

Title: Thank you, Green Bay!

At a time of year when most northeasterners are booking flights to Florida, I decided to fly straight into the heart of winter - Green Bay, Wisconsin. I was fortunate enough to meet you all at World Futures Day, hosted by Envision Greater Green Bay. What awaited me was anything but a cold welcome. The magnificent few days I spent in your great city were rewarding, fulfilling, and validating of my own ideas.

Last year, I rekindled a longtime interest: tracking signals - the early indicators that hint at where the world is heading and how those shifts might shape the places we call home. My daily personal practice evolved into concentrating my scanning on the signals most likely to shape my hometown: Buffalo, NY. I recognized that my city could benefit from a dedicated foresight initiative, which I see as a real gap in our community.

As I began researching existing initiatives and interviewing people in the futures community, one individual, futurist Jonathan Brill, led me to Envision Greater Green Bay. EGGB is a model that felt remarkably close to what I had been dreaming of for Buffalo. I reached out immediately. What followed was a rich, hour-long conversation with Tony and Randy. It was the kind of conversation that reminded you why you pursue the ideas that keep you up at night. They shared so much to be proud of, including the original founding of EGGB nearly 35 years ago, their journey of discovering foresight, their long and formative partnership with futurist Garry Golden, and their sustained work helping align an entire city around the practice of seeing what's next. With a generosity and enthusiasm that meant the world to me, they pushed my thinking, encouraging me to weave foresight training directly into my concept for a signal scanning service. When they extended an invitation to join them for World Futures Day in a month's time, I didn't hesitate for long. I talked it over with my family, took the PTO, and booked the flights. It felt like a sign that I wasn't about to ignore.

The centerpiece of my trip was World Futures Day itself, led by Garry Golden, who provided us with a morning filled with possibilities. Garry has a rare gift for making the future feel both urgent and accessible. Like all of you, I learned a lot as he walked us through the foundational tools of foresight thinking: the cone of plausibility, drivers of change, what it truly means to think like a futurist, and the importance of looking beyond our own lamppost for signals. The room was alive with curiosity and possibility. I had the pleasure of working alongside Cheryl and Leanne in the small group session where we imagined how AI might open new doors for neurodivergent workers and what an inclusive workforce could look like. The conference also featured powerful company testimonies of organizations that shared firsthand how foresight training had shifted the way their teams think, plan, and lead.

After the conference, Envision Greater Green Bay board member Judy (an exceptional docent of the city) spent the afternoon showing me around. She fulfilled my request to find a cheese hat (for those Sundays when the Bills aren't playing ;) by taking me to the Packers Pro Shop, along with a tour of the stadium entrance and Titledown. I was amazed; we have nothing like it in Buffalo! After tours through Green Bay and De Pere, we ended the day with dinner at Angelina's, an Italian restaurant so authentically warm that I half-expected to look up and find myself in Sicily, where we were greeted by Ermanno himself. My time in Green Bay concluded with the opportunity of sitting in on an MBA class where the next generation of leaders was being introduced to foresight thinking through a team-taught session by board members of EGGB.

When I think of Green Bay, I am reminded of the term 'topophilia,' a deep, emotional bond with place. Green Bay is a city of people who are unabashedly, joyfully passionate about where they live. As a Buffalonian, that felt like home. Here was another Rust Belt city, carrying its history with pride and building real momentum toward its future. I've learned what it looks like when foresight is woven into the fabric of how a city thinks about itself and the future. World Futures Day, the MBA class, and the training and community engagement that Envision Greater Green Bay has cultivated over decades work together to orient an entire city toward what's next. That is a rare and special thing.

The future looks genuinely bright for Green Bay, and it is no accident. It is the result of years of intentional, patient, community-centered work. I look forward to returning to share Buffalo's foresight progress but also to see how foresight is continuing to shape the future of Green Bay.

With gratitude and great expectations for what's ahead, for Green Bay and for Buffalo!
Leah from Buffalo