

# LSC WESTERN NEW YORK



2020-2024 Strategic Plan

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Empowering People; Transforming Neighborhoods

## From our Executive Director

We are pleased to present the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation’s Western New York (LISC WNY) office.

This plan builds upon the 20-year foundation of LISC’s work in Buffalo and the surrounding area, and the numerous ways strategic, intentional investments helped shape some of the City’s most vibrant neighborhoods.

This is a unique chapter of our region’s story. After years of disinvestment and large scale population loss that sent our loved ones away and exacerbated long standing structural racism, a range of local success stories have helped WNY reclaim our identity as a place of innovation, investment and impact. However, the region’s decision to focus our efforts on a concentrated set of places in the face of scarce resources, drove further concentration of poverty and segregation, resulting in significant income, wealth and health disparities.

LISC believes that WNY’s long-term success will be measured by the extent to which all individuals – regardless of income, race or zip code – have access to safe, healthy, sustainable communities with housing and economic choices; putting them on the path to financial security, health and wellbeing.

Our intent is to become the most valuable community development entity in the region – a trusted organization that works with our partners to **empower people and transform neighborhoods**.

“Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach... When a great ship is in harbor and moored, it is safe, there can be no doubt. But that is not what great ships are built for.”

- Clarissa Pinkola Estes

We believe LISC is a *great ship*. We invite you to join us, as we embrace our full reach in WNY. Thank you for your continuing support.



Julie Barrett O'Neill  
Executive Director  
LISC WNY



## From LISC's National CEO

Over the course of LISC's 40 years of work, its comprehensive approach to community development, and its broad national reach, have made it a unique and valuable leader in the fight to improve quality of life in communities across the country. LISC's greatest success over these years, has been working with under-resourced communities, and their residents, to help them get ahead. Today, the growing inequality, concentrated poverty and racial inequity that our country continues to experience, makes the work that we do with our partners even more urgent than ever before.

An **opportunity gap** – reflected in disparities in health and wellbeing, employment, wealth and financial security, and overall quality of life – is increasingly dividing America. This opportunity gap does not stem from any single root: it arises from imbalanced access to basic needs like safety, housing and healthcare, as well as inequality of educational and economic opportunities. Addressing such complex problems requires a set of equally multi-dimensional tools and strategies.

LISC believes that catalyzing opportunity involves working at the local level to foster resilient, safe and healthy communities in which individuals have financial security, economic choices and a high quality of life. With our deep local roots, national breadth, and comprehensive set of products and services, we will fight to close the opportunity gap in America through our strong network of over 2,300 community-based partners.

To achieve this aspiration, LISC will continue to build on our strategic advantages, including **our role as a key partner, investor and convener** in the field, and our foundation of comprehensive community development. In this next chapter, we will build on our core work, striving to ensure that our contributions remain relevant to the demands of today's communities. This will include advancing and **building out our economic development efforts** to promote employment opportunities; **expanding our footprint** with a focus on markets with the highest poverty and inequity in the country; and **broadening our policy efforts** to include more state and local work.

## From LISC's National CEO

Partnership lies at the heart of our service model, and we must continue to pursue relationships with organizations that can inclusively and accountably serve as conduits of opportunity for individuals and communities. This includes a range of actors – from local non-profits and municipalities to hospitals, universities, and women and minority-owned businesses.

Together, with a diverse set of partners and stakeholders, LISC will work to **elevate and scale** its work to close the opportunity gap; thereby working to ensure that prosperity is broadly shared across the entire country. It is this aim of inclusive economic growth – an America where every community is rich with opportunity – that motivates our work across the country.



Maurice Jones  
Chief Executive Officer  
LISC National



# Our Mission & Vision

## MISSION

LISC WNY works regionally with partners to bring local neighborhood ideas to life; creating great places to live, work and raise a family for all.

## VISION

We envision a region where **residents are connected to their communities** and can **plan to stay there**. A place where community residents build wealth through good jobs and entrepreneurship. A place where community residents drive action to improve their neighborhoods because they feel a sense of ownership and empowerment. Where neighborhoods have strong and responsive community organizations, driven by residents' needs and ideas.



## LISC WNY Values

**Trust.** Community revitalization is not an individual sport. Our work must reinforce community-centeredness, just relationships, the success of many, and the creation of a sustainable network to do the work over the long term. Trust is built upon a foundation of respect for every individual, listening and strong communication, transparency, and the credibility earned by delivering what we promise.

**Local Leadership.** LISC believes that local community members, organizations, and assets are the most important catalysts of opportunity. For over 40 years, LISC has used a “teach a man to fish” approach – connecting our partners with the capital, strategy, and know-how to build places where people can thrive.

**Innovation.** WNY has a rich and diverse heritage of innovation. Our creativity came from every corner of our community including the Irondequoit Confederacy, Niagara Movement, the Women’s Suffrage Movement, modern environmental law, bi-national resource management, and technological innovators like Greatbatch. LISC celebrates the entrepreneurial leadership in every neighborhood.

**Diversity & Equity.** Racial and economic equity are integral to ensuring sustainable economic growth. We must unite successfully across public, civic, philanthropic and private sectors to catalyze opportunity for people and places that are being left behind in today’s economy.

**Responsibility.** LISC is an organization with tremendous capacity to do great work. We must responsibly steward our resources, and build systems that address structural disinvestment and implicit bias; working to maximize our service to our partners and those in need.



# LISC WNY Is Uniquely...

**Comprehensive.** Addressing complex problems requires a set of equally multi-dimensional tools and strategies. Our work involves strategies that empower people, transform places, supports enterprises, and drives systems innovation - in the same place, at the same time. We invest in all of the issues that must be tackled at once, so that progress in one is not undermined by neglect in another: housing, health, entrepreneurship, education, public safety and employment.

**A Multiplier.** LISC typically leverages \$6-8 for every dollar of local investment. Our due diligence process helps build and attract diverse capital stacks. Our comprehensive national and regional relationships allow individual donors to stretch their dollar further. Our strong financial management systems help steward the investments of many donors around shared work, and make it easier for front line organizations to access coordinated resources.

**An Intermediary.** We are not bound to one neighborhood, organization, demographic, political jurisdiction, election cycle, shareholder group, CEO, or policy objective. This allows us to serve as an honest broker. We convene, hold collective space for, and facilitate important conversations that are often difficult for others to lead.

**Backed by The Mother Ship.** The WNY team is the local office of the nation's largest community development organization. LISC National has a network of peer practitioners across the US, a national support team with networks and expertise in every community development topic area, extensive operations infrastructure, and the financial tools necessary to turn visions into reality. This access provides us a competitive advantage, as we harness these resources in service to our local partners.

**A Long-Lasting Commitment.** Our national relationships and capacity, balanced with input from local practitioners, allows LISC to go upstream to address the policy, structural and long-term challenges that often undermine the work of our front line partners. We persevere as markets go up and down, political winds shift, and fads come and go.

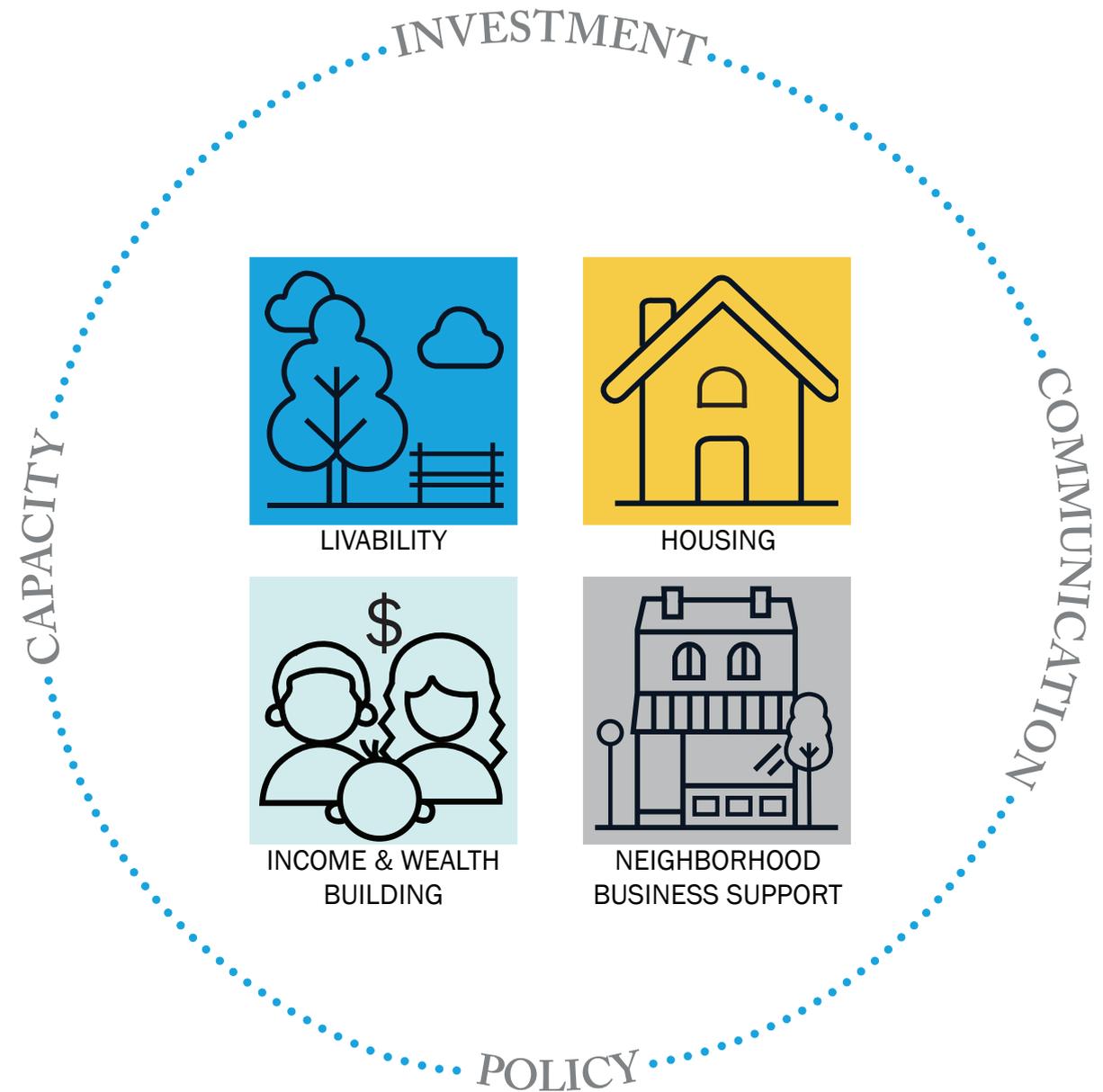


2020-2024

Goals

# Goals At-A-Glance

GOAL	LISC WILL...
<b>LIVABILITY</b> FACILITATE LIVABILITY INVESTMENT PLANS	Facilitate the development and implementation of community-owned comprehensive livability investment plans that drive public and private investment; addressing the complex relationship between our homes, our businesses, our neighborhoods, our work, our health and our planet.
<b>HOUSING</b> PRESERVE AND INCREASE THE SUPPLY AND QUALITY OF THE REGION'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY	Embrace LISC's unique expertise on housing. Facilitate a regional mixed income housing strategy and production system, that delivers increased public and private investment; connecting people to opportunity, challenging displacement, supporting healthy families, and helping to close the racial wealth gap.
<b>INCOME &amp; WEALTH BLDG</b> CONNECT INDIVIDUALS WITH FAMILY INCOME AND WEALTH BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES	Connect LISC's national Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) and Bridges to Career Opportunities (BCO) service models with existing workforce wealth building efforts. We will partner to improve financial literacy and credit health; supporting poverty reduction, resilience and asset building.
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS</b> CULTIVATE AN INCLUSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS SUPPORT SYSTEM	As a complement to regional high growth entrepreneurship efforts, we will actively cultivate an inclusive neighborhood business support system as a pathway to agency and self-determination, job-creation, wealth building, and neighborhood vitality.



# Livability

Facilitate livability investment plans

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Develop a clear work plan for deploying **Comprehensive Livability Investment Plan (CLIP)** programs in WNY neighborhoods
- Pilot the approach in Masten Park, Delavan Grider and the University District, building upon LISC WNY's existing work and relationships
- Drive public and private investment, for both shovel ready and long-term strategies, to make larger investments feasible over time
- Assist with plan implementation by brokering and investing in real estate deals when appropriate, providing direct technical support, and connecting local partners to other partners and resources
- Make the program available as an open source, digital resource for self-study and/or deployment
- Convene neighborhood CLIP partners as a peer learning and resource network
- Deploy the approach in additional neighborhoods based upon LISC WNY's capacity and stakeholder input on geographic opportunities and priorities

## Results

- Completed CLIPs
- Jobs & Tax Revenue Generated
- Increased Private & Public Investment in Target Neighborhoods
- Improved Neighborhood Livability



# Housing

Preserve and increase the supply and quality of the region's affordable housing supply

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Work with partners on short-term individual affordable housing preservation and development efforts
- Prepare a regional affordable housing market analysis & benchmark targets based upon the region's unique demography
- Convene partners and stakeholders around a regional housing systems approach and strategy that:
  - Preserves affordability and prevents displacement
  - Minimizes exposure to household contaminants
  - Develops affordable options in high opportunity areas
  - Expands ownership/wealth building options
  - Builds new capacity, construction & financing models to serve more people, sooner
  - Activates vacant land in targeted infill locations
  - Identifies new systems for leveraging public assets
  - Supports Public Housing Agencies
- Assist with plan implementation by brokering and investing in housing projects when invited and appropriate; providing direct technical support; and connecting local partners to other partners and resources

## Results

- **Completion of a Regional Mixed Income Housing Strategy & Performance Metrics**
- **Affordable Homes Built and Preserved**
- **Increase in Number of Home Owners**



# Income & Wealth Building

Connect individuals with family income and wealth building opportunities

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Pilot LISC's National **Financial Opportunity Center (FOC)** & **Bridges to Career Opportunities (BCO)** models on Buffalo's Eastside
- Increase FOC/BOC sites and partners focused on the regional industries, and business sectors that provide living wage jobs and the potential for advancement: small businesses, manufacturing, tourism, construction, and health care sectors
- Convene partners around opportunities to:
  - Streamline income support systems
  - Maximize talent placement and break down segregation
  - Support a distributed/multi-site/asset-focused system
  - Implement a regional credit building model

## Results

- Increased Number of Clients Served in FOC & BOC Sites
- Increased Credit Scores, Income, Family Net Worth
- Increased Number of Individuals Placed in Full-Time, Quality Jobs with Family Sustaining Wages
- Enhanced Number, Diversity and Scale of Local Developers



# Neighborhood Business Support

Cultivate an inclusive neighborhood business support system

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Convene and increase the capacity of place-based community development partners as front-line neighborhood business support agents, beginning with the “East Side Avenues”
- Develop a user-friendly portal that increases small business and place-based partner access to technical support and financial resources
- Work with partners to track outcomes, and hold the neighborhood business ecosystem accountable to shared metrics; supporting continuous improvement based upon client feedback
- Scale Kiva lending with LISC match resources
- Explore credit enhancement opportunities to leverage increased economic development investment in target neighborhoods
- Increase Immito and LISC small business lending for neighborhood businesses
- Develop an entrepreneurial/neighborhood business FOC to provide financial readiness, credit counseling and other supports to help build a pipeline of “loan ready” borrowers
- Provide training, technical, and financial support, to expand the number and diversity of local developers

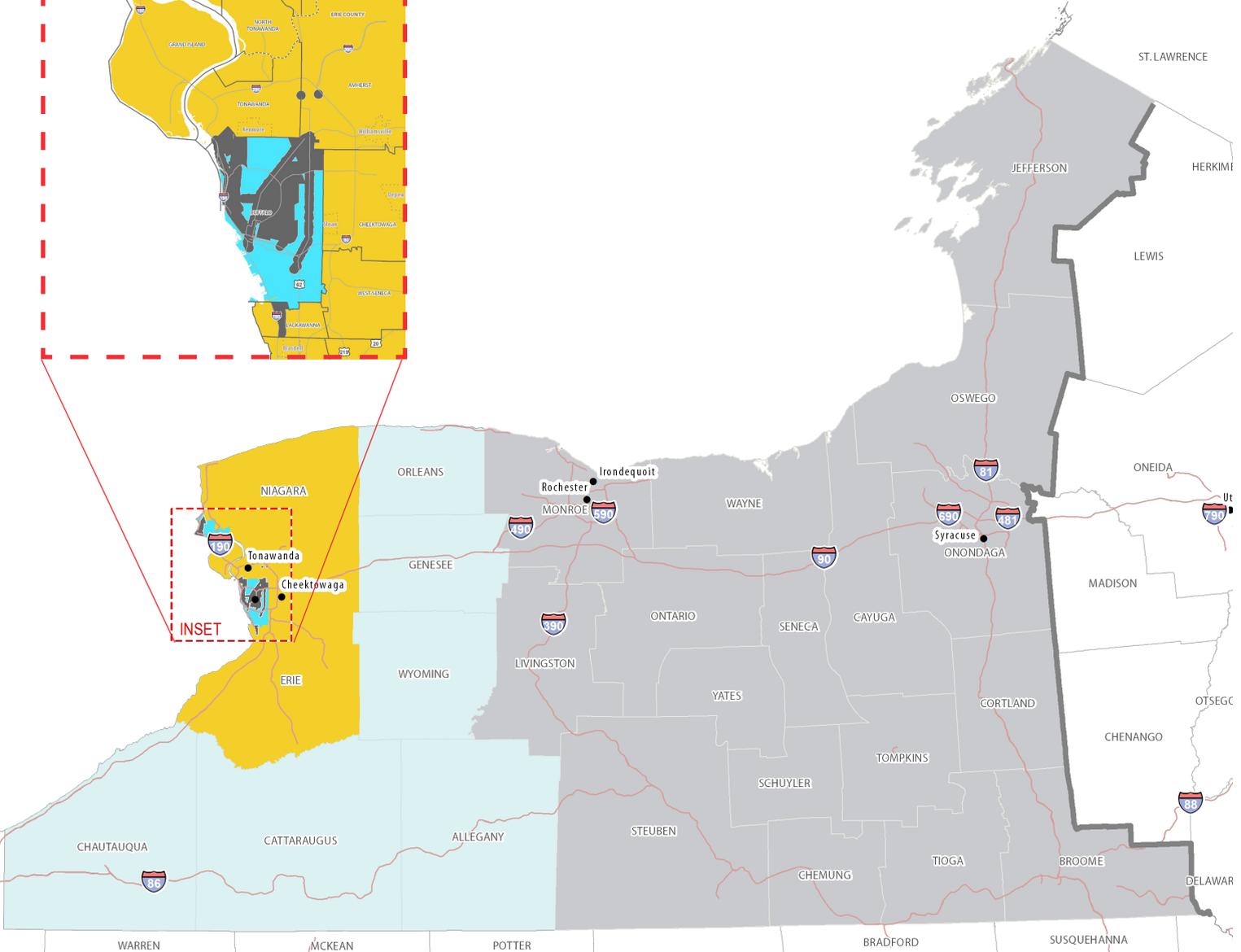
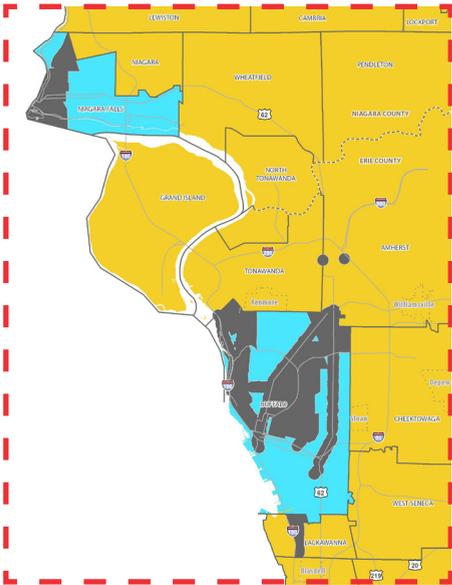
## Results

- Increased Small Business Investments
- Increased Small Business Diversity
- Decreased Neighborhood Business Vacancy Rate



Where We  
Work

### LISC WNY Services Provided by Zone



	Distressed Areas on East Side, West Side, Niagara Falls, Lackawanna	City of Buffalo, Niagara Falls	Erie & Niagara Counties	Eight Counties of WNY	West of I-81
<b>Amplify and Connect</b>					
Hands On Communications Support					
Amplification					
<b>Livability Investment Planning</b>					
Direct TA with Livability Planning					
Implementataion Support					
Recreation Grants					
Zombie Property Management					
<b>Regional Housing Systems</b>					
Neighborhood Based Housing Scenario Planning					
Public Housing Authority Technical Assistance					
Market Supply and Demand Analysis					
GHHI & Homeowner Repair					
Manufacturing Innovation					
Mission Based Housing Support					
<b>Family Income &amp; Wealth Building</b>					
Physical Financial Opportunity Centers					
Web-Based Network Resources					
<b>Neighborhood Business Support</b>					
Neighborhood Business Support System					
Commercial Corridor Technical Assistance					
Digital Directory					
Developer Education Program - in person					
Developer Education - Remote learning					
<b>Capacity Building</b>					
Assessment & Action Planning					
Staff Training					
Real Estate Development Technical Assistance					
Grant Writing Support					
Section 4 Capacity Funding					
Peer Network Connections					
Webinars & Remote Learning					
<b>Systems Change</b>					
Policy Advocacy - Local Government					
Policy Advocacy - State/Federal Government					
Financial Product Development					
Fund Development					
<b>Financial Investments</b>					
LISC Predevelopment Support					
LISC Construction Lending					
LISC Business Lending					
Opportunity Zone TA - with LISC National					
NEF/NMSC/Immito					

# Internal Goals

# Internal Goals At-A-Glance

## GOAL

## LISC WILL...

EMBRACE THE REGION

EMBRACE THE REGION WITH A TIERED SERVICE APPROACH

Provide concentrated technical assistance to WNY's distressed neighborhoods. Engage with partners beyond the urban centers to determine how LISC may support these communities regionally; increasing their access to LISC/NEF/NMSC/Immito resources.

AMPLIFY

LIFT UP, AMPLIFY, AND CONNECT THE STORIES OF LISC AND OUR PARTNERS

Celebrate the diverse beauty, talent, creativity, and resilience of WNY. Use our voices and communications networks to lift up, connect, and amplify the stories of LISC and our partners.

INTERNAL CAPACITY

BUILD LISC WNY'S LOCAL INTERNAL CAPACITY

Diversify and support the Local Advisory Committee. Develop pathways for volunteers to invest their time and/or talent. Work to secure sustainable, diversified, multi-year funding commitments for LISC and our partners. Attract, support and retain a high performing local team.

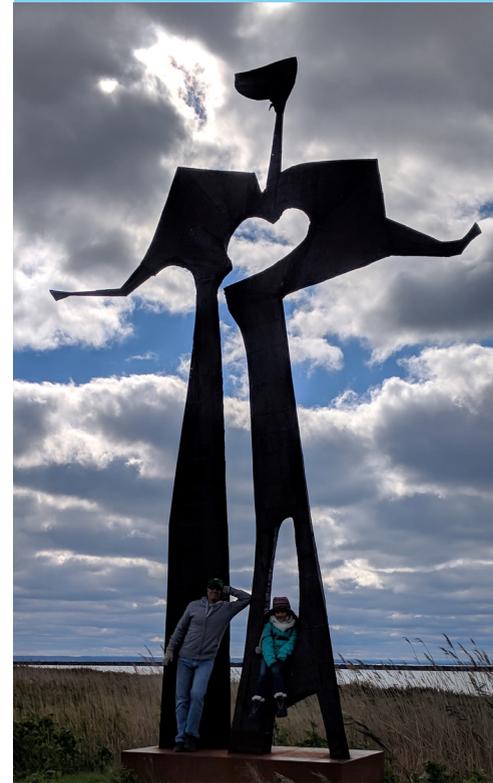
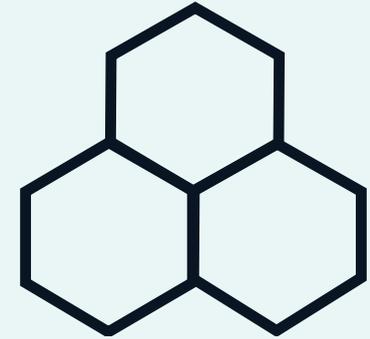
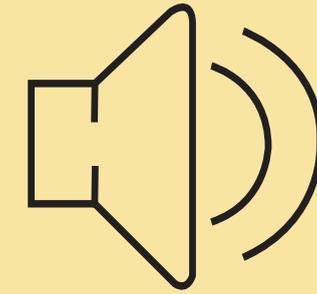
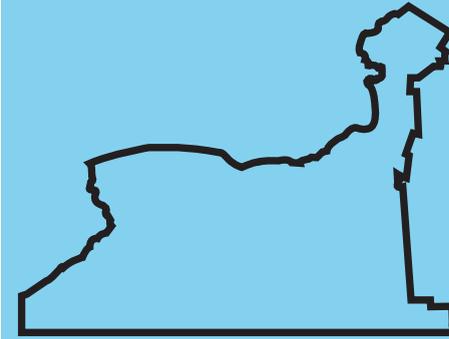


Photo by State of Digital



# Embrace the Region

Embrace the region with a tiered service approach

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Formally re-name and adopt WNY regionalized brand approach
- Begin with concentrated technical assistance to WNY's urban centers
- Actively engage with partners outside of the urban centers to understand community development needs and determine how LISC may support those communities
- Build systems and networks to support neighborhoods in WNY
- Increase regional access to LISC/NEF/NMSC/Immito resources

## Results

- Increased LISC Investment, Tracked by Geographic Zone
- Use of LISC Open Source Resources, Tracked by Geographic Zone
- Geographic Representation of WNY on Our Local Advisory Committee (LAC)



# Amplify & Connect

Lift Up, Amplify, and Connect the Stories of LISC and our Partners

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Celebrate LISC's work/impact and partners to date with 1) a 20 year impact summary report; 2) on-site project signage; 3) a January 2020 event
- Develop robust internal relationship management systems and high quality communications collateral
- Develop a directory of our community and economic development stakeholders and partners
- Collaborate with LISC project partners to tell the stories of our shared work using LISC's listserv, social media, website and press connections
- Develop a shared calendar to help facilitate coordination among our community and economic development partners
- Host an annual event to celebrate our work and partners
- Publish a digital annual report each year celebrating our progress

## Results

- Improved Visibility of our Partner Organizations
- Improved Visibility of LISC and Our Impact



# Internal Capacity

Build LISC WNY's local internal capacity

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Work with **Local Advisory Committee (LAC)** members to diversify and actively engage LAC members in our work
- Develop and implement a strategy for engaging local, state and federal community and economic development agencies
- Develop clear pathways for individuals and organizations to invest their time, talent or treasure in LISC and our partners' work
- Secure diversified, multi-year funding commitments for local programs & operations
- Support existing staff through clear work planning, ongoing coaching and performance processes
- Hire new local staff for key, ongoing programs, as multi-year resources are secured
- Build a culture of hard work, accountability, entrepreneurship, impact, and lived values
- Explore opportunities to leverage LISC's office space location and operations to better support our mission and goals

## Results

- **A Robust, Diverse, and Actively Engaged LAC**
- **Higher Number of Staff; Lower Turnover Rates**
- **Increased Financial Support from Public & Private Sources**
- **Strong Relationships with Neighborhood Residents and Regional Community & Economic Development Leaders**



# Our Toolkit

**Communicate & Convene:** Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination. LISC supports our local partners by convening and facilitating collaborative efforts with technical support, communications, and logistical support.

**Capacity Building:** LISC builds front-line capacity through training for neighborhood non-profits, grant writing support, AmeriCorps service placement, real estate development assistance, and organizational and management assistance.

**Investments:** LISC helps drive investment to implement neighborhood revitalization projects through pre-development, construction, and permanent loans for capital projects, transaction debt financing, equity financing (Low Income Housing Tax Credits and New Markets Tax Credits), and new financial product development.

**Policy:** LISC works with local partners to leverage our national relationships to address the policies, structures, and long-term challenges that often undermine the work of our front-line partners.

**LISC's National Programs:** Neighborhood Revitalization • Affordable Housing • Economic Development • Family Income and Wealth Building • Commercial Corridor Revitalization • Health (Medical, Nutrition, Recreation and Social Determinants) • Safe Neighborhoods • School Improvements & Education Initiatives • Community Leadership • Policy Engagement • Best Practices Research on Neighborhood Revitalization

“There is no magic to achievement.  
It’s really about hard work,  
choices and persistence.”

- Michelle Obama



# Thank You

As a core value, LISC is committed to actively engaging stakeholders and partners in our work, while building trust by employing regular communication and transparency. We took time to understand the amazing work that is already underway in the region – digesting the research on our local community, as captured in our 2019 Environmental Context Report.

We listened to hundreds of partners and stakeholders to find out where LISC support is needed through:

- Meetings with Denise Scott, LISC's VP of Programs (January 2019);
- a digital survey with 114 respondents;
- a six month discussion around LISC's potential role in supporting Inclusive Entrepreneurship;
- multiple meetings with potential providers and financial sponsors to explore the desirability/feasibility of bringing the LISC Financial Opportunity Center Model to WNY;
- a series of small group sessions with Affordable Housing providers;
- interviews conducted by LISC's strategic planning consultant;
- monthly meetings of LISC's Local Advisory Committee; and
- a year's worth of interviews and conversations between our new Executive Director and community members.

# Thank You

We remain committed to a culture of continuous listening, learning and refinement of our work.

Finally, a steering committee comprised of local advisors and LISC staff met to tailor LISC National's vision and mission to WNY and develop consensus around the scope of LISC WNY's work moving forward.

**We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the development of this plan and for the community's patience as we completed this important and necessary work.**

We are excited about LISC WNY's next chapter and eager to get going. It's time to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

# LISC

# WESTERN NEW YORK

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*Empowering People; Transforming Neighborhoods*