Who would have thought that Buffalo would rank as one of the “five best places to live in 2100” along with Siberia and Greenland?

The Great Lakes will likely become a destination of choice as the impact of climate change renders some places uninhabitable. We are likely to have an influx of climate refugees. And yet, one has to wonder what life on earth will be like in 2100 if we don't take immediate steps to address climate change.

The release of the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report warns us that we have only 12 years to act before the world...
as we know it may be uninhabitable for humans and other beings. And the report probably isn’t telling us the whole truth because, as Jamie Henn of 350.org says, it is a consensus version, which means that the science is probably even more scary.

The rapid increase of severe weather and increasing temperature is only moving one way, and we are all feeling, personally or empathetically, the impacts of fierce fires, devastating hurricanes and flooding, sinking homes, rain bombs, killer heat waves, and drastic species extinction. And there is no doubt that the injustice of climate change falls mostly on those who contributed the least to increased carbon and the earth’s degradation.

So Buffalo — what do we do here? It helps to change our personal habits of consumption and we should — but we really need collective action. All of us who care about future generations should push New York State for serious reductions of greenhouse gas emissions through legislation like the Community Climate and Protection Act and Pollution Penalty, strong energy efficiency standards, and insist that the state divest from fossil fuel companies. And closer to home, we can stop harming and start healing our own region.
What if we evaluated each act of planning and building in our region by the standard of climate justice and resiliency considering energy, biodiversity and human well-being? What if we refuse to invest public monies in future harm? What if we calculated cost/benefits with real climate impacts and human costs for different actions?

For example, right now we are considering the future of Buffalo’s Outer Harbor, our newly reclaimed public Lake Erie waterfront. This area is rich in biodiversity, beautiful sunsets and recreational opportunities. It also functions as a “barrier island,” protecting the city from the damages of lake effect storms and flooding. How do we promote the clean-up and environmental healing of the land and water that is already occurring and ensure that this place exemplifies the sustainable and generative economy we want for all people of our region?

If you are interested in participating in this conversation, join the Our Outer Harbor coalition on Oct. 29 at Riverworks, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. (ourouterharbor.org (http://www.ourouterharbor.org/)).

Lynda Schneekloth is on the board of the Sierra Club Niagara Group and the Western New York Environmental Alliance.
Another Voice: Climate change demands collective action – The Buffalo News

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