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# Letter: Buffalo must be prepared to house climate refugees

Dec 31, 2020

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**I**n the 2019 State of the City Address, Mayor Byron Brown declared that Buffalo will be a “**Climate Refuge City.**” Since then, we have seen multiple articles from national publications that feature Buffalo as a city to move to if you are trying to escape the effects of climate change.

Acknowledging that Buffalo’s infrastructure was built for a city of 500,000, the planning for that infrastructure is now over 60 years old. City streets are in various states of repair, water lines are over 100 years old in many parts of the city, and the combined storm and waste sewer system has been environmentally subpar since the Clean Waters Act was enacted.

According to a survey published in Nature, as many as 13.1 million U.S. residents living on the East and West Coasts could be displaced due to rising sea levels. Then add in millions more moving from areas of extreme heat and insufficient water supplies like much of the Southwest. So, what has the mayor done since his 2019 address to plan for the eventual wave of new residents?

Aside from a number of private initiatives to rehab industrial or office spaces to high scale residential units, nothing has been announced to replace the housing stock that has been lost in the city. And most of the remaining homes (often neglected by absentee landlords) were built over a hundred years ago and are showing their age.

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Jimmy Griffin found a way to encourage new construction surrounding the downtown core in the 1980s. Brown needs to find similar incentives to infill housing in the city. I would start with areas surrounding destination locations like the Buffalo Niagara Medical Corridor, Larkinville and the Broadway Market.

Climate refugees in the United States will likely demand the comforts of their previous home. Having housing that will fill those needs will show that Buffalo will be prepared for those displaced by climate change.

John Szalasny

Williamsville

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