small businesses into a business park like an incubator. Need to maintain public access and retail development.
- \$ incentives ECIDA – low cost power.
- Tackle “eyesore” properties for redevelopment.
- UB incubator companies downtown. Should be targeted for expansion.
- Solar panels!
- We have source of hydroelectric power, capitalize on it.
- Utilize shovel ready areas. Don’t put industry on waterfront unless it needs water/electricity. Get people to waterfront.
- Can they lump in this with the tourist shuttle in Niagara and Grand Island. A historic center.
- Ask industry what are you looking for in innovation in your area? Incentivized private funding. Change perception. Continue branding to address economy.
- Economy – vague. IDAs (ECIDA), official mechanism, town picks up that role – keep tax base local. Incubator/co-worker space. What is the general direction of town. Need more IT/Comp Adm. Tech.
- Ideal location, bridge.
- Town has a lot of land – can’t all be for industrial/economic use.
- Build/improve quality of life. Attract young singles/families. Waterfront for recreation. Destinations (restaurants, events, etc.) Grants to improve homes. Good schools. Bike paths.
- Service area. Biking. Retail. Transportation. R.R. Auto industry. Life science. Durable goods. Modernize current businesses.
- Economic strategies. Solar energy, spin off businesses, town has water access, aging workforce, many small businesses, transportation, tourism.
- Need details on what industry could replace Huntley. Clean industry and housing nearby.
- Bus lines. Develop BOCES programs. Tax incentives? For how long.
- Require new businesses to adopt green energy and other environmentally sustainable practices.
- Local economy is more diverse than we sometimes acknowledge.
- What are we training for – What types of jobs.
- Transportation.

- Sustainable
- Structural/promotional branding.
- River access, Kenmore.
