



WNY  
Sustainable  
Business  
Roundtable

March 2023

# Community Driven Climate Resiliency & Mitigation Action Supported by Local Sustainable Businesses.

Final Report

Presented to

Environmental  
Protection Agency

Presented by

Brenna C Reilly



WNY  
Sustainable  
Business  
Roundtable

OVER

**300**

COMBINED EVENT  
PARTICIPANTS



[https://www.wnysustainablebusiness.org/  
project/environmental-justice](https://www.wnysustainablebusiness.org/project/environmental-justice)



# Table of Contents

01	Meet the team	05	Project Events
02	Partnerships and Roles	06	Project Outputs & Lessons
03	Project Overview	07	Conclusions
04	Project Budget & Costs		



# 01 Meet the team

## Environmental Justice Team

**Erie County Department of Environment and Planning  
Black Rock Riverside Alliance  
West Side Promise Neighborhood**



**Alexandra Holland**  
Executive Director  
Sustainable Business  
Roundtable



**Brenna Reilly**  
Program Coordinator,  
Sustainable Business  
Roundtable



**Bonnie Lawrence**  
Deputy Commissioner  
Erie County Department  
of Environment and  
Planning



**Anne McCooley**  
Executive Director  
Black Rock Riverside  
Alliance  
(BRRA)



**Talia Rodriguez**  
Associate Director  
West Side Promise  
Neighborhood  
(WSPN)

# 02 Partnerships & Roles

**Black Rock Riverside Alliance** is a sub-recipient of this grant. Executive Director Anne McCooey has been actively involved in the planning process since day-1. Bringing her extensive knowledge of the neighborhood, Anne has assured that this grant has had a meaningful impact in her community.

Another highly involved partner was the **Erie County Department of Environment and Planning**, and Deputy Commissioner Bonnie Lawrence. As a highly supportive partner in the grant, other members of the department, such as Josh Wilson and Tracy Skalski, have brought their collective expertise to the grant events. This has allowed for the incorporation of the upcoming Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP) and the County's Vulnerability Assessment (VA) into the events, sharing their main initiatives to the business and residential communities in the West Side, Black Rock and Riverside. The County will then use the feedback provided at this event to incorporate into public comments for the successful progression of the CCAP.

**West Side Promise Neighborhood**, and their Associate Director Talia Rodriguez, had acted as a supporting role, introducing the West Side Community and topics important to them to the business associations and SBR members.

Other organizations that have been involved in events include **PUSH Buffalo**, who had assisted with the September Community/ Corporate Climate Action Service Days, providing consultation from subject matter experts about native plants and providing access to purchase such plants from the PUSH Blue nursery in Buffalo's West Side, as well as providing opportunity to plant on their properties. PUSH also provided access to PUSH headquarters, PS 77 in the West Side, for the Community Climate Action Workshops. Their partnership was a great asset as they are finely ingrained into the community, and have a recognizable location for our meeting.

As guides in the Walk & Talk series, both the **City of Buffalo Crime Prevention** (Ron Dixon) and **GO Buffalo Niagara** (Brendan Seney) had led intriguing and valuable discussions surrounding infrastructure in the communities and how it can impact everything from safety and health to business success.



# cont.

This project would not have been possible if not for the aforementioned as well as the many partners and organizations who have helped along the way. Other such project partners that have been involved include:

- 5Loaves Farmhouse: Venue, introduced their mission during first Walk & Talk Event.
- Riverside Place: Venue and active business owners in Riverside.
- Big Big Table: Venue, introduced their mission during Business Association Updates.
- George Washington Park Community Association: Volunteered for Native Planting.
- The Tool Library: Spoke to their mission at the Community Corporate Climate Action Day of Service. With membership, provided garden tools for rent for events.
- Inspired Buffalo: Active business in Black Rock, made shirts for our Native Plantings, donated basket for our Youth Art Showcase participant raffle.
- WEDI/West Side Bazaar: Catered and participated at events.
- Say Yes Community Schools: Attended schools to promote Climate Action Showcase and Youth Art Showcase.
- Amplified Buffalo's Jennifer Rung: Outreach for our Climate Action Plan, volunteer for Climate Action Showcase.
- Climate Action Task Force /Outreach Committee: Members assisted with the organizing of the Climate Action Showcase, helped to volunteer for, promoted event.



# 03 Project Overview

- i. Project Description and Area
- ii. Project Goals

# i. Project Description & Area

The West Side is one of the two most socioeconomically disadvantaged and the most environmentally disadvantaged community across the entire City of Buffalo. The community is home to the highest population of Hispanic and foreign-born residents, leading to a concentrated population with limited English speaking abilities. More than 25% of adults aged over 25 do not have a high school degree<sup>1</sup>, and a majority of households have incomes below the federal poverty line<sup>2</sup>.

The City of Buffalo has some of the oldest housing stocks in the country, with most of the housing in the West Side having been built before 1939<sup>2</sup>, as determined from EJ Screen data. Over time, the more socioeconomically advantaged areas of the city have installed air conditioning and up to date insulation in their homes. However, many on the West Side cannot afford these renovations and as such, are left exposed to the extreme temperature variations prevalent in Buffalo. Further, the age and lack of enhancements to most homes on the West Side leave them highly energy inefficient, resulting in extortionary energy bills some of the residents have difficulties affording.

The West Side is directly impacted by disproportionate environmental and/or public health harms and risks. The nearness to Interstate 190 leads to closer proximity to higher traffic volumes and elevated concentrations of ozone and particulate matter in the air<sup>2</sup>, resulting in the highest environmental disadvantage in the city<sup>1</sup>. The West Side also has limited access to public open spaces and parks<sup>1</sup>, further impacting their environmental disadvantage. When socioeconomic and environmental disadvantages are combined, the neighborhoods in the West Side have the highest green infrastructure equity index scores across the City of Buffalo<sup>1</sup>, indicating a great need for green infrastructure investments.

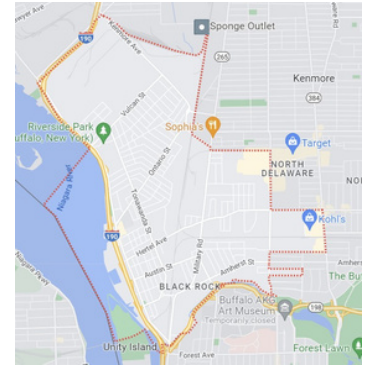


Figure 3.1:  
Zip Code 14207, Google.

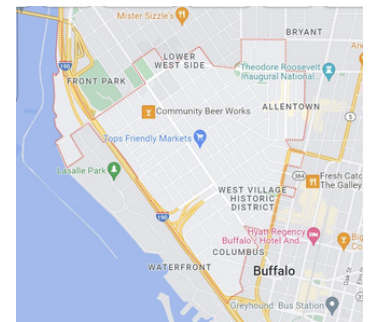


Figure 3.2: Zip Code  
14201, Google.

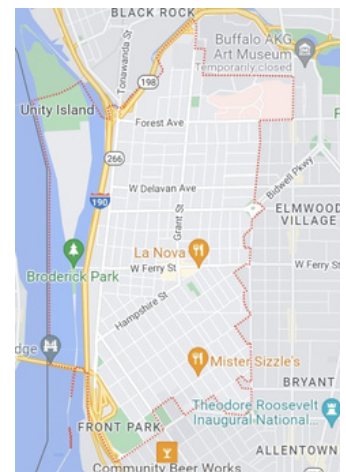


Figure 3.3: Zip Code  
14213, Google.



# Cont.

## Climate Vulnerabilities Today & Tomorrow

Buffalo is surrounded by two Great Lakes, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, creating a climate consisting of extremely cold winters and hot summers. Due to climate change, these weather patterns are expected to shift. As the global temperature continues to rise, less ice will form on Lake Erie each winter causing the lake temperature to rise. In Western New York, the average air temperature may rise 3° to 5° F by 2050. As a difference in temperature between air and water cause lake effect snow, the more drastic this difference becomes in the winter the more the City of Buffalo will experience extreme snowfall events, a trend already documented in the Great Lakes Basin.

These unpredictable and extreme precipitation events will put strain on the city's sewer and drainage system, likely leading to increased flash flooding and damage to infrastructure. Vulnerable populations are more likely to suffer disproportionately as they tend to live on flood plains and take longer to recover from flood damage. Further, increased air temperature results in elevated concentrations of ozone<sup>5</sup>, meaning that as climate change escalates air quality in neighborhoods on the West Side will only continue to deteriorate, particularly during summer heat waves.

Without enhanced climate resiliency and green innovation, residents of socioeconomically and environmentally disadvantaged communities, such as the West Side of Buffalo, will be left to bear an even worsened burden of climate change impacts. With deteriorating air quality, the elderly and people who suffer from respiratory or cardiovascular illnesses will struggle to breathe while outside their homes. Yet, due to the condition of their homes the intense heat waves of summer and frigid cold of the winter may result in uninhabitable conditions, as well as the potential for serious medical emergencies such as heat stroke or dehydration.

How West Side residents will benefit from our proposed project

# Cont.

As a result of this project, we intend to develop a community driven climate resiliency plan. The plan will contain achievable actions that can be implemented by both residents and business owners. It will also inform the Climate Action Task Force's working groups for Climate Justice & Climate Resilience. Hence, the equity-centered Climate Action Plan to be developed by Erie County with policy suggestions to improve environmental, social and economic conditions, will have a greater potential to reflect the West Side community's experiences and viewpoints.

This project's workshop series will be based on the results from the new Climate Vulnerability Assessment, to be finalized in the spring of 2022, which will indicate the greatest environmental and public health threats to the city of Buffalo. By educating the West Side community on the assessment's key results and asking for their input, we will create an arena for dialogue, in our effort to co-develop the most appropriate actions for remediation and enhancing resiliency based on the residents' knowledge of the West Side. SBR will also access its network of 70 local sustainable businesses that can assist with putting key elements of the community's priorities into action.

This project will allow the community to directly and quickly benefit from their own climate resiliency policy input, and result in the overall betterment of the West Side neighborhoods. A long-term outcome of this project is community-led identification of climate adaptation and resilience strategies that will inform the Community Climate Action Plan that will inform pursuit of actions that address greenhouse gas emissions and associated pollution like nitrous oxide and sulfur dioxide within the West Side community. Working with the community, this project will advance service days that tackle issues raised by the community. If, for example, the community chose to engage in a LED light bulb distribution program, SBR could calculate the emission reductions based on reduced energy use and determine resulting reduction in associated nitrous oxide and sulfur dioxide using regional factors available through the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Similarly, if a vegetation project is chosen to address traffic emissions, SBR can quantify the carbon removal capability of the plantings and qualitatively describe the potential benefits of reduced air pollution concentrations. Post workshop surveys will also be used as a tool for tracking increased understanding of vulnerabilities associated with climate change impacts and potential adaptation and resilience measures to reduce vulnerabilities.

### iii. Project Goals per Narrative

Events	Number of events	Attendees	Other outputs
<b>COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SESSIONS</b>	3 workshops in consecutive weeks	25-40 attendees per workshop	50-75 event surveys
<b>BUSINESS INFORMATION SESSIONS</b>	3-5 sessions	15-25 attendees per session	
<b>BUSINESS WORKSHOP SESSIONS</b>	2 workshops at local businesses	15-25 attendees per session	20 event surveys
<b>COMMUNITY/ CORPORATE CLIMATE ACTION SERVICE DAY</b>	2 service days	2-5 businesses sending (20-30) employees each event	50-100 native plants planted/ lbs of trash removed
Other goals	Number of associated outputs	Notes	
<b>ADVERTISEMENTS</b>	Produce 4 electronic newsletters, 2 videos, 8 social media posts and 1 - 2 paid advertisements	20% newsletter open rate	
<b>FACT SHEETS</b>	1 fact sheets	using information gathered by events	

Table 3.1: Overarching Grant Goals



# Project Goals Redefined

Events	Number of events	Attendees	Other outputs
<b>COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SESSIONS</b>	2 workshops	25-40 attendees per workshop	50-75 event surveys
<b>COMMUNITY EVENT, YOUTH ART SHOWCASE</b>	1 Tabling Event with Youth Art Showcase	>= 50 Hashtag Uses, 30-50 attendees	15-25 event surveys, 3-5 give-aways
<b>BUSINESS INFORMATION SESSIONS</b>	4 sessions: 2 informational, 2 updates	15-25 attendees per session	15-20 event surveys
<b>BUSINESS WORKSHOP SESSIONS</b>	2 workshops	15-25 attendees per session	20 event surveys
<b>COMMUNITY/ CORPORATE CLIMATE ACTION SERVICE DAY</b>	2 service days	<= 2-5 businesses sending, 20-30 volunteers	50-100 native plants planted/ lbs of trash removed
Other goals	Number of associated outputs	Notes	
<b>ADVERTISEMENTS</b>	Monthly electronic newsletters, 2 videos, 12 social media posts and 1 - 2 paid advertisements	20% newsletter open rate goal	
<b>FACT SHEETS</b>	1 fact sheet	using information gathered by events	

Table 3.2: Grant Goals Redefined

# 04 Project Budget

## i. Project Budget

# i. Project Budget

## \$75,000

Grant allotment amount

	Project Budget	Reallocation #1	Reallocation #2
Personnel	\$42,600.00	\$48,092.92	\$48,533.90
Fringe Benefits	\$13,206.00	\$15,673.83	\$15,045.51
Travel	\$696.00	\$696.00	\$380.83
Equipment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Supplies	\$6,830.00	\$2,313.05	\$2,313.05
Contractual	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other	\$9,668.00	\$8,224.20	\$8,726.71
Indirect	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00

Table 4.1: Budget Summary

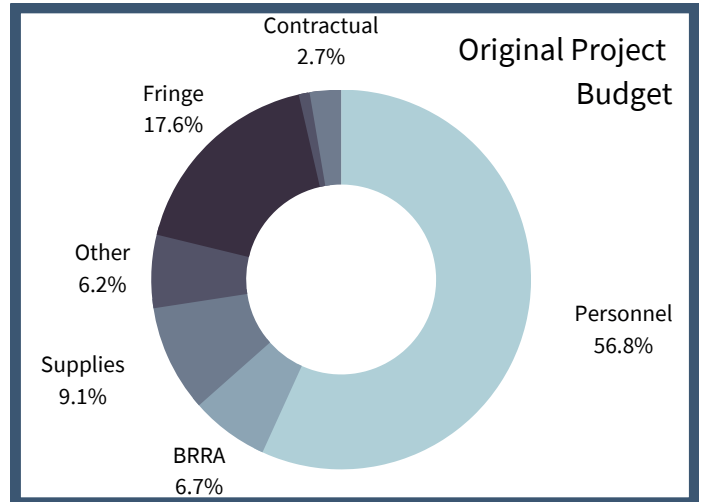


Figure 4.1: Original Project Budget

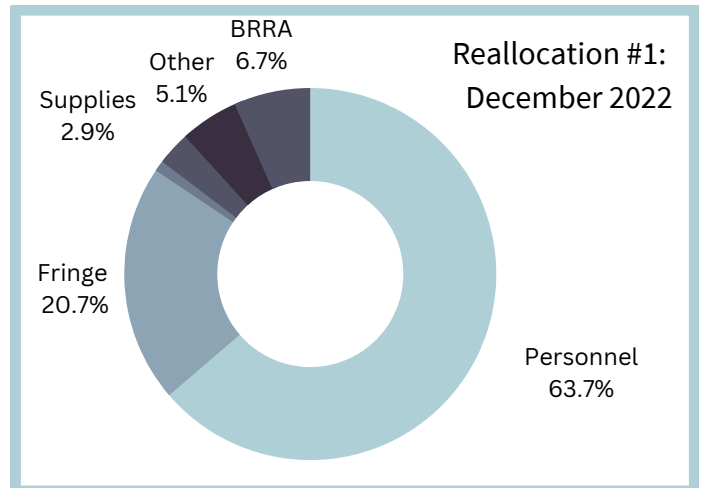


Figure 4.2: Reallocation #1 12/2022

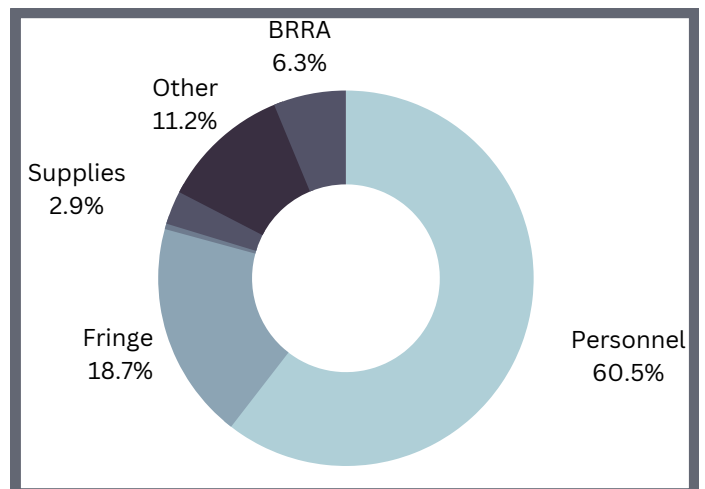


Figure 4.3: Reallocation #2 03/2023



# 05 Grant Events

- i. Timeline of Events
- ii. Walk & Talk Events
- iii. Community Corporate  
Climate Action Service Days
- iv. Community Workshops
- v. Business Updates
- vi. Business Workshops
- vii. Climate Action Showcase
- viii. Youth Art Showcase

# i. Timeline of Events

Grant period 04/01/2022 - 03/31/2023



In accordance with the original calendar, the Community Workshops were initially the first series of events. Due to our partnership with Erie County, and the status of their upcoming Community Climate Action Plan, it was decided to align with the Erie County calendar and shift the Business Association Meetings to the summer, and the Community Workshops to the Fall.

This shift in calendar events allowed for a meaningful consultation for the Community Corporate Climate Action Service Days, as well as for increased outreach to bring participants in.

An additional aspect of the project was also established: the Youth Art Showcase, which opened in January 2023 for submissions, and ran until the grant's last event, the Climate Action Showcase on March 18, 2023.

## ii. Walk & Talk Events

Events geared towards businesses also served as SBR Environmental Justice Educational Events for July and August 2022

Walk & Talk events were scheduled to introduce the grant area to both local business owners and those business associates who are members of SBR. The success of these events was noted by both participants and experts that were brought in. Minor struggles included engaging the local business owners for more significant turnout.



# WALK & TALK: WEST SIDE

**Location:** 5Loaves Farmhouse,  
West Delevan St., Grant St.,  
Lafayette Ave., and Niagara St.

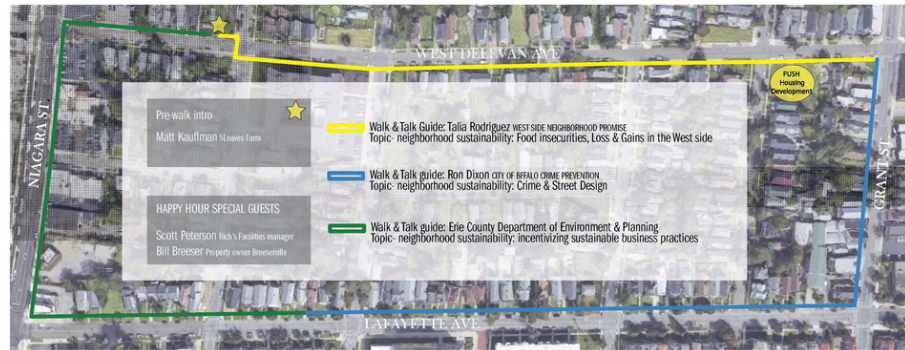
**Number of Registrants:** 26

**Number of Attendees:** 25

**Social Media:** Posted on Instagram,  
Twitter, and LinkedIN

**Surveys (Pre-walk):** 5 submitted

**Surveys (Post-walk):** 6 submitted



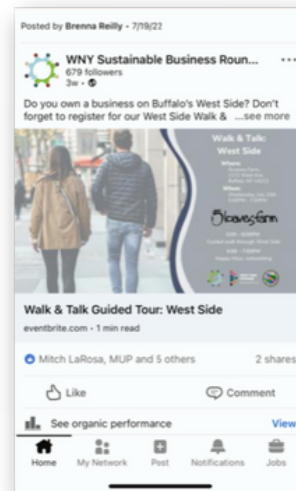
Above: Walk & Talk West Side Map with stops



Twitter: 357 followers



Instagram: 265 followers  
Shared by @whatspopinpopcorn  
(7,332 followers)



LinkedIn: 679 followers, 2 shares



LinkedIn: 679 followers, 4 shares



**Talia Rodriguez**, Associate Director of West Side Promise Neighborhood, introduced SBR Businesses, local West Side businesses and partners to the complexities of the neighborhood, as food insecurities and old housing stock propel the already vulnerable overall health of the community. Vacant lots and empty structures bring another layer of concerns for leaders as they strive to create a safer place to live for residents.

To address the safety in the community, **Ron Dixon**, Special Projects Manager at the City of Buffalo Crime Prevention, guided participants by introducing topics of CPTED, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, the four principles being 1.) Natural Access Control, 2.) Natural Surveillance, 3.) Territorial Reinforcement and 4.) Maintenance. These manifest in properly maintained vegetation, gated side alleys, proper lighting, and signage.

The last guide, **Bonnie Lawrence**, Deputy Commissioner of Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, discussed topics important to the future of the area: climate change impacts and planning. The lack of tree canopy makes extreme heat events adversely impact the neighborhood, especially the most vulnerable populations.



# WALK & TALK: RIVERSIDE

**Location:** Riverside Place,  
Tonawanda St., Vulcan St  
Elgas St., Roesch Ave.

**Number of Registrants:** 30

**Number of Attendees:** 19

**Social Media:** Posted on Instagram,  
Twitter, and LinkedIn

**Surveys (Pre-walk):** 9 submitted

**Surveys (Post-walk):** 3 submitted



Above: Walk & Talk Riverside Map with stops



Twitter: 357 followers



Instagram: 265 followers



LinkedIn: 679 followers

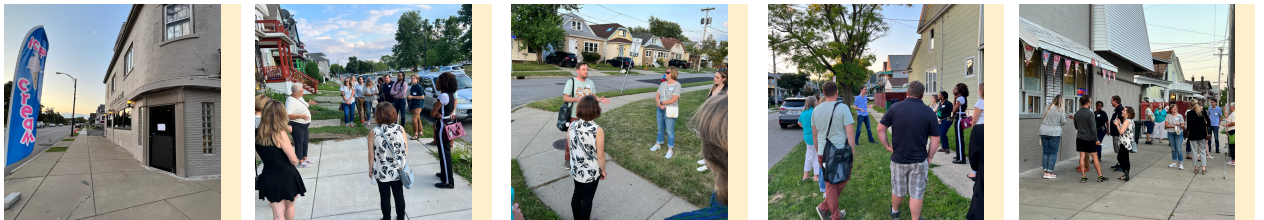




**Mary Ann Kedron**  
Founding President  
BRRA

**Brendan Seney**  
Program Manager  
GO Buffalo Niagara

**Josh Wilson**  
Sustainability Director  
Erie County DEP



To begin the Walk & Talk tour of Riverside, there was first an acknowledgement that there were a lot of walk participants that were not familiar with the area. To remedy this, **Mary Ann Kedron**, founding President of Black Rock Riverside Alliance and community activist, provided a detailed breakdown of the history of Riverside leading up to its current conditions. This included speaking to its designation as a legacy community with poor air quality, its infrastructural limitations and its unique waterfront adjacent location.

To discuss the infrastructural shortcomings of the Riverside community, GO Buffalo Niagara Program Manager, **Brendan Seney** was invited to talk. Brendan made note of upcoming potential opportunities found within the Buffalo Bike Plan, as well as indicated that there are some areas that can be a focal point for direct city engagement.

The last guide, **Josh Wilson**, came from the Erie County DEP to discuss with participants the particular vulnerabilities that are being used to inform future action attached to the Community Climate Action Plan.

### iii. Community Corporate Climate Action Service Days

Planting events were scheduled for Fall 2022

While Buffalo weather may be unpredictable, planting seasons are generally wrapping up by early October. This said, when pre-registration numbers for the events dwindled, it was determined that the days of service be pushed to increase participation. This was a successful tactic for one of the events, but as colder fall weather approached, the participation decreased.



# CLIMATE ACTION SERVICE DAYS

**Locations:** George Washington Park, Niagara St. Riverside & 127 18th St. West Side Buffalo

**Number of Registrants:** 6

**Number of Attendees:** 14

**Social Media:** Posted on Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn

**Surveys (Pre-event):** 5

**Surveys (Post-post):** 6



Instagram: 265 followers



LinkedIn: 679 followers



Twitter: 357 followers



# NATIVE PLANT SELECTIONS

## Introducing *PUSH Gro*:

### Locally Sourced, Organically Grown, Native Plants.

*PUSH Gro* is the latest endeavor by PUSH Blue to promote earth-based solutions to the stormwater and climate challenges facing our region and beyond. All of our native plants are of local provenance and cultivated in our Rhode Island street hoop house.

PUSH Blue is a team of stormwater mitigation and outreach specialists that are on the forefront of the community-based water management movement.



#### Switchgrass; *Panicum virgatum*:

**Mature Size:** 3-6'

**Growing Conditions:** full sun- part shade, dry to moist soils.

**Growth Characteristics:** Clump habit, turns bright yellow in fall. Able to withstand snow piles. Dried grass left over the winter is a favorite nesting material for birds in the spring.



#### Milkweed, common; *Asclepias Syriaca*:

**Mature Size:** 3-5'

**Growing Conditions:** full sun; dry- moist soils, clay tolerant.

**Growth Characteristics:** Pale pink umbral blooms from spring to late summer. Host plant for Monarch butterfly. Spreads by rhizome and seed.



# NATIVE PLANT SELECTIONS

**Ironweed, Giant NY; *Veronia Noveboracensis*:**

**Mature Size:** 4-6'

**Growing Conditions:** full sun- part shade; dry to moist. Tolerates clay and wet soils.

**Growth Characteristics:** Deep purple blooms late summer to fall, clump forming, resembles Joe-Pye weed. Great for rain gardens.



**Cardinal Flower; *Lobelia*:**

**Mature Size:** 2-4'

**Growing Conditions:** full sun- full shade; moist to wet soils. Needs consistent moisture.

**Growth Characteristics:** Spires of red flowers bloom late summer to early fall. Hummingbirds feed on nectar.



**Aster, New England; *Aster Novae-Angliae*:**

**Mature Size:** 3-6'

**Growing Conditions:** full sun- part shade; dry-moist

**Growth Characteristics:** Purple blooms late summer- mid fall. Critical late season food source for pollinators and birds.







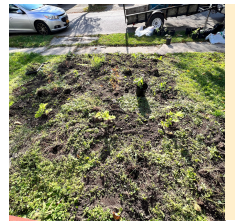
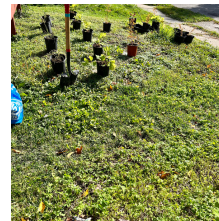
## RIVERSIDE: GEORGE WASHINGTON PARK

During the review of the Riverside community, many areas that would benefit most from native plantings were noted. Given the capacity, it was decided to tackle a small park which sits alongside Interstate-190 and a busy roadway, Niagara St. The community turned out, giving the positive outputs of the removal of 5 bags of invasive species/waster and planting of 30 plants - 10 within a small circle, and 20 along the edges of an existing bed. This area is a bird migration path, and its ecological well-being is important, so the work was met with gratitude by the community and municipality alike.



Above: Location of improvements in George Washington Park, Google Earth.





## WEST SIDE: PUSH BUFFALO PROPERTIES

Working with PUSH Buffalo, two vacant lots were identified as ideal locations for planting. While attendance dwindled into the second planting event, the targeted goals for number of plantings were still met, with over 120 plants in 4 different beds. The work done both beautified and infilled the properties, and created a more cohesive and safe environment for the adjacent properties.

## iv. Community Workshops

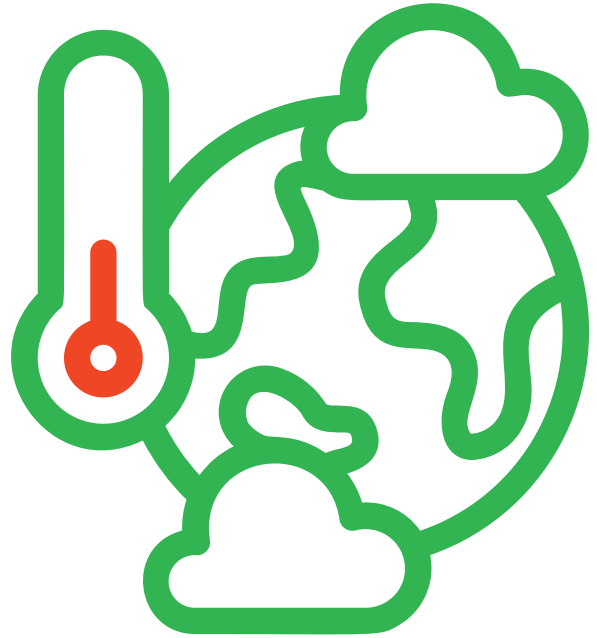
Community Climate Action Workshops were scheduled for late Fall 2022

The Community Workshops were held in late fall 2022. The first of the community-centered events had a low-turnout. This said, they provided an important lesson on garnering community participation, especially in the colder months in Buffalo, NY.





# COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION WORKSHOPS



**Locations:** PS 77 429 Plymouth Ave  
Buffalo NY 14213 & 43 Hamilton St. Buffalo  
NY 14207

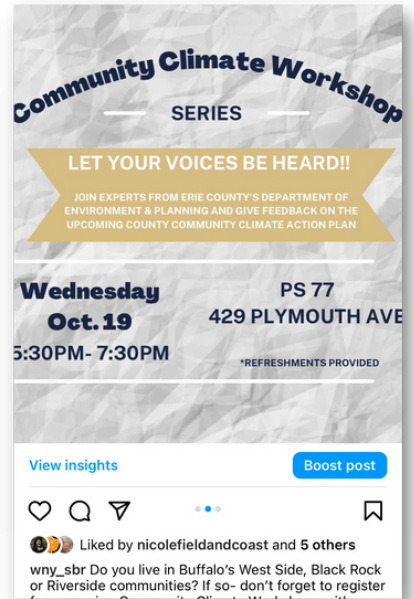
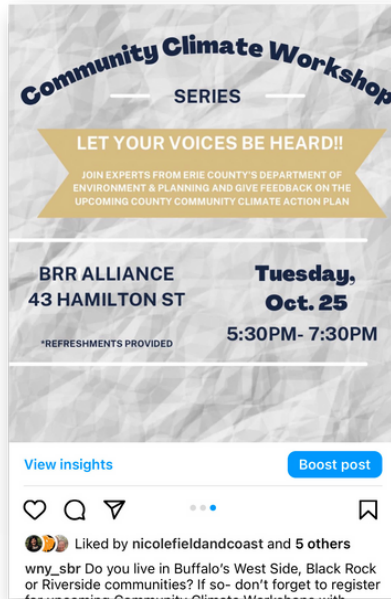
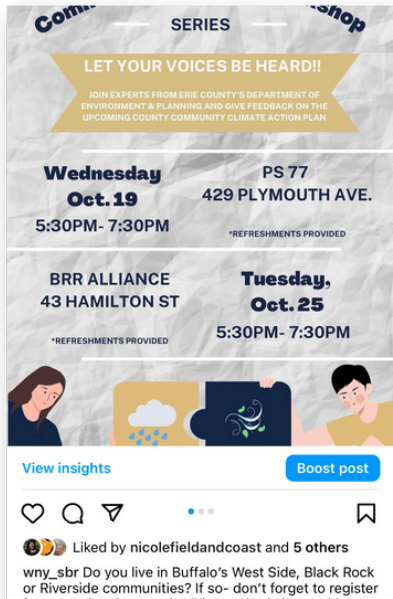
**Number of Registrants:** 3

**Number of Attendees:** 20

**Social Media:** Posted on Instagram

**Surveys (Pre-event):** 6

**Surveys (Post-post):** 6



Instagram: 63 followers



## 1. WEST SIDE: PUSH HEADQUARTERS

As the first event drew near, it was difficult to draw attention to the Community Events. When few people attended the West Side event, the opportunity was provided to Erie County DEP to practice community engagement with the set of experts in the room.

## 2. RIVERSIDE: BRRA HEADQUARTERS

With the lessons from West Side, the presentation and participation at BRRA was a success. The conversation provided insight on the conceptions the community has on environmental issues and policy shifts. This event also allowed for community members to ask important questions to educate themselves about their health and stability as it related to the topics.

# v. Business Updates

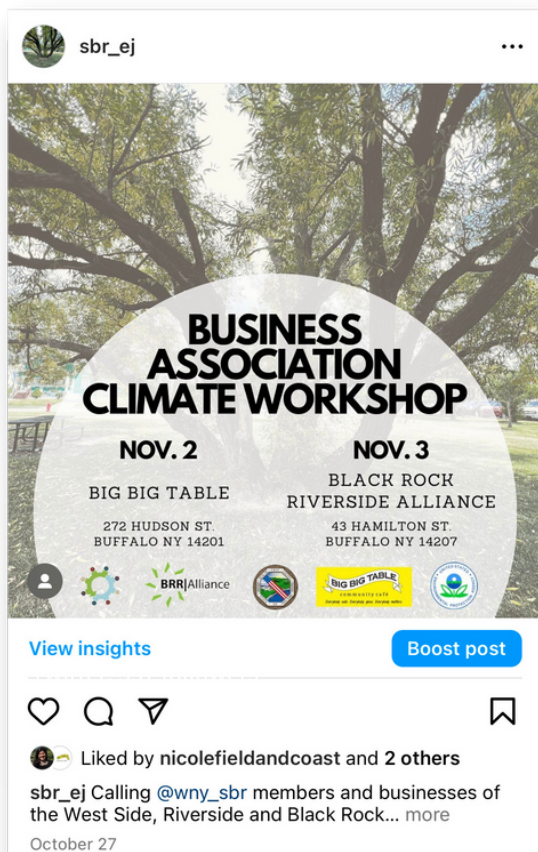
Business Updates occurred November 2 & 3, 2022

In accordance with the original event plans and schedule, a series of Business Updates were held in November 2022. The updates focused on building off of the Walk & Talk events to introduce the Community Climate Action Plan responses to issues discussed in the summer.



# BUSINESS ASSOCIATION UPDATES

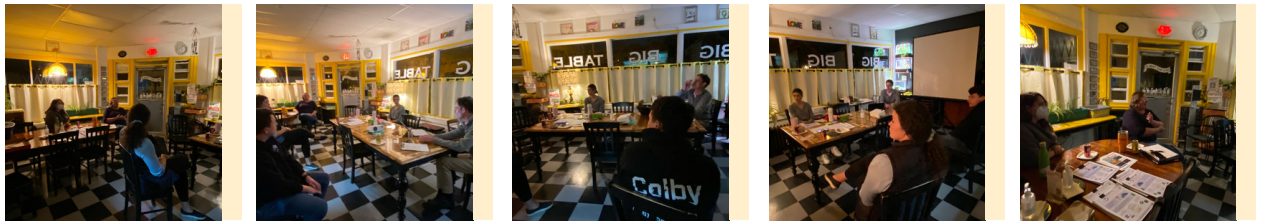
- Locations:** 272 Hudson St. Buffalo NY  
14201 & 43 Hamilton St. Buffalo NY 14207
- Number of Registrants:** 3
- Number of Attendees:** 15
- Social Media:** Posted on Instagram
- Surveys (Pre-event):** 4
- Surveys (Post-post):** 1



Instagram: 63 followers







## WEST SIDE: BIG BIG TABLE

While there was not a high-turnout for the event, the intimate conversation between participants provided for a productive conversation between those in attendance. A business-centric presentation by Erie County DEP addressed concerns that were highlighted at previous (grant) events. At Big Big Table, a roundtable of sorts discussed electrification at a high-level with industry experts, planners, and local business associates.



## RIVERSIDE: BRRA HEADQUARTERS

The second update took place at BRRA Headquarters and made for a similarly meaningful conversation with local businesses. The turnout was more successful in Riverside, and participation for those in attendance was high. The conversation, once again, brought light to some disconnect between policy and general knowledge surrounding energy usage shifts and impacts. This conversation helped Erie County to address such concerns head-on and assure that facts are being presented to Buffalo businesses in an understandable fashion.

## vi. Business Workshops

Business Workshops took place on November 16 2022

Every year SBR holds a Sustainability Summit. This year, Environmental Justice was at the forefront of the event. Not only did this provide ample opportunity for members to showcase and educate on their workplans, but this year's Summit invited small, MWBE and innovation hubs to join either through tabling opportunities, or scholarship, or both.





## BUSINESS WORKSHOPS

**Locations:** Powerhouse Buffalo

**Number of Attendees:** 30

**Promotion:**

- Social Media
- Radio
- Print
- Email Blasts



**SBR Followers:**

- Instagram: 313 followers
- LinkedIn: 785 Followers
- Twitter: 357 Followers





## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

**SESSION 1: INFUSING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN YOUR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS STRATEGY**



**DEREK NICHOLS**  
University at Buffalo  
Sustainability



**ANDY WHITEHEAD**

**SESSION 2: BUILDING EQUITY IN OUR BUSINESS' CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**



**NICOLE MORRIS-MCLAUGHLIN**  
Erie County  
Department of  
Environment and  
Planning



**SARAH HERBST**  
Rich Products



Photographs for this event by ING Photography/ Gabrisphoto

## THE SUMMIT: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STEWARD WORKSHOPS

As a way to provide expert advice, SBR invited businesses to join at the 2022 Sustainable Summit, held in November of 2022. The Summit integrated Environmental Justice through a two-session workshop with member experts working in the field. Each session had roughly 15-20 persons that asked those in attendance to actively participate in not just learning but putting to action the integration of environmental justice within their workplans.

## vii. Climate Action Showcase

Business Updates took place on November 16 2022

In response to low attendance rates at previous events, a shift in event plans was made. To appeal to a larger audience, an open-house style showcase was planned. The timing of this shift allowed for Erie County to unveil their Community Climate Action Plan Draft to the public, giving opportunity for questions and input.





# CLIMATE ACTION SHOWCASE



**Locations:** D'Youville University Academic Center (DAC)

**Number of Registrants:** 164

**Number of Attendees:** ~200

**Promotion:** Via Erie County DEP

- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Press Release
- Email Blasts
- Mutual Sharing from other organizations in WNY

**Surveys (Pre-event):** 49

**Surveys (Post-post):** 9



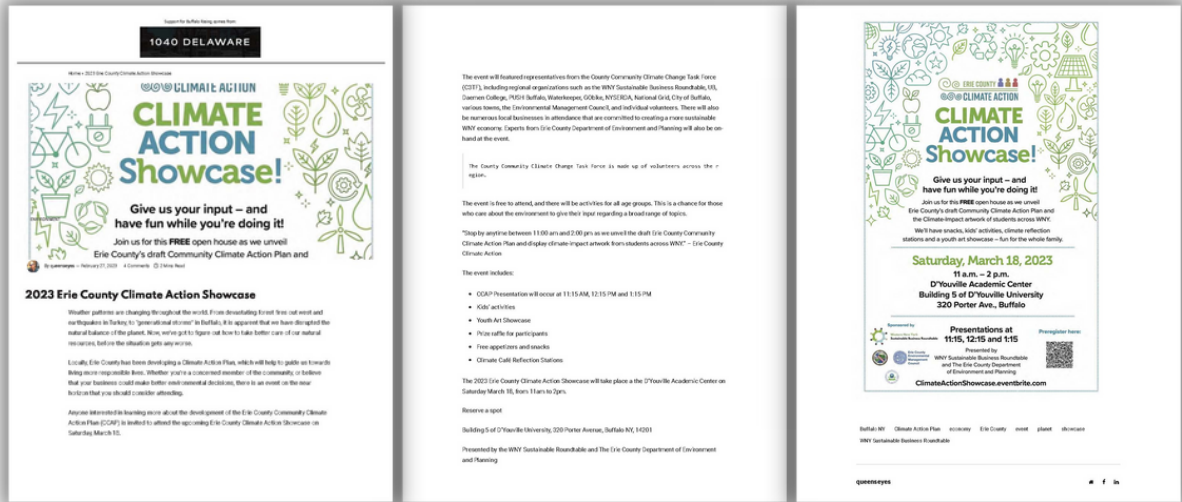
**Erie County Followers:**

- Instagram: 187 followers
- LinkedIn: 10,497 Followers



# CLIMATE ACTION SHOWCASE

## Notable promotions for Climate Action Showcase



To provide for a successful final event, project partners at Erie County DEP sent a press-release regarding the event. This, along with the many email blasts, social media posts and Eventbrite event page, prompted the increased promotion of the event. The event and its associated graphic have been found on several event calendars at local organizations including the likes of **NAACP**, **Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper**, **Buffalo-Niagara Gardening**, just to name a few. Most notably, an article was written at local media outlet, **Buffalo Rising**. This article is found at [www.buffalorising.com/2023/02/2023-erie-county-climate-action-showcase/](http://www.buffalorising.com/2023/02/2023-erie-county-climate-action-showcase/).

Extra efforts were made to promote within the project area, with allocated times on the agendas of the February 15 meeting for **Rediscover Riverside** and the March 6th meeting for **Believe in Black Rock**.



## CLIMATE ACTION SHOWCASE

SBR and Erie County held a Climate Action Showcase on Saturday, March 18, 2023 at the D'Youville Academy Center. The event unveiled the draft Erie County Community Climate Action Plan and displayed climate-impact artwork from students across WNY. As advertised, the event was family-friendly, with snacks, kids' activities, climate reflection stations, and presentations on the CCAP at 11:15, 12:15 and 1:15.



# CLIMATE ACTION SHOWCASE

Erie County (New York) utilized this event to officially unveil the draft of their Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP), which was opened on March 18, 2023 for a 60-day public review period. Deputy County Executive Lisa Chimera opened the event by thanking by name the many community members involved in the CCAP planning and review process., while also addressing the importance of the plan for the future resilience of the County. Chimera remained at the event speaking with attendees and visiting Chapter Tables.





# CLIMATE ACTION SHOWCASE

## Different stations at the Climate Action Showcase

Tabling Organizations	CCAP Chapter Tables	MadLib
<p>Outside organizations were not invited as capacity and space was low. This said, project partners SBR, BRRRA, and Erie County were given priority to emphasize the goals of our project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Justice</li> <li>• Communicating Progress</li> <li>• Economic /Workforce Development</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Commercial Energy</li> <li>• Housing &amp; Neighborhood Resilience</li> <li>• Agriculture &amp; Food Systems</li> <li>• Climate Resilience</li> <li>• Nature Based Solutions</li> <li>• Consumption &amp; Waste</li> </ul>	<p>University at Buffalo and Erie County DEP partnered to create a MadLib exercise to both allow attendees to have fun talking about climate and help gather data.</p>
Youth Art Showcase	Climate Cafes	Kid's Activities
<p>Outside organizations were not invited as capacity and space was low. This said, project partners SBR, BRRRA, and Erie County were given priority to emphasize the goals of our project.</p>	<p>Mini Climate Cafes were conducted by an invited licensed professional, to discuss climatic stressors and impacts to one's well-being.</p>	<p>Activities for children were provided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erie County DEP provided a custom coloring book,</li> <li>• Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve provided a craft</li> </ul>

# viii. Youth Art Showcase

## The Climate & You

The Youth Art Showcase was an additional element of this project that was created to align with the Climate Action Showcase. With this, middle and high school aged children were asked to reflect on climate and weather events. The submissions were presented at the Climate Action Showcase on March 18, 2023, as well as on SBR's Environmental Justice Instagram account.



# YOUTH ART SHOWCASE

**Locations:** D'Youville University Academic Center (DAC), 320 Porter Ave.

**Number of Submissions:**

- 9 individual submissions
- 2 group submissions

**Promotion:**

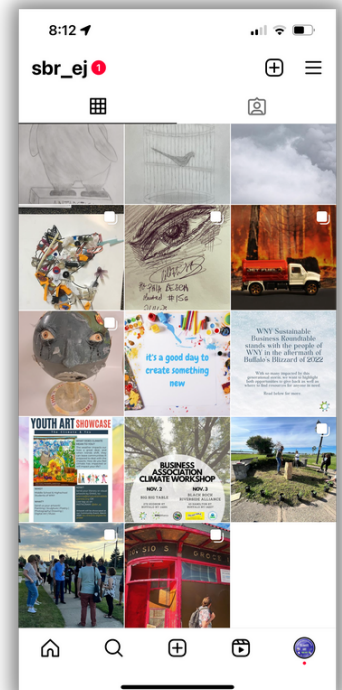
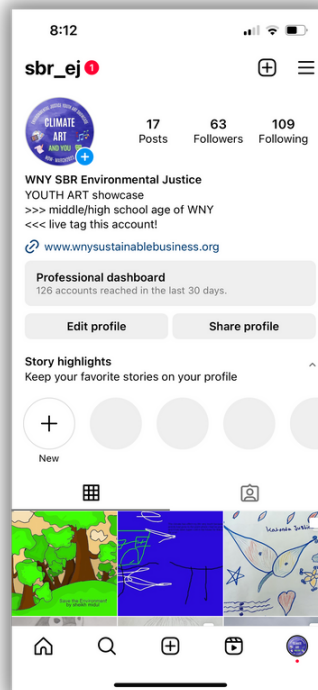
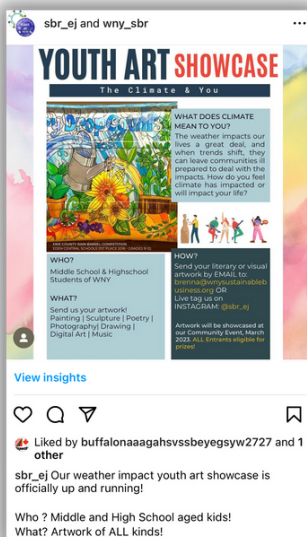
- Created @sbr\_ej on Instagram
- Email Blasts
- School visits

**Instagram:**

- 63 followers
- 17 posts
- 3 Prize alerts



Above: Stories highlighting prizes to be raffled



# YOUTH ART SHOWCASE: PROMOTIONS



**February 11, 2023**

Frank A Sedita  
Academy PS 30  
350 Vermont St,  
Buffalo, NY 14213

**March 2, 2023**

Lafayette High School  
370 Lafayette Ave,  
Buffalo, NY 14213

Above: Say Yes Community School Promotions

To promote the Youth Art Showcase in Buffalo's West Side, Black Rock, and Riverside communities, trips were made to local Say Yes Community School programs. Project areas were targeted to increase participation. Previous partner projects were utilized to disseminate information about the Youth Art Showcase and Climate Action Showcase.



# 06 Project Outputs

- i. Participation
- ii. Outputs
- iii. Goal Attainment
- iv. Lessons Learned & Recommendations
- v. "How to" Guide

# i. Participation

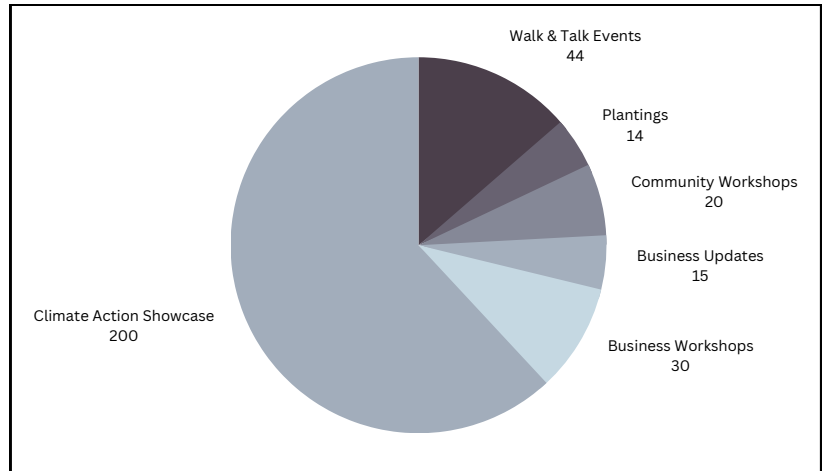
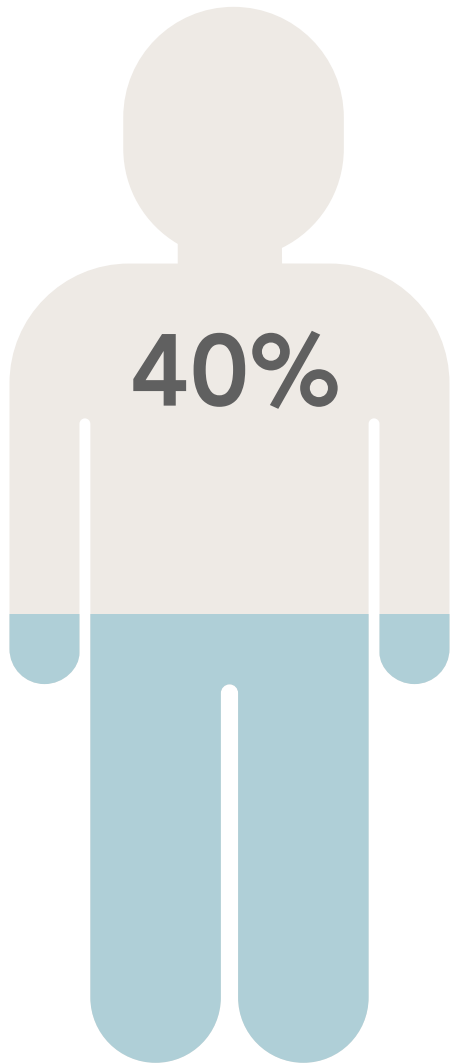


Figure 6.1: Overall Event Survey Attendees

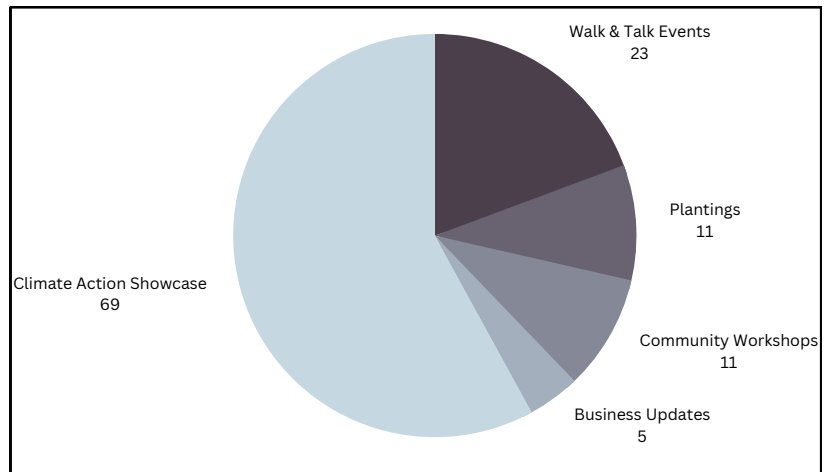


Figure 6.2: Overall Event Survey Responses

Overall the 9 events from this project brought over 309 participants. With 119 survey responses, the project had a 39% response rate. According the VINE Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems, the median response rate for questionnaires is 27.8%. This suggests a great success for response rate.

# CLIMATE ACTION SHOWCASE: SURVEY RESULTS

According to surveys given at entry, more than half of the guests asked were either "Aware" or "Very Aware" of the CCAP. Adversely more than 1/3 of respondents were either "Not at all aware" or "Not so aware," with the remaining falling somewhere in the middle. This provides context as to the reach of the event. While the method of hearing about the event was not a linear connection with the under-aware, a high percentage of the respondents were brought to the event through a personal connection/ word of mouth. This data can provide Erie County important guidance as they move forward with outreach events.

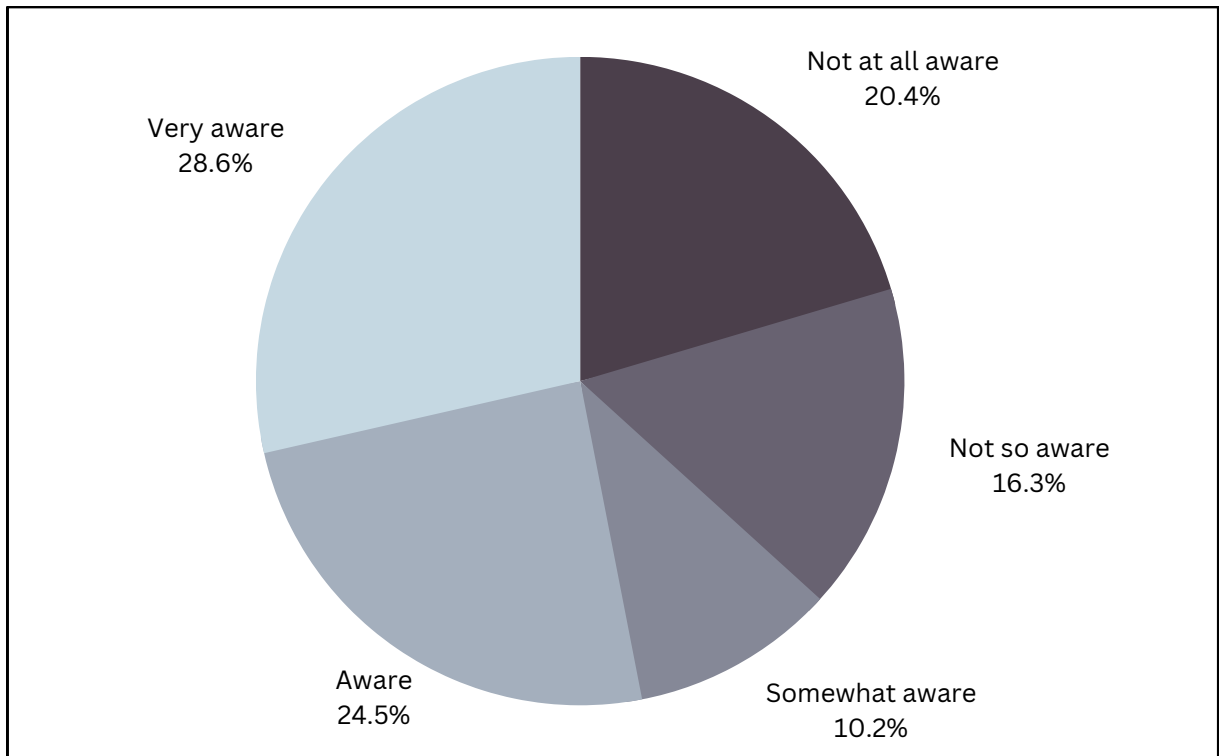


Figure 6.3: Awareness to CCAP prior to event, per survey

# CLIMATE ACTION SHOWCASE: SURVEY RESULTS

"This event was first class!  
Everyone was knowledgeable  
and very  
friendly. Great food!  
Congrats!!"

"Nice work, it was great  
event and the number of  
attendees  
really showed how much  
interest there is"

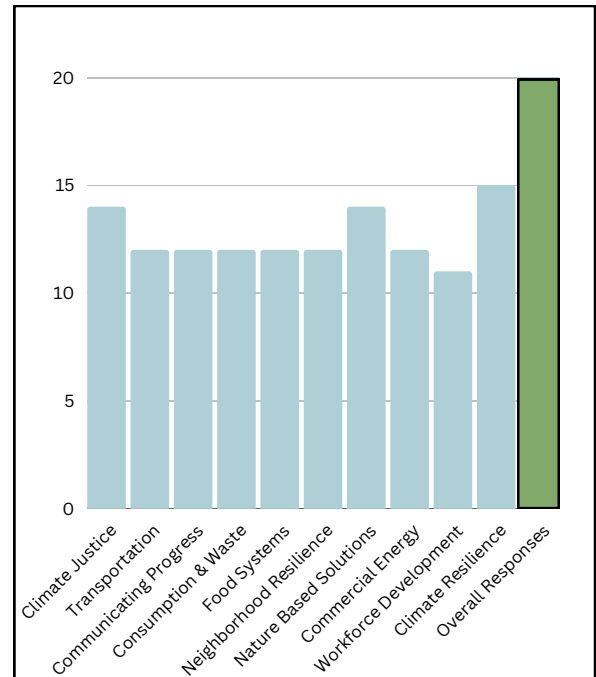


Figure 6.4: Chapter Table Visits, per survey

Under half (7/20) of those surveyed post-event responded that they made a stop at every Chapter table available. Of the remaining responses, there was a relatively even distribution throughout the Chapters, with Climate Resilience the most visited and Workforce Development the least visited.

Qualitative data suggests that every respondent felt listened to at each table, and the vast majority feeling that the event was an effective way to present the Erie County Climate Action Plan draft. The only exception noted concerns about geographic location of the event being located in the City of Buffalo.

Other productive feedback include the improvements of wayfinding to the venue, as well as the suggestion of having technology with digital access to the draft at the event. Expanding wayfinding is an important consideration. Lack of capacity and access to technology may hinder individual digital access at larger events. Location of this event was assessed in the planning process based on (this) project area, transportation and parking access, and proximity to vulnerable populations.



# ii. Outputs

## WORKPLAN AND OUTPUTS

<p>Plan &amp; Conduct 4 -6 community workshops to educate and gather input.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 educational workshops, 20 attendees total</li> <li>• Received important feedback as to what the community is concerned most about</li> <li>• Climate Action Showcase, ~200 attendees total</li> </ul>
<p>Plan &amp; Conduct info sessions at 3-5 business associations to educate and solicit companies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two Walk &amp; Talk Series, 44 attendees total</li> <li>• Two Business Updates, 15 attendees total</li> <li>• Established Project Awareness within Business Community</li> </ul>
<p>Plan &amp; Conduct 2 workshops at local businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 45-minute sessions dedicated to Environmental Justice and its integration with business practices, roughly 20 attendees each</li> <li>• Had high-level discussions around Environmental Justice</li> </ul>
<p>Plan &amp; Organize 2 Community/Corporate Climate Action Service Days.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150 genetically native plants on 3 different sites and 6 beds</li> <li>• 5 Bags of invasive species removal</li> <li>• Strengthened connection to community</li> </ul>
<p>Produce 4 electronic newsletters, 2 videos, 8 social media posts and 1-2 paid advertisements. Create and distribute event surveys to workshop attendees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated section in 12 Monthly Newsletters;</li> <li>• Social Media posts-INSTAGRAM: @sbr_ej (62 followers) on with (current) 62 followers, ~20 posts, @wny_sbr (310 followers)~10 Environmental Justice Grant-related posts.</li> <li>• LINKEDIN: WNY Sustainable Business Roundtable ~5 grant-related posts</li> </ul>

# iii. Goal Attainment

- ABOVE & BEYOND
- GOALS ACHIEVED
- GOALS UNMET

Events	Number of events	Attendees	Other outputs
<b>COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SESSIONS</b>	2 workshops	25-40 attendees per workshop	50-75 event surveys
<b>COMMUNITY EVENT, YOUTH ART SHOWCASE</b>	1 Tabling Event with Youth Art Showcase	>= 50 Hashtag Uses, 30-50 attendees	15-25 event surveys, 3-5 give-aways
<b>BUSINESS INFORMATION SESSIONS</b>	4 sessions: 2 informational, 2 updates	15-25 attendees per session	15-20 event surveys
<b>BUSINESS WORKSHOP SESSIONS</b>	2 workshops	15-25 attendees per session	20 event surveys
<b>COMMUNITY/ CORPORATE CLIMATE ACTION SERVICE DAY</b>	2 service days	<= 2-5 businesses sending, 20-30 volunteers	50-100 native plants planted/ lbs of trash removed

Other goals	Number of associated outputs	Notes
<b>ADVERTISEMENTS</b>	Monthly electronic newsletters, 2 videos, 12 social media posts and 1 - 2 paid advertisements	20% newsletter open rate goal
<b>FACT SHEETS</b>	1 fact sheet	using information gathered by events

# ABOVE & BEYOND

The areas where this project's outputs exceeded its expected results include the Walk & Talk survey response rate, Community/ Corporate Climate Action Service Day outputs, and the Climate Action Showcase attendance and survey response rates.

## Community event, Youth Art Showcase:

<p>&gt;/= 50 Hashtag Uses, 30-50 attendees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 200 event attendees</li> <li>• 9 individual youth art submissions</li> <li>• 2 group youth art submissions</li> </ul>
<p>15-25 event surveys, 3-5 give-aways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 49 Entry Surveys</li> <li>• 20 Exit Surveys</li> <li>• 4 Prizes drawn at random for participants</li> </ul>

## Business Information Sessions

<p>15-20 event surveys</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 event surveys</li> </ul>
----------------------------	--

## Community/Corporate Climate Action Service Day

<p>50-100 native plants planted/ lbs of trash removed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150 Native Plants in ground at 3 locations on West Side and Riverside</li> <li>• 5 bags of invasive plants removed</li> </ul>
---	--

## GOALS ACHEIVED

This said, the following events were considerably successful as they met both quantitative goals, as well as having provided positive qualitative outcomes.

### Business Information Sessions

<p>15-25 attendees per session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walk &amp; talk West Side: 25 attendees</li> <li>• Walk &amp; Talk Riverside: 19 attendees</li> <li>• Business Updates: 15 attendees</li> </ul>
------------------------------------	--

### Business Workshop Sessions

<p>15-25 attendees per session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 workshop sessions with 30 total attendees</li> </ul>
------------------------------------	---

### Advertisement & Fact Sheet

<p>Monthly electronic newsletters, 2 videos, 12 social media posts and 1 - 2 paid advertisements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 Newsletters,</li> <li>• 17+ Social media posts,</li> <li>• Paid advertisements from Erie County/ Amplified Buffalo (in-kind)</li> </ul>
<p>1 fact sheet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Fact sheet included in recommendations</li> </ul>



# GOALS UNMET

Each event series was met with its own challenges. Unfortunately the challenges that met the Community Workshops, Business Workshops and Community/Corporate Climate Action Service Days were not able to attain the outputs set forth in the project workplan. The positives of these events, however, far outweigh the unmet goals.

## Community Workshops:

25-40 attendees per workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 total attendees at 2 events</li> </ul>
50-75 event surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 total surveys at 2 events</li> </ul>

## Business Workshop Events

20 event surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No surveys for this event.</li> </ul>
------------------	--

## Community/ Corporate Climate Action Service Day

<= 2-5 businesses sending, 20-30 volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14 volunteers total</li> <li>• 1 SBR member business (Casella Waste) sent 5 employees</li> </ul>
---	---

# iv. Lessons Learned & Recommendations

This project had a unique set of challenges based both on the project location and the intended goals. This said there were some general lessons that presented themselves throughout the implementation of the project.

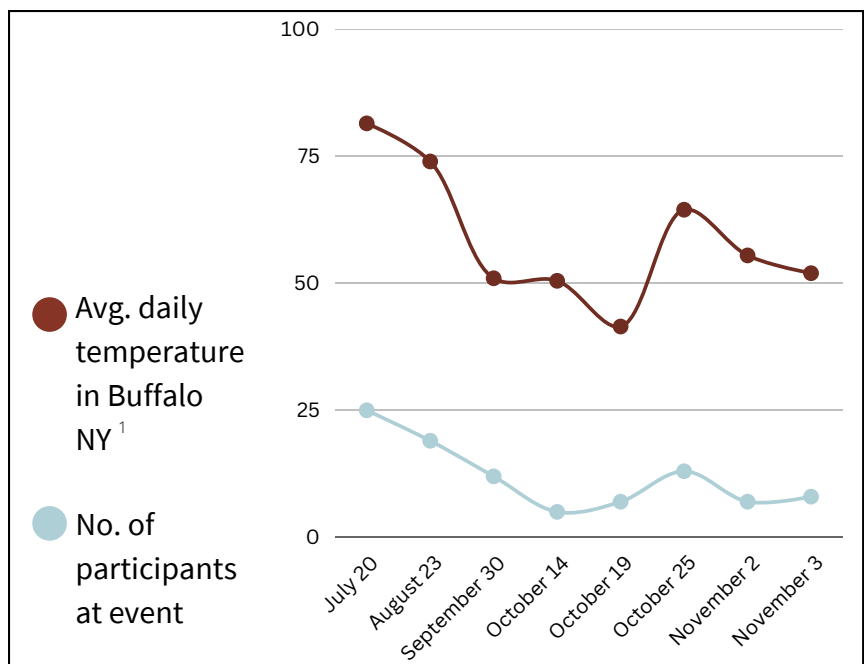
**Community partners** are a valuable asset- and this cannot be understated. To garner participation, one must meet the prospective communities where they are at, and this takes both a **deep understanding of said community** and strong allyships.

Identifying partners that with cohesive values and goals is important. Anne McCooley at Black Rock Riverside Alliance, co-recipient of this grant, remained an integral partner from inception, and was a huge factor to the successes of the project. The successes were more apparent in Black Rock and Riverside than in West Side, and a stronger relationship between our work and participants were established due to a much more involved partner. Erie County, another grant partner, established their participation early. Together, the content of grant programming was tailored to address the aspects identified as priorities for the project areas.

Keeping a **comprehensive calendar** for the project allowed for necessary adjustments to be made, when workplans were not as successful. Understanding that **shifts were going to be necessary** helped to assure the overall success rate for the project. Such adjustments and calendar governing became necessary as weather changes occurred and participation rates dipped (see Figure 6.5: Participation v. Temperature).

Figure 6.5: Participation v. Temperature

1. National Weather Service, 2022, NOWData - NOAA Online Weather Data, weather.gov, <https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate?wfo=buf>



# The "how to's" of an EPA Grant



## Vision & Goals

HAVE A CLEAR VISION OF YOUR PROJECT IMPACT.

## Partners

ALIGN YOURSELF WITH OTHERS WHO HAVE SIMILAR GOALS. ASSURE YOU ARE ALL AWARE OF ROLES.



## Communicate

CREATE AND MAINTAIN A CONSISTENT LINE OF COMMUNICATION WITH PROJECT PARTNERS AND THE EPA



## Plan & Schedule

PROVIDE A COHESIVE PLAN FOR GOAL ATTAINMENT

## Implement

ASSURE YOU SET MAINTAINABLE GOALS. TRACK AND DOCUMENT EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR PROJECT.



## Analyze

CONTINUE TO ANALYZE THE RESULTS OF PROJECT EVENTS. MAKE ADJUSTMENTS WHERE NECESSARY TO MEET YOUR GOALS.



## Report

PRESENT CHANGES, ISSUES, AND SUCCESSES TO PROJECT PARTNERS AND THE EPA.

## Revise

BE PREPARED TO MAKE REVISIONS TO ANY WORK AS SEEN FIT BY THE EPA.



# 07 Conclusions

The West Side, Black Rock and Riverside communities of Buffalo NY have a complex relationship with climate. Vulnerabilities that exist within these communities are both highly visible (low tree-canopy, high traffic areas, poverty rates) as well as invisible (high asthma rates, low birth weight, linguistic barriers). This project aimed at educating the residential and business communities about how the environment has magnified such vulnerabilities, and how Erie County's Community Climate Action Plan intends to address the issues. Through this grant project, the communities were provided access to opportunities to both learn and comment on the municipal plans.

This project started off on a high note, with two Walk & Talks that comprehensively introduced the project areas. Through continued work, the project remained lively, providing a consistent line of communication from communities to the County work. Ultimately, the project came to an end on another high note with the Climate Action Showcase featuring the Youth Art Showcase and the unveiling of the draft version of Erie County's Community Climate Action Plan.

With over 300 participants, a 40% survey-response rate, 150 genetically native plants, removal of 5 bags of invasive species, and a more aware residential and business community, this project can officially be labeled a success!

**THANK YOU TO  
THE EPA, OUR  
PARTNERS & THE  
COMMUNITY!**

