

September 2016

Local Foods, Local Places

A Community Driven Action Plan for
Fresno, California



A technical assistance program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Transportation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Appalachian Regional Commission, and Delta Regional Authority



Community Story

Fresno, California is located in one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. Fresno County accounted for nearly \$6.6 billion in total dollar value in the year 2015 alone (Figure 1). Almonds, grapes, and poultry were the leading 2015 crops.¹ Fresno County and the larger area of the Central Valley is one of the few places in the country that could realistically supply all its own food needs. Fresno annually hosts the Fresno Food Expo, in which 150 local producers come to show and sell their goods.

Comparison of Gross Production Value in Fresno County	2005	2012	2015
Field Crops	\$476 million	\$573 million	\$233 million
Seed Crops	\$29 million	\$45 million	\$23 million
Vegetables	\$734 million	\$1.1 billion	\$1.3 billion
Fruit & Nut	\$1.1 billion	\$3.1 billion	\$3.3 billion
Nursery	\$16 million	\$41 million	\$46 million
Livestock	\$652 million	\$1.6 billion	\$1.6 billion
Apiary	\$7 million	\$58 million	\$71 million
Industrial	\$7.3 million	\$3.5 million	\$3.3 million

Figure 1. Comparison of Agricultural Value in Fresno County. Source: 2015 Fresno County Annual Crop & Livestock Report.

While the food industry is economically very strong, Fresno is often cited as one of the poorest cities in America based on personal income. Many of Fresno’s workers—including many in the food industry—earn low wages and support larger families than the U.S. average.² Many of California’s economically challenged residents also move inland to avoid the high cost of living in coastal cities. Of Fresno’s children under 18, 42.8 percent are living in poverty.³ Nearly half of the City’s census tracts are considered low income with low access to supermarkets, supercenters, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and

¹ 2015 Fresno County Annual Crop & Livestock Report

<http://www.co.fresno.ca.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=70031>, p. v

² US Census via Healthyfoodaccess.org, 2010 data

³ Ibid, 2010 data



affordable food, based on 2010 USDA findings. In 2011, 22.6 percent of Fresno County residents used benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).⁴

Downtown Fresno, like many downtowns, saw disinvestment and abandonment beginning in the 1970s. However, as of 2016, the downtown is seeing the benefits of recent revitalization efforts, with political will and city resources dedicated to improving the city center as an economic engine, neighborhood, and destination.

Fresno	2010	2014
Total Population	484,008	506,132
Percent Hispanic Ethnicity	45.7%	48%
Percent Caucasian, not Hispanic	31.7%	28.6%
Percent Minority	45.8%	48.8%
Average Household Size	3.04	3.10
Median Household Income	\$43,124	\$41,455
Percent 18 or younger	21.8%	20.8%
Percent 65 or Older	9.0%	9.6%

Figure 2. Demographic data. Source: 2014 American Community Survey (ACS). Fresno’s population grew between 2010 and 2014. However, median household income showed a slight decline.

In 2016, a long-awaited, much-anticipated remodeling began of the Fulton Street Mall, a six-block stretch in the downtown central business district that had been converted to a pedestrian mall in 1964. The remodel will reintroduce automotive traffic while creating an attractive and safe pedestrian environment. Longer range, additional enhancements to downtown’s transportation infrastructure are planned as well, including bus rapid transit and a high speed rail. The private sector is also making new development investments in entertainment and housing uses in downtown Fresno, including updates to the Chukchansi Park baseball stadium. Recently, a Friday Farm Market was introduced, and warmly received, at the minor league stadium.

A project that the City of Fresno has been working on with private partners but not yet brought to fruition is a planned Fresno Public Market. The City has control of an existing

⁴ US Census, 2011 data



building in downtown, a 50,000 sq. ft. addition to the former Gottschalks Department Store, which it intends to use to house the Public Market. The market has the potential to both enhance and benefit from the growing investment and interest in downtown. It can provide a new source of food access to the surrounding neighborhood, new economic opportunities for food sellers, and an attractive destination within downtown. It also has the potential to become a focal point to leverage community pride and identity around local foods.

In order to advance the implementation and optimize the impact of public and private investment in the Fresno Public Market, the city identified three needs:

- Placemaking through design that contributes to the public realm downtown;
- A plan to achieve an optimal mix of products offered for sale; and
- A plan for phasing and financing of the Public Market.

Project Assistance

In 2015, the City of Fresno requested assistance through the Local Foods, Local Places program to develop an action plan for achieving its vision. The program is supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Transportation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the Delta Regional Authority. Implementing the actions described later in this plan can bring several benefits to the community including:

- More economic opportunities for local farmers and food business.
- Better access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged groups.
- A revitalized downtown that is the economic anchor of the community.
- A special place that gives a complete picture of the Central Valley, especially its agricultural productivity and its ethnic diversity.

Engagement

The technical assistance engagement process for the Local Foods, Local Places program includes three phases (Figure 3). During the convening phase leading up to the workshop, the community steering committee and federal partners convened three times by conference call and webinar to assess the community's needs and goals and coordinate



logistics for the workshop. The local steering committee was comprised of the following participants:

- Danielle Bergstrom, City of Fresno
- Amy Fuentes, Fresno Food Expo
- Irene Hsieh, City of Fresno
- Mehmet Noyan, Noyan-TFS Investments
- Craig Scharton, Fulton Street Investors

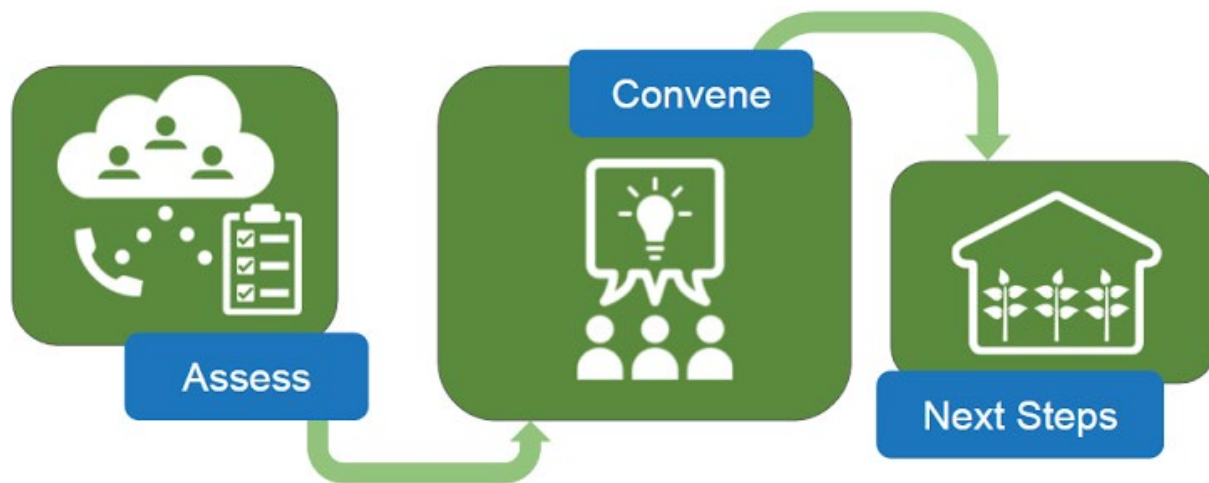


Figure 3. The diagram above lays out all of the steps leading to this action plan.

The convening phase includes the effort’s capstone event—a two-day workshop in the community, followed by a next steps phase that includes three follow-up conference calls to finalize documentation of the workshop’s outcomes and set the stage for implementation.

The main sessions of the Fresno workshop were held in downtown Fresno on July 12 and 13, 2016. Prior to the workshop’s first public session, the technical assistance team, community steering committee, and federal partners participated in an informal lunch and tour of the proposed public market site and surrounding downtown area.



Left:

Left: A community tour of the public market site and the surrounding streets. Right: Street improvements underway directly adjacent to the market site.



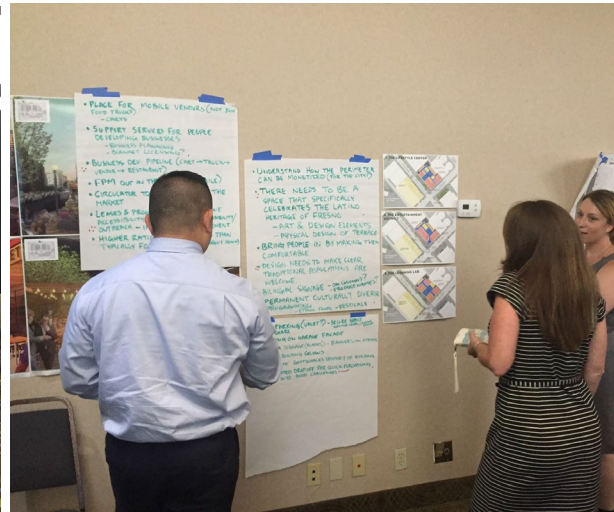
Left: Inside the Gottschalks building, relics remain from its past uses. Right: Mehmet Noyan talks to the tour group about the building's history

About 50 people attended the public workshop sessions, with many participating both days. In addition to local government staff, elected leaders, and residents, over 17 farmers, food product producers, or restauranteurs were in attendance. See *Appendix A: Workshop*



Participants for details of workshop participants. A compilation of photos from the tour and workshop can be found in *Appendix B: Workshop Photo Album*.

The workshop began with a kick-off the program that included an introduction to the project background and goals. Steering Committee members Danielle Bergstrom, Craig Scharon, and Mehmet Noyan provided context about Fresno and existing food- and revitalization-related initiatives. Suzanne Berts-Rosa reviewed the draft Branding Platform. This was followed by the first group exercise, a charrette-style review and discussion of conceptual designs of the public market elements that interface with the street. Preliminary draft designs were prepared in advance by Sasaki, Paul Halajian Architects, and USDA Architect Fidel Delgado to help facilitate the discussion. Workshop attendees discussed the merits of various elements, which lead to prioritization of elements to include in the next design stage.



Left: Participants hear from experts on day one of the workshop. Right: participants brainstorming ideas during the charrette-style review of conceptual design alternatives.

The evening portion of day one was a facilitated discussion among producers, vendors, food market experts, and others about product offerings, opportunities, and challenges for achieving an optimal market.

Day two began with a recap of the prior day's themes, followed by a session on phasing, financing, and action steps. The technical assistance team presented case studies and



research from other public markets. Group discussion lead to a prioritization of approaches that could work in Fresno.

Vision

The workshop revealed that at the heart of the community’s vision is to improve access to healthy, local foods in downtown Fresno while simultaneously bolstering downtown’s economic vitality and sense of place. In particular, the community envisions a vibrant indoor market in the vacant Gottschalks building, which could become a place to anchor new economic activity and offer healthy food retail in a centralized location.

Large-scale design elements were discussed at length, from branding and programming to streetscape considerations. Most participants agreed that the market should be more than just a shopping experience; it should also be a social and educational experience to attract locals and visitors alike. Suggestions included transparent ground-floor viewing areas for visitors to view food-making processes, demonstration kitchens with video screens, tasting areas, and a flexible layout to accommodate a variety of seating types.

In terms of architecture, participants favored lighting, bike racks, and other design elements that welcome patrons and create a perception of security. Also, to the greatest extent possible, the design of the space should celebrate the multicultural heritage of Fresno. Attendees suggested bilingual signage and ethnic festivals on-site.

Producers and retailers had specific, targeted ideas about making the market as accessible and successful as possible. For example, participants suggested customizable kitchen spaces and vendor stalls; large, commercial-sized freezers with interchangeable sharing compartments; temperature-adjustable cold-storage spaces; shared spaces for produce and fruit; and highly coordinated exterior and interior delivery.

On day two, participants discussed financing strategies for public markets. Irene Hsieh started the conversation by going over the components of a financial plan. To frame the financing challenge for the market, it was explained that the business model for most markets works very similar to a cultural facility—the capital costs need to be covered primarily from grants, contributions, and other forms of equity since public market operations will, at best, break-even and are rarely able to also pay for any debt. Lessons from a public market that was not developed in Denver were shared and the financial



realities of the typical public market were confirmed by the California case studies researched by the LFLP team.

Given this general overview of the common public market business model, workshop participants were encouraged to brainstorm on potential grants and contributions. Industries and foundations that could benefit from affiliation with the market, including health and agriculture, could be targeted. In order to lead fundraising, a new 501(c)3 non-profit public development corporation could be formed.

Opportunities and Challenges

Attendees who participated in the evening session gave insights about the opportunities and challenges associated with the vision for the Fresno Public Market.

Opportunities/Assets

- *Fresno and the Central Valley has agricultural abundance and heritage.*
- *Great producers of incredibly diverse products already exist in the community.*
- *There is a rich cultural diversity within the community already.*
- *There are strong partnerships and associations between food vendors and producers.*
- *Growth and investment in Downtown Fresno are already underway and projected to pick up speed.*

Challenges

- *It is important to ensure the market is designed, built, and operated in a way that is inclusive and welcoming to community members of all income groups and cultural backgrounds.*
- *The city needs a place where residents will come and spend disposable income on quality food products.*
- *Fresno needs to redefine downtown as an exciting, lively, and safe place to be and to spend time.*
- *Fresno needs to connect all the relevant partners and community members to get this project off the ground.*



Action Plan

The following three overarching goals and action items were finalized at the workshop with input from all participants. The three goal areas correspond to the three workshop activities: the design charrette from day one (Goal 1), the vendors and producers session about optimal product mix from day one (Goal 2), and the financing and phasing discussion from day two (Goal 3). The Goals and Actions are listed below. Implementation matrices, which include specifics to aide in implementation, follow.

Goal 1: Create organizational and financial frameworks

- Action 1.1 Establish 501(c)3 (“Fresno Public Market Development Corporation”?)
- Action 1.2 Fill the Board with strategic people from inside and outside of the city
- Action 1.3 Commission a Phase II Market Feasibility Study
- Action 1.4 Create a marketing and fundraising package
- Action 1.5 Seek mayoral support to raise funds for the market
- Action 1.6 Narrow down funding resources list
- Action 1.7 Seek assistance from federal partners to identify further funding resources
- Action 1.8 Create an ongoing partnership with the Northern California Community Loan Fund for potential grants, financing and New Markets Tax Credits

Goal 2: Advance conceptual design of the market, focusing on placemaking

- Action 2.1 Engage a diverse/representative group of local stakeholders in the design process, and task them with contributing design ideas that emphasize the multicultural makeup of the public market
- Action 2.2 Plan and host a visual preference event, focusing on the physical and placemaking/design elements (brand)
- Action 2.3 Develop and make publicly available case studies of communities that have recently redefined, or experienced a transition, in their brand/identity to draw parallels between their stories and Fresno’s ambitions⁵
- Action 2.4 Create a revised market plan (space programming/activation/animation Plan)
- Action 2.5 Plan street festivals, under the 501(c)3 umbrella (Thursday night Street Festival and Sunday morning Farmers’ Market) - Identify event sponsors
- Action 2.6 Create interim, short-term displays on the storefront windows of the building before construction
- Action 2.7 Experiment on the façade of the building to advertise the market as “coming soon” and to test ideas with the public to evaluate preferences

⁵ E.g. Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Oakland, Austin, Buffalo



- Action 2.8 Create a pop-up prototype of the market (farmers market, food trucks, pop-up park and/or gathering spaces) throughout the development to promote the project

Goal 3: Maintain engagement with vendors and producers

- Action 3.1 Create a robust database of vendors and producers (including a shared drive)
- Action 3.2 Develop a strategy to maintain communication and engagement with vendors and producers
- Action 3.3 Identify and approach prospective tenants for the public market who can serve as anchors
- Action 3.4 Identify key vendor segments that are aspirational and in demand, to recruit

Detailed Action Matrices

Goal 1: Create organizational and financial frameworks

Action	Why important	Time Frame	Lead Role	Supporting Cast	Cost, sources, etc. ⁶
1.1 Establish 501(c)3 (“Fresno Public Market Development Corporation”?)	The project needs a nonprofit structure to raise funds and champion it.	ASAP: within the next 3 months	Craig Scharton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Fresno; Mayor ● Mehmet Noyan ● Pro bono attorney 	No Cost
1.2 Fill the Board with strategic people from inside and outside of the city	A new nonprofit needs highly visible and influential community leaders.	Short: within the next 6 months	Craig Scharton , Mayor, Mehmet Noyan		No Cost
1.3 Commission a Phase II Market Feasibility Study	The project needs a detailed business plan, including market feasibility	Med: 6-9 months	City of Fresno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New nonprofit from Action 1.1 	\$\$\$

⁶ Key for Estimated Costs: \$ = less than \$5,000; \$\$ = \$5,000-\$25,000; \$\$\$ = over \$25,000



	and financial pro formas.				
1.4 Create a marketing and fundraising package	The package will be a key tool to start selling the market concept to contributors, donors, and potential tenants.	Med: within the next year	New nonprofit from Action 1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Fresno ● Mehmet Noyan 	\$ to \$\$ (health foundations, hospitals, USDA, ag associations, banks, NMTC etc.)
1.5 Seek mayoral support to raise funds for the market	Mayoral support adds credibility and visibility.	Short: within the next 6 months	LFLP Fresno Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Fresno ● New nonprofit from Action 1.1 	No Cost
1.6 Narrow down funding resources list including New Market Tax Credit	Creates a manageable and realistic list to work from.	Short: within the next 6 months	LFLP Fresno Team		No Cost
1.7 Seek assistance from federal partners to identify further funding resources	Federal partners may have additional knowledge that should be utilized.	Short: within the next 6 months	LFLP Fresno Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Federal partners 	No Cost
1.8 Create an ongoing partnership with the Northern California Community Loan Fund for potential grants, financing and New Markets Tax Credits	The California Freshworks Fund could be a key component of implementation financing.	Short; on-going	New nonprofit from Action 1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Fresno ● LFLP Fresno Team 	No Cost



Goal 2: Advance the conceptual design of the market, focusing on placemaking

Action	Why important	Time Frame	Lead Role	Supporting Cast	Cost, sources, etc.
2.1 Engage a diverse/ representative group of local stakeholders in the design process, and task them with contributing design ideas that emphasize the multicultural makeup of the public market.	Fresno is racially and ethnically diverse. The market should embody the multitude of cultures. Market must be distinctive and local-serving.	Short: within next 6 months (in process)	Architects, Craig Scharton, new nonprofit from Action 1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New nonprofit from Action 1.1 	No Cost -- Existing architect & process
2.2 Plan and host a visual preference event, focusing on the physical and placemaking/design elements (brand)	An exciting and inclusive design concept will generate broad-based community support.	Medium: part of feasibility study?	New nonprofit from Action 1.1		\$
2.3 Develop and make publicly available case studies of communities that have recently redefined, or experienced a transition, in their brand/identity to draw parallels between their stories and Fresno’s ambitions⁷	A brand that is in sync with the local identity and values, that is also authentic, hip, and modern will help make the market a success.	Short: within next 6 months	LFLP Fresno Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New nonprofit from Action 1.1 	No Cost - LFLP report will refer to applicable case studies
2.4 Create a revised market plan (space programming/ activation/ animation Plan)	A successful market needs to create a good visitor experience.	Short: within next 6 months	Craig Scharton, Mehmet Noyan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Architects ● New nonprofit from Action 1.1 	No Cost - Existing architects & process
2.5 Plan street festivals, under the	Events that market the area around	Medium: Develop	New nonprofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Fresno 	Eventually identify event sponsors

⁷ E.g. Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Oakland, Austin, Buffalo



<p>501(c)3 umbrella (Thursday night Street Festival and Sunday morning Farmers’ Market) – Identify event sponsors</p>	<p>the site can help draw consumers to the market and to Downtown Fresno.</p>	<p>programming concepts and identify sponsors within the next year. Outreach to measure demand for type, composition, and timing for events.</p>	<p>from Action 1.1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Downtown Fresno Partnership 	<p>\$ to \$\$</p>
<p>2.6 Create interim short-term displays on the storefront windows of the building before construction</p>	<p>Displays will help promote the project and generate community enthusiasm.</p>	<p>Short - Medium: within next 6 to 18 months</p>	<p>Mehmet Noyan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Fresno ● New nonprofit from Action 1.1 	<p>\$</p>
<p>2.7 Experiment on the façade of the building to advertise the market as “coming soon” and to test ideas with the public to evaluate preferences</p>	<p>Banners will help to promote the market and to activate and enliven the place.</p>	<p>Medium: within the next year</p>	<p>New nonprofit from Action 1.1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● City of Fresno ● Downtown Fresno Partnership ● Mehmet Noyan 	<p>\$\$</p>
<p>2.8 Create a pop-up prototype of the market (farmers market, food trucks, pop-up park/ gathering spaces) throughout development to promote the project</p>	<p>A pop-up will help promote the project, showcase potential talents, and gauge consumer interest and response.</p>	<p>Medium - Long: within next 1-3 years</p>	<p>New nonprofit from Action 1.1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Downtown Fresno Partnership ● Mehmet Noyan 	<p>\$\$</p>



Goal 3: Maintain engagement with Vendors and Producers throughout the planning process

Action	Why important	Time Frame	Lead Role	Supporting Cast	Cost, sources, etc.
3.1 Create a robust database of vendors and producers (including a shared drive)	Need a reliable way to contact stakeholders.	Short: within the next 6 months	Craig’s intern	● Craig Scharton	No Cost - Intern (work from Fresno EXPO, workshop attendee list)
3.2 Develop a strategy to maintain communication and engagement with vendors and producers	Vendors and producers are very supportive; want to keep them engaged to maintain this support.	Short: within the next 6 months Meet quarterly	New nonprofit	● Mehmet	No Cost
3.3 Identify and approach prospective tenants for the public market who can serve as anchors	Provides stability, name recognition, and strong patronage to the project.	Medium: within the next year	New nonprofit	● City of Fresno ● Craig ● Mehmet	No Cost
3.4 Identify key vendor segments that are aspirational and in demand, to recruit	Need to plan for a balance of foods and products that best exemplify the region.	Short: within the next 6 months	New nonprofit	● Craig ● Mehmet	No Cost

Implementation

The Action Plan identified many short-term action steps including several that did not require new funding sources. The project defines short-term action steps are those that can be completed within six months. Some of these Actions include:

- Action 1.1 Establish 501(c)3 (“Fresno Public Market Development Corporation”?)
- Action 1.2 Fill the Board with strategic people from inside and outside of the city
- Action 1.5 Seek mayoral support to raise funds for the market
- Action 1.6 Narrow down funding resources list including New Markets Tax Credit
- Action 1.7 Seek assistance from federal partners to identify further funding resources



- Action 2.1 Engage a diverse/ representative group of local stakeholders in the design process, and task them with contributing design ideas that emphasize the multicultural makeup of the public market
- Action 2.3 Develop and make publicly available case studies of communities that have recently redefined, or experienced a transition, in their brand/identity to draw parallels between their stories and Fresno’s ambitions⁸
- Action 2.4 Create a revised market plan (space programming/ activation/ animation Plan)
- Action 2.6 Create interim short-term displays on the storefront windows of the building before construction
- Action 3.1 Create a robust database of vendors and producers (including a shared drive)
- Action 3.2 Develop a strategy to maintain communication and engagement with vendors and producers
- Action 3.4 Identify key vendor segments that are aspirational and in demand to recruit

Appendices C: Funding Resources and *Appendix D: Additional Resources* are included to help the community with implementation.

Appendices

- Appendix A - Workshop Participants
- Appendix B - Workshop Photo Album
- Appendix C - Funding Resources
- Appendix D - Additional Resources

Photo Credits

Photos used in this report and appendices were provided by Chris Freda, unless otherwise noted.

⁸ E.g. Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Oakland, Austin, Buffalo