



—  
THE **START**  
OF SOMETHING

**BIG**

ON BUFFALO'S  
EAST SIDE

Executive Summary	3
Overview	9
Doing Things Differently	10
A Future Shaped by the Community	11
Changing the Conversation about the East Side	12
Building an Effective Ecosystem	13
<b>Program Progress</b>	<b>14</b>
➔ Community-Based Real Estate Development Training	15
➔ Central Terminal	20
➔ East Side Commercial Districts	25
➔ Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor	30
➔ Commercial Building Stabilization Fund	35
<b>Anchors + Infrastructure Investments</b>	<b>41</b>
➔ Buffalo Neighborhood Stabilization Fund	42
➔ MLK Park District	44
➔ Broadway Market	46
➔ Community Solar Array at Northland Beltline Campus	48
➔ Direct Project Assistance	50
➔ Infrastructure to Support and Enhance Investments	53
By The Numbers	54
Qualitative Impacts	55
Year-in-Review	56
Lessons Learned	57
COVID-19 Impact—2020: A Year Like No Other	58
Thanks to our Generous Funders	59



WHEN A COMMUNITY AND  
SUPPORTERS COME TOGETHER  
WITH A COMMON GOAL,  
**THE RESULTS CAN BE  
INCREDIBLE.** THAT'S WHAT  
IS HAPPENING NOW  
**ON BUFFALO'S EAST SIDE.**  
AND WE'RE JUST GETTING  
**STARTED.** ➔

East Side Avenues is led by  
a Project Implementation Team  
from the UB Regional Institute.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ABOUT EAST SIDE AVENUES



→ Executive Summary



As part of Governor  
ANDREW M. CUOMO'S BUFFALO BILLION  
investment plan, **\$65 million** is dedicated to the  
——revitalization——  
OF BUFFALO'S EAST SIDE



THROUGH **CAPITAL INVESTMENTS**  
ALONG **FOUR COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS.**



East Side Avenues provides  
*capacity building and organizational support*  
to complement capital investments.

## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION TEAM (PIT)



The PIT, led by UBRI and supported by a team of consultants,

- *ensures that appropriate supports such as infrastructure, staff, and funding are in place;*
- *assists with strategic planning, program design, and problem solving;*
- *leads the team on technical assistance for community-based organizations;*
- and **REPORTS ON PROGRESS.**

### Project Oversight:

The UB Regional Institute (UBRI), a research center of the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning, thoughtfully constructed the Project Implementation Team (PIT) in mid-2019, hiring additional staff members and assigning leadership roles. Administrative processes are in place with the Fund’s fiscal agent (Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo). Funding was released and reporting and program evaluation parameters and processes are in place with all partners. Communication processes were developed to maximize efficiency and ensure smooth, consistent communications among partners and community organizations. Fundraising efforts are ongoing and additional funders were secured. The PIT adapted to the COVID-19 environment quickly, looking for new ways to engage the community, roll out classes and programs, and keep the critical East Side revitalization work moving forward. We worked with partners to update budgets and began planning for 2021.

### Capacity Building and Problem Solving:

The PIT hosted a well-received networking/team introduction reception. Organizational capacity building efforts are well underway. We finalized a comprehensive consultant pool using both quality and diversity lenses and shared it with our partners. The current COVID-19 environment led to the expansion of our role as advisors for communications, strategy, and planning—a role that has become even more crucial for our partner organizations. We built and distributed a Distanced Engagement Resource Guide to assist organizations with continuing their critical outreach work under unusual circumstances.

### Marketing Communications:

We developed a robust marketing communications strategy. This included elements such as the development of a brand identity, the launch of the East Side Avenues website, electronic monthly communication “kits” for partners to share our content, and periodic electronic newsletters. We created an ongoing storytelling program, which included videos with community members, an overview video, and dynamic photography. We are working to build viewership and site traffic and evaluate our efforts, and developed a longer-term communications plan. Earned media and digital communications efforts are ongoing.

## CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS

**Capital for new programs, matched by more than \$8 million in capacity building funding from foundations and corporations, strengthens the work of local nonprofit organizations.** These programs support small business improvements, historic preservation, real estate development training, and fundamental East Side anchors.

- **SMALL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS**
- **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**
- **REAL STATE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING**
- **FUNDAMENTAL EAST SIDE ANCHORS**

In the past year, across programs, capacity building funds were used to hire new staff, in some cases the first-ever executive director. With assistance from consultants, partner nonprofits completed organizational assessments and capacity building/strategic action plans and identified areas where additional consultants could be of assistance. Brand new funding and education programs were developed and launched; organizational infrastructure and administrative functions were strengthened; and marketing and communications materials and systems were developed. Our nonprofit partners procured consultants and began major planning efforts that will guide development for years to come.



The **EAST SIDE COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS** program creates a building renovation program in four investment areas to improve the business climate, combat vacancies, and contribute to the overall revitalization of the corridors. In 2019–2020, after designing administrative procedures and marketing the program, three local nonprofit program administrators completed an application process and awarded over \$1 million in matching capital grants to 22 building owners.



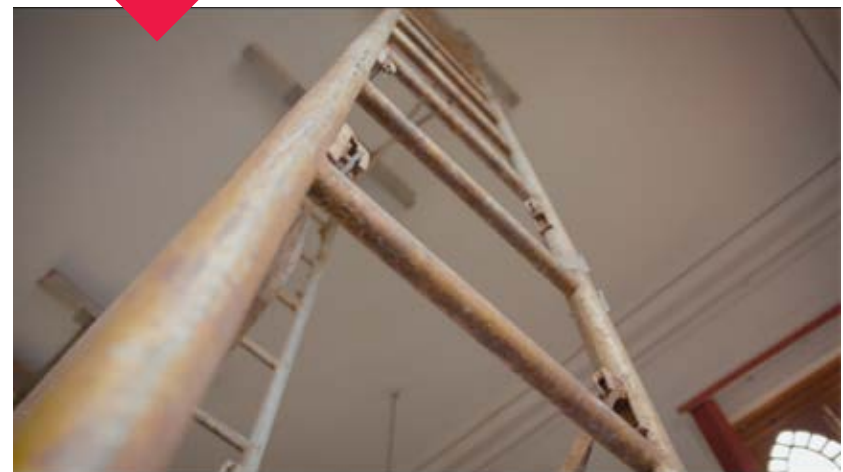


The goal of **COMMUNITY-BASED REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING** is to provide East Side residents and building owners with educational opportunities in commercial real estate development. In 2019–2020, we designed, marketed, and implemented a tuition-free, non-credit bearing, adult education program that provides an in-depth overview of the commercial real estate development process. A first cohort of 15 students completed the 2020 program (including a final project and presentation) and participated in a virtual completion ceremony in August.

## FIRST COHORT (15 STUDENTS) COMPLETED THEIR TRAINING IN 2020



The **COMMERCIAL BUILDING STABILIZATION FUND** establishes a dedicated funding source to support stabilization of at-risk historic buildings in the target investment areas. In the past year, the program, which invites East Side commercial property owners to apply for up to \$50,000 for stabilization-related activities, was designed.



East Side commercial property owners

can get  
UP TO **\$50,000**

TOWARD STABILIZATION EFFORTS

## MICHIGAN STREET AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE

**CORRIDOR COMMISSION** will create a cooperative operating and business model and plan for capital improvements for a unified tourist destination around Michigan Street's unique assets. In the first year of the program, work focused on strengthening the MSAAHCC by formalizing its organizational infrastructure and administrative functions and strengthening its communications. MSAAHCC also embarked on a yearlong Strategic Action Plan to guide all future operations and capital improvements.



### STRENGTHENED:



ORG



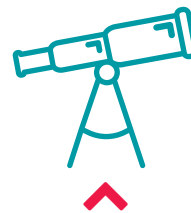
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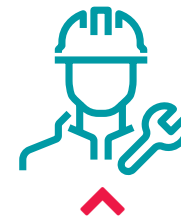
STRAT



One of Buffalo's most iconic buildings, the **CENTRAL TERMINAL**, will be restored as a year-round regional venue and asset for the Broadway-Fillmore neighborhood. In 2019–2020, a scope of work was developed and construction begins October 2020 on the first \$5 million in capital improvements funded by Empire State Development. Concurrently, a master planning process developed in coordination with the Broadway Market and other Broadway Fillmore neighborhood efforts that are guided by community and neighborhood engagement began.



SCOPING  
COMPLETED



CONSTRUCTION  
BEGAN



12-MONTH PLAN  
IN PROGRESS

## ANCHORS AND INFRASTRUCTURE



*Targeted capital funding increases homeownership opportunities, ensures community anchors remain accessible, safe, and relevant, improves key mixed-use properties to spur private investment, and enhances the streetscape along the corridors.*



The **BUFFALO NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION FUND**, a multi-pronged housing initiative, will increase homeownership, prevent foreclosure, and target zombie properties on the East Side.

Improvements to **MLK PARK DISTRICT** (Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and the Buffalo Museum of Science) ensure this historically significant community anchor remains an accessible, safe, and relevant asset for the community.



Initial capital improvements and a business, marketing, and concept design services planning process that began in 2020 are first steps in re-establishing the **BROADWAY MARKET** as a viable and vibrant public shopping hub and attractive regional destination.



Design is underway to develop a **COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY AT NORTHLAND** to benefit neighborhood residents, draw tenants, and facilitate hands-on training in the renewable energy sector.



Construction is underway on several key mixed-use and anchor projects along the targeted commercial corridors that received **DIRECT PROJECT ASSISTANCE** to facilitate business growth and job creation.



Targeted streetscape improvements and **INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE INVESTMENTS** will be contracted for construction progressively over the next two to three years.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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As part of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's Buffalo Billion investment plan, \$65 million is dedicated to the revitalization of Buffalo's East Side through transformational capital investments in nine targeted areas along four East Side Commercial Corridors. Understanding the tremendous opportunity to leverage New York State's \$65 million East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund, private and philanthropic organizations pooled their funds to create the \$8 million East Side Collaborative Fund to support operations, programs, capacity building, and community infrastructure associated with five program initiatives.

In a coordinated effort led by UBRI, these public and private funders work together with community nonprofits to foster revitalization activities that improve commercial properties, support small businesses, promote historic preservation, educate building owners with real estate development training, ensure community anchors remain accessible core assets, and enhance the streetscape along the corridors.



# \$65 MILLION

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## 9 TARGET AREAS

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Plus another **\$8 million** in funds  
from private and philanthropic organizations for

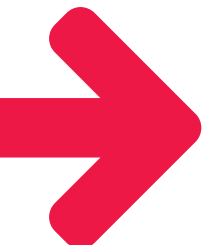
ANCHORS AND SUPPORTS *to*

## FIVE PROGRAM INITIATIVES



## DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

The path to develop East Side Avenues had to be different, or the effort wouldn't have the impact the community truly deserved. The East Side of Buffalo is a big place. By analyzing data, recent investments and talking with the community, nine key areas along four commercial corridors were identified where additional investments could make a big difference. As a core part of the process, community members were asked what they would like to see happen and what projects they believe are important for promoting economic change. Based on all of this information, a portfolio of capital improvement projects focused on anchors and infrastructure was put together for state investment.



***But public resources wouldn't be enough. It would take public, private, and corporate entities—all pulling in the same direction—to make a big difference.***

To date, 14 foundations and corporations joined this endeavor to complement the state's investment and committed to an unprecedented five years of funding.



Finally, a project implementation team (PIT) was needed to oversee all of the projects. The PIT, led by UBRI, ensures that appropriate supports such as infrastructure, staff, and funding are in place; assists with strategic planning, program design, and problem solving; leads the team on technical assistance for community-based organizations; and reports on progress. This created a unique collaborative to spark transformational change for lasting impact on Buffalo's East Side.

## A FUTURE SHAPED BY THE COMMUNITY

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Initial and ongoing community engagement was the most important element in the creation of East Side Avenues.

*This wasn't a traditional grant program with a formal application process. It needed to be more flexible, and, in a way, **MORE EXPERIMENTAL**, to fund the best community-driven projects.*

Community members—businesses, community groups, and nonprofits—were engaged through a series of one-on-one conversations and listening sessions. This created a much deeper understanding of the barriers to economic development, and what programs could be created to have the greatest impact, while building trust with the community. All ideas, no matter the stage, were shared in the East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund final report. When funding decisions were made, broad partnerships were created with trusted community partners with strong neighborhood ties to implement the capital projects and programs that people said were priorities.

BUILT WITH  
THE COMMUNITY  
FOR THE  
COMMUNITY



# CHANGING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE EAST SIDE

The team developed a marketing communications strategy to support and create awareness of community activities and progress. The communications strategy focused on telling the story of the community's role in transforming the East Side to elevate the importance of its work. With our partner, Riveter Design, an extensive storytelling program was created *that lifts up the voices of the people living and working on the East Side.* East Side businesspeople and community members were identified and featured in an inaugural storytelling video series on the newly built website: [www.eastsideavenues.org](http://www.eastsideavenues.org). Even in East Side Avenues' nascent stage, the community is seeing signs that perceptions about the East Side are changing. **There are new conversations about investments and momentum.** As programs roll out, interest is far exceeding expectations. **Local news outlets are covering East Side programs.** This momentum is driving traffic to the website and growing video viewership. Listening to and lifting up the voices of the people who live and work on the East Side remains a priority.



IT ALL STARTED WITH \$65M FROM NYS  
FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS.

Investments in  
**anchors & infrastructure** to make lasting  
transformational change.

The **capacity-building programs**  
emerged to strengthen that investment.

## 5 PROGRAMS

East Side Avenues will support locally-owned  
businesses with a focus on projects that  
provide economic benefits to people working  
and living in the community.

# Building an EFFECTIVE ECOSYSTEM to Maximize East Side Revitalization

It All Started with **\$65 Million in Capital Investments** from New York State.



Private Foundations and Banks Provided **\$8+ Million for Capacity Building**



**Listening to the Community** Initial and Ongoing Engagement and Community Outreach Informs Program Development



Formed **Project Implementation Team**, Led by UBRI



**Comprehensive Communications Strategy and Storytelling Effort** Create Awareness of Programs and Lift Up Voices of the East Side

## 5 Capacity-Building Programs Built

Capital for new programs, matched by more than \$8 million from local foundations, strengthens the work of local nonprofit organizations. These programs support small business improvements, historic preservation, real estate development training, and fundamental East Side anchors.



COMMERCIAL BUILDING STABILIZATION FUND



COMMUNITY-BASED REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

MICHIGAN STREET AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CORRIDOR



EAST SIDE COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS



CENTRAL TERMINAL



## Investments in Anchors and Infrastructure

Targeted capital funding ensures community anchors remain accessible and active core assets, improves key mixed-use properties to spur private investment, and enhances the streetscape along the corridors.



INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE INVESTMENTS

Areas of infrastructure investments



BUFFALO NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION FUND



MLK PARK DISTRICT



DIRECT PROJECT ASSISTANCE



COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY AT NORTHLAND



BROADWAY MARKET

MICHIGAN

JEFFERSON

FILLMORE

BAILEY



**CAPACITY BUILDING**  
PROGRAMS



**EMPOWERING  
EAST SIDE RESIDENTS**

# COMMUNITY-BASED REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

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## WHY IT MATTERS

With 1,650 acres of vacant land and 850 vacant commercial addresses, there is great potential for development on Buffalo's East Side. Much of this land is concentrated in and around the commercial corridors. There is also tremendous entrepreneurial spirit—from small business owners to artists, urban farmers, preservationists, budding housing and commercial developers, and not-for-profit leaders. Some of these entrepreneurs have deep roots in the community. Others are young people new to Buffalo, or immigrants building a life on the East Side. Many see real estate and community development opportunities and are passionate about how their buildings could house new business enterprises. However, they need assistance to successfully plan and implement a commercial real estate development project.

*The East Side community possesses immense entrepreneurial spirit—from small business owners to artists, urban farmers, preservationists, budding housing and commercial developers, and not-for-profit leaders. Some of these entrepreneurs have deep roots in this community. Others are young people new to Buffalo, or immigrants building a life on the East Side.*



1,650 ACRES OF  
VACANT LAND

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850 VACANT COMMERCIAL  
ADDRESSES





## CBREDT

### Training East Side residents and building owners in real estate development.

In 2019–2020, the Community-Based Real Estate Development Training program (CBREDT) was developed through a collaboration of the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning, University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI), Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC WNY), Empire State Development (ESD), and the City of Buffalo. The intent is to train East Side building owners and community members to undertake a commercial, mixed-use, or infill project.

**This ensures that revitalization is driven by the community,** and buildings don't fall into the hands of absentee landlords or land speculators or sit unused.

The first of its kind in the region, CBREDT is a tuition-free, non-credit bearing, adult education program. The approximately 16-week intensive program provides an overview of the commercial real estate development process, including pre-development, construction, and property management, and financing a project from private and public sources. Weekly classroom instruction (transitioned online temporarily in response to the COVID-19 crisis) is given by a wide range of local experienced real estate development professionals and includes lectures and hands-on activities. Participants are also linked with a mentor based on individual needs and interests. Students work toward a final project that they presented to a panel of jurors.

**Students who successfully complete the program will be invited to apply for capital funds administered by ESD, which target the East Side commercial corridors.**



*The 16-week intensive program provides an overview of the commercial real estate development process*



**100+ APPLICATIONS RECEIVED**



**20 APPLICANTS ACCEPTED**



***15 students graduated from inaugural class***

**KEY MILESTONES 2019 - 2020**

- **Created a workgroup to advise on program and curriculum design.** LISC WNY acted as the program administrator and co-facilitated the program.
- **Completed a series of focus groups** to solicit input for program and curriculum design. Invitees included potential program participants, East Side developers, CDCs, and faith-based organizations.
- **Completed program design.** This included program vision and outcomes, course curriculum, schedule, instructors, mentorship program, participant eligibility and requirements, applicant selection criteria and process, and program budget.
- **Accepted applications and marketed the program.** Robust outreach and marketing included development of new webpage; earned media; online and paper applications; e-news blasts; postcards; print ads in *Challenger* and *Criterion* newspapers; and posters and flyers. The result: 104 applicants.
- **Completed applicant selection process and set class roster.** The application review committee was comprised of ESD, UBRI and OH-Community partners. Applicants were selected for interviews held by a smaller committee. Twenty applicants were accepted into the 2020 class. Due largely to complications related to COVID-19, 15 students were able to complete the full program.
- **Quickly adjusted CBREDT schedule and learning model in response to the COVID-19 crisis,** but the curriculum remained largely the same. Pre-class engagement began in April and virtual class sessions were held bi-weekly from May to August.
- **Matched students with individual mentors** who they

worked with until October.

- **Fifteen students participated in a celebratory virtual graduation ceremony in August.**
- **Ongoing student evaluation of the program was overwhelmingly positive.**
- **Built a partnership with the Urban Land Institute—New York,** the oldest and largest network of cross-disciplinary real estate and land use experts in the world. Through this partnership, CBREDT participants will have access to additional support in their real estate development endeavors and will receive a complimentary one-year ULI membership.

**LOOKING AHEAD:  
GOALS FOR 2020-2021**

- Continue to share participants' progress with the community.
- Focus on continuing education opportunities for 2020 class.
- Based on program evaluations, make adjustments to program and curriculum for 2021.
- Plan and launch outreach and application process for second class to begin in March 2021.



## AHMED SALEH

As the owner of the Mandela Market since 2001, Ahmed works long days but is invigorated by the energy of his customers. Located in a “food desert,” Ahmed understands that it’s very inconvenient for those in the neighborhood to travel to the nearest grocery store. He is using funding from the

East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund to expand his store, and will soon be able to offer more fresh, healthy foods. He wants to give customers the opportunity to eat, “the way I like my family to eat.”

**WATCH ▶**



An aerial photograph of a large, historic building complex, likely a university or government building. The most prominent feature is a tall, multi-story tower with a distinctive, stepped, Art Deco-style top. The building is constructed of brick and has many windows. In the foreground, there are trees with autumn foliage in shades of orange, red, and yellow. A road or walkway runs alongside the building. The sky is a clear, bright blue. A semi-transparent yellow rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "REACTIVATING THE HISTORIC CENTRAL TERMINAL" in white, bold, uppercase letters.

**REACTIVATING THE HISTORIC  
CENTRAL TERMINAL**

# CENTRAL TERMINAL

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## WHY IT MATTERS

The Broadway Fillmore neighborhood is largely defined by its proximity to the iconic Buffalo Central Terminal, an Art Deco masterpiece that closed to rail traffic in 1979 and has been the focus of a grassroots restoration movement. An Urban Land Institute study in 2017 advised that the Central Terminal and Broadway Fillmore were intrinsically linked and should be developed in tandem to their mutual benefit. An incredible opportunity exists to redevelop the neighborhood's significant landmark building and connect the Central Terminal and Broadway Fillmore business district to attract private investment and visitors to the area.



## CENTRAL TERMINAL

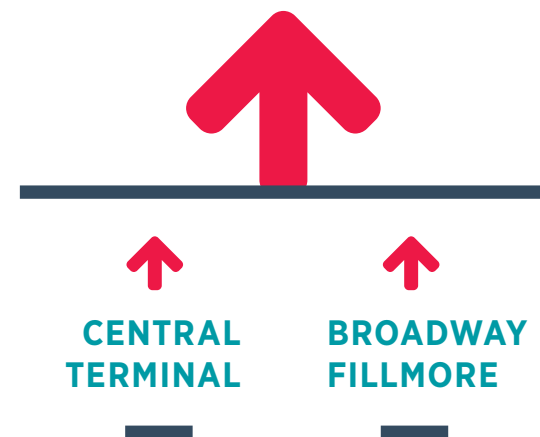
The previously all-volunteer-run Central Terminal Restoration Corporation (CTRC) made tremendous strides in stabilizing the facility and bringing attention to the landmark's importance. Empire State Development (ESD) funding will support the restoration of the Terminal's historic concourse—a first step in transforming part of it into a year-round regional venue and asset for the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood.

Multiple capital improvements will be made inside the main terminal building to enhance event capacity. This includes building out space for catering and entertainment and attaining code compliance. In 2019–2020, schematic design of restoration work was completed, and construction is anticipated to be completed in one year, starting in summer 2020.

At the same time, East Side Avenues funding is building the capacity of the CTRC by funding a full-time executive director and other paid staff and linking the Board and staff to organizational consultants. With their support, CTRC is creating a robust organization that will guide capital improvements, fundraising, and marketing.

In 2020, CTRC embarked on a site planning process to guide the vision, operations, capital improvements, and financing structure for the Terminal. The planning process is engaging residents to

create physical, economic, and emotional connections between the neighborhood and the Terminal, pursue future development that benefits the community, and create connections with the Broadway Market as well as with other anchor facilities that form the neighborhood fabric. The goal is to eventually reuse the entire complex and restore the iconic Art Deco tower.



*This is the first step in transforming Central Terminal into a year-round regional venue—and an asset for the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood.*



**construction is anticipated to be completed in one year, beginning in** FALL 2020

## CENTRAL TERMINAL

### KEY MILESTONES 2019-2020

- **Monica Pellegrino Faix was hired as Executive Director.**
- **Completed Operating Assessment and Capacity Building Plan with support of consultant Glenda Cadwallader.** Started working on plan recommendations, including a board retreat on governance, strategic planning, and board member skillsets and recruitment needs.
- **Identified additional consultants needed to implement the capacity building plan.**
- **Created and started a process to improve the diversity of events, attendees, and collaborations.**
- **Following an RFP process, selected consultant SmithGroup and began work on master planning** to guide the redevelopment and reuse of the Central Terminal within the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood.
- **Site investigation work, schematic design, and cost estimating was completed by CJS Architects and sub-consultants.**
- **Identified scope of work for the \$5 million in capital funds and hired a construction manager.**
- **The first construction component, roof repair, began.** With remaining funds, the interior restoration work will prepare the former restaurant area adjacent to the concourse for “white box” tenant fit out.
- **Ran a search process and hired a program manager responsible for community engagement, neighborhood-based events, and placemaking.**



### LOOKING AHEAD:

### GOALS FOR 2020-2021

- Focus on the 12-month site planning process in coordination with the Broadway Market and guided by community and neighborhood engagement.
- Continue board and organizational capacity building activities.
- Begin to hold small neighborhood-based activities once COVID-19 event restrictions are lifted.



## PAUL LANG, CENTRAL TERMINAL

An architect by trade, Paul can't help but marvel at the design and detail of the Buffalo Central Terminal. He also recognizes that the terminal was "a lightning rod for activity" in its heyday. As Chair of the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation, he believes both the building and surrounding neighborhood have a bright future together. Investments being

made are two-fold. First, capital improvements aim to preserve the terminal and make part of it available for year-round use. Second, capacity development, including hiring an executive director and full-time staff, will allow the organization to engage with and work alongside stakeholders within the community.

[WATCH ▶](#)





An aerial photograph of a city street corner. A large, semi-transparent red rectangular overlay covers the central part of the image, highlighting a Rite Aid Pharmacy building and its surrounding area. The building is a two-story structure with a flat roof and a sign that reads "RITE AID PHARMACY". A sign on the corner also reads "RITE AID PHARMACY". The street is paved and has several cars parked and driving. There are trees and other buildings in the background. The text "TRANSFORMING THE CORRIDORS' BUSINESS DISTRICTS" is overlaid in white, bold, uppercase letters on the red area.

**TRANSFORMING THE CORRIDORS'  
BUSINESS DISTRICTS**

# EAST SIDE COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

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## WHY IT MATTERS

There is a need to expand neighborhood-serving businesses such as retailers and restaurants and increase mixed-use opportunities along the corridors. It's also important to maintain the historic character of the buildings and re-establish traditional, walkable community business districts. Buildings along the corridors have a broad range of needs—from exterior façade renovations and interior improvements to systems improvements and code compliance upgrades. These vary greatly in scale and cost. A focused effort on building renovations could improve the business climate, combat vacancies, and contribute to the overall revitalization of the corridors.



## EAST SIDE COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

### Creating an expanded building renovation program in four investment areas to improve the business climate, combat vacancies, and contribute to the overall revitalization of the corridors.

The East Side Commercial Districts (ESCD) program, modeled after the New York Main Street program, provides matching capital grants to building owners through local program administrators (LPAs). ESCD provides funding for building renovations in four investment areas through three non-profit LPAs—**Jefferson Avenue Commercial District** (Citizens' Alliance, in partnership with the Black Chamber of Commerce of WNY), **MLK Park Business District and Broadway Fillmore** (Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services), and **Kensington Bailey** (University District Community Development Association). This ensures that outreach and priorities are made on a local level. The investment areas were chosen because they represent traditional mixed-used commercial districts; significant demand exists there; and trusted, informed LPAs were available to serve as community partners.

***The role LPAs play as conduits is critical to the program's success and to re-establishing the corridors as viable and revitalized business districts.*** The LPAs all had prior experience administering New York Main Street grants but faced staffing and capacity needs. In 2019–2020, each LPA hired a dedicated commercial district staff person and was paired with a consultant to assist with program administration, marketing, and project selection.

LPAs also underwent organizational assessments and capacity mapping with LISC WNY and worked on strategic actions plans to help increase overall capacity.

**At the same time, the ESCD capital grant program was designed, marketed, and launched.** Eligible business owners were invited to apply directly to the LPA in their district for funds. Each LPA developed its own project selection criteria, design guidelines, and review/selection committee. Empire State Development (ESD) developed new programmatic guidelines to reduce administrative burdens and remove barriers faced by property owners in accessing capital funds. There was tremendous interest in the program, with 54 requests submitted. Over \$1 million in grant funds were awarded to 22 projects.

**54 REQUESTS SUBMITTED**

*22 projects selected for funding*

**GRANT FUNDS CONTRIBUTED OVER**  
**\$1,000,000**



## EAST SIDE COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS

### KEY MILESTONES 2019 - 2020

- Chose three organizations as LPAs.
- ESD selected and is funding program consultants LaBella Associates and Developments by JEM/Clinton Brown Company through an RFP process. They will assist LPAs for up to two years.
- LPAs completed staff searches and hired program coordinators.
- Each LPA went through an organizational assessment and capacity mapping, and developed strategic action plans with technical assistance from LISC WNY.
- ESD developed guidelines and administrative procedures for the East Side Commercial Districts' matching capital grant program.
- LPAs marketed the program and accepted applications.  
The program's first round of applications were due January 31, 2020. Outreach to promote the program and solicit interest in grant funding from small businesses began with informational kick-off meetings in all four commercial districts and then included door-to-door canvassing, outreach to elected officials, and media release distribution.
- LPAs and consultants finalized administrative procedures.
- Completed applicant selection process. LPAs received a total of 54 applicants. ESD worked with LPAs to assess impact of COVID-19 business shutdown and financial impact on ability to participate in the program and provide the required funding match.

- A list of grantees was finalized and 22 Round 1 projects were announced and awarded over \$1 million in grant funds.

### LOOKING AHEAD:

### GOALS FOR 2020-2021

- Consultants and LPAs will finalize scopes with the property owners of the selected projects.
- LPAs will hold information meetings with selected projects to discuss funding and administrative procedures.
- The application process and timeline for Round 2 of funding will be developed.
- Construction will begin on the first round of projects and will be managed by the LPAs with the assistance of the ESD consultants.
- Outreach to business owners will continue.
- Strategic organizational action plans will be implemented. Using the vetted pool of consultants, LISC WNY and Glenda Cadwallader will facilitate additional consultant matchmaking with LPAs informed by their strategic action plans as needed.



## ESSENCE SWEAT

Essence moved back to Buffalo because she missed the tight-knit community and sense of family. Now, in her role as Business Development Specialist at UDCDA, she is working to make that community a better place to work, live, and play. She helps local businesses access East Side Commercial Districts' funding for façade and interior

improvements. This fund is modeled after the Main Streets Program that supported businesses like Buffalo Paint and Wallpaper, which has been a Bailey Avenue mainstay for over 30 years. Essence views this funding as a catalyst to turn the East Side into an entrepreneurial hub.

**WATCH ▶**



PROMOTING  
A ONE-OF-KIND ATTRACTION

# MICHIGAN STREET AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CORRIDOR

## WHY IT MATTERS

There is a need for increased consensus, cooperation, and coordination along Michigan Street's African American Heritage Corridor. The Michigan Street tourism assets are each independently operated, and the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission (MSAAHCC) was formerly a small umbrella organization that provided marketing for the sites. Each of the historic sites also requires capital to restore and improve buildings. Adding capacity within the MSAAHCC will help coordinate the efforts of each organization, create a cohesive master plan for tourism, and facilitate capital improvements to maximize the potential of this unique area.



*Coordinating efforts  
for a cohesive master plan for tourism,  
capital improvements  
and maximized potential.*

## Creating a cooperative operating and business model and plan for capital improvements for a unified tourist destination around Michigan Street’s unique assets.

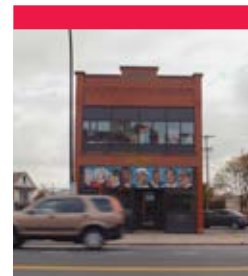
This project supports MSAAHCC’s efforts to create a multifaceted tourist destination focused on the historic assets between William and Broadway (Michigan Street Baptist Church, Nash House Museum, Colored Musicians Club, and WUFO Black Radio History Collective).

The objective is twofold: create a cooperative operating and business model and coordinate capital improvements to build a unified tourist destination that will tell the story of Buffalo’s contribution to African American history while attracting new visitors to the region.

In 2019–2020, work focused on strengthening the MSAAHCC by formalizing its organizational infrastructure and administrative functions. With assistance from Roxanne Kise Consulting, MSAAHCC revised its mission, vision, and strategic plan; revived its website; accessed awarded New York Power Authority (NYPA) funds; created office space; established committees with job descriptions and trainings; developed an operating budget; underwent a search for a payroll company; and updated a building and business survey. With assistance from an executive recruiting firm, MSAAHCC completed a search and hired its first executive director.

The MSAAHCC issued an RFP and selected Moody Nolan for a strategic action planning process, which will formalize a cooperative operating model that can support operations, fundraising, and marketing and prioritize future capital investments such as additional upgrades, expansions, ADA and safety compliance, streetscape improvements, community gathering spaces, and other amenities.

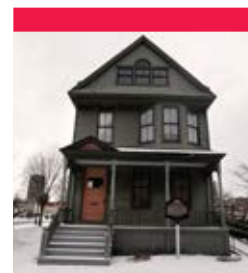
Addressing immediate capital needs for some of the historic assets was also a priority in 2019–2020:



When COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, **THE COLORED MUSICIANS CLUB** will break ground on its initial capital improvements, which include constructing a new, ADA-compliant building entrance; restoring the building’s façade; renovating performance space; and improving streetscapes.



The Board of Buffalo Niagara Freedom Station Coalition (**MICHIGAN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH**) selected Foit-Albert Associates to lead design and construction administration to restore the church’s roof truss system and implement building stabilization and accessibility enhancements.



**THE NASH HOUSE** is also making progress on its initial capital improvements. Fabrication, delivery and installation of custom-made weatherization components were delayed by COVID-19 restrictions.



**KEY MILESTONES 2019-2020**

- Leveraged capacity building funding to strengthen foundational elements of MSAAHCC.
- With assistance from recruiting firm Career Partners International, **MSAAHCC completed a search process and hired a full time Executive Director, Terry Alford.**
- **The Michigan Street Baptist Church received a \$204,845, African American Civil Rights Federal Grant.**
- **The Colored Musicians Club was awarded the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation 2019 New York State Historic Preservation Award.**
- **Developed a virtual tour and video** to highlight the rich history of the Corridor, keep its historic anchors in the public eye (especially during COVID-19 restrictions), and introduce the new Executive Director to the community.
- **Hired a part-time Project Manager.**
- **Underwent an RFP process and selected consultant Moody Nolan out of New York, NY to develop a Strategic Action Plan** for the target area to include a strategy to foster collaboration and how the MSAAHCC will best serve as the forum/structure for it; a joint branding/marketing plan; and a concept design and budget for part of the ESD capital grant to expand and enhance facilities and heritage interpretation.



**LOOKING AHEAD:  
GOALS FOR 2020-2021**

- Will complete the Strategic Action Plan to guide all future operations and capital improvements.
- Will complete a fundraising plan.
- Construction will begin on immediate capital needs for some of the historic assets.



## GEORGE SCOTT

As President of the Historic Colored Musicians Club, George can recite the long list of jazz legends who passed through the club's doors. But he's also proud of its history of being a welcoming place for everyone. Thanks to funding from East Side Avenues' partner, Empire State Development, HCMC is undergoing a two-story expansion

and renovation. Adding an elevator and space for youth music lessons will continue the club's legacy as a beacon for all music lovers. George is excited about the possibilities, "Who knows, we could have another Grover Washington here one day."

**WATCH ▶**





STABILIZE AT-RISK  
HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Market

William

ONE WAY

Sherman

Historic

## COMMERCIAL BUILDING STABILIZATION FUND

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### WHY IT MATTERS

Historic preservation is an important element of the region's economic development strategy. Western New York's unique history, beauty, and sense of place are retained through architecture, landscapes, and urban design. More than any other area of the city, the East Side has historic buildings in danger of "demolition by neglect." In many instances, the owner is willing to work on building redevelopment but lacks funding to stabilize the property or the ability to self-develop. The community would like to see stabilization of historic buildings along the corridors to ensure that historic assets are saved, and neighborhood character is preserved—both essential to a thriving commercial district.



*—demolition by neglect—*

*STABILIZE*



## COMMERCIAL BUILDING STABILIZATION FUND

### Establishing a dedicated funding source to support stabilization of at-risk historic buildings on the East Side.

The Commercial Building Stabilization Fund is a dedicated resource that supports the stabilization of at-risk commercial and mixed-use buildings on Buffalo's East Side. In 2019–2020, in partnership with Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN) and the City of Buffalo Department of Permits and Inspection Services (DPIS), a program was developed to identify at-risk historic buildings and administer funds to “mothball” them (e.g., institute structural repairs and weatherization to prevent further deterioration). This will protect the buildings from future demolition and allow for their re-use when promising market opportunities arise. DPIS is encouraged to use this program as part of its toolkit in helping owners come into compliance with building codes.

***Interested East Side commercial property owners are invited to apply for up to \$50,000 per building for stabilization-related activities.***

Preference will be given to historic buildings that are at high risk for demolition, are located along commercial corridors and will improve the business environment of the neighborhood, and that need short-term stabilization solutions but have interest from the owner in future redevelopment. Buildings are not required to be formally designated on the National Register of Historic Places.

Capacity building funds are assisting PBN in administering a pilot round of the Fund. PBN is responsible for conducting outreach and community engagement for identifying potential properties and building owners; managing the collection of grant applications and aiding in the selection process; administering grant funding provided by ESD to award capital grants to building owners for conducting “stabilization” repairs to the property; and serving as the construction manager for each property and project.



*\$5 million is dedicated to preserving buildings for future development*



*up to*  
**\$50,000**  
**PER BUILDING**

## COMMERCIAL BUILDING STABILIZATION FUND

### KEY MILESTONES 2019 - 2020

- PBN completed Operating Assessment and Capacity Building Plan with support of consultant Glenda Cadwallader.
- PBN, ESD, and DPIS completed program guidelines and application processes. This includes roles and responsibilities, building selection and stabilization criteria, funding limits, and an outreach and communications plan.
- For Round 1 of the program, PBN is working with DPIS to identify known at-risk commercial buildings and target them for funding. LaBella Associates was selected as a consultant to conduct a “windshield-level” survey to identify potential at-risk commercial structures. This survey was on hold during NYS on PAUSE, but will ultimately be used to identify buildings for future rounds.
- In Round 1 of the program, PBN will administer grant funds to awarded building owners. There was response to the Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) for non-profit organizations to be Local Program Administrators (LPAs) and work with PBN to provide technical assistance to building owners, market the program, and administer ESD capital funds to building owners. Qualified organizations will be requested to complete a Request for Applications and would administer future rounds.

### LOOKING AHEAD: GOALS FOR 2020 - 2021

- Based on Capacity Building Plan, determine technical assistance needed and future consultant matchmaking.
- Once program is announced, begin outreach to building owners, complete application and selection process, and announce Round 1 recipients.
- PBN will prepare a scope of work and cost estimate for the selected buildings in Round 1.
- Design and construction on Round 1 buildings begin.

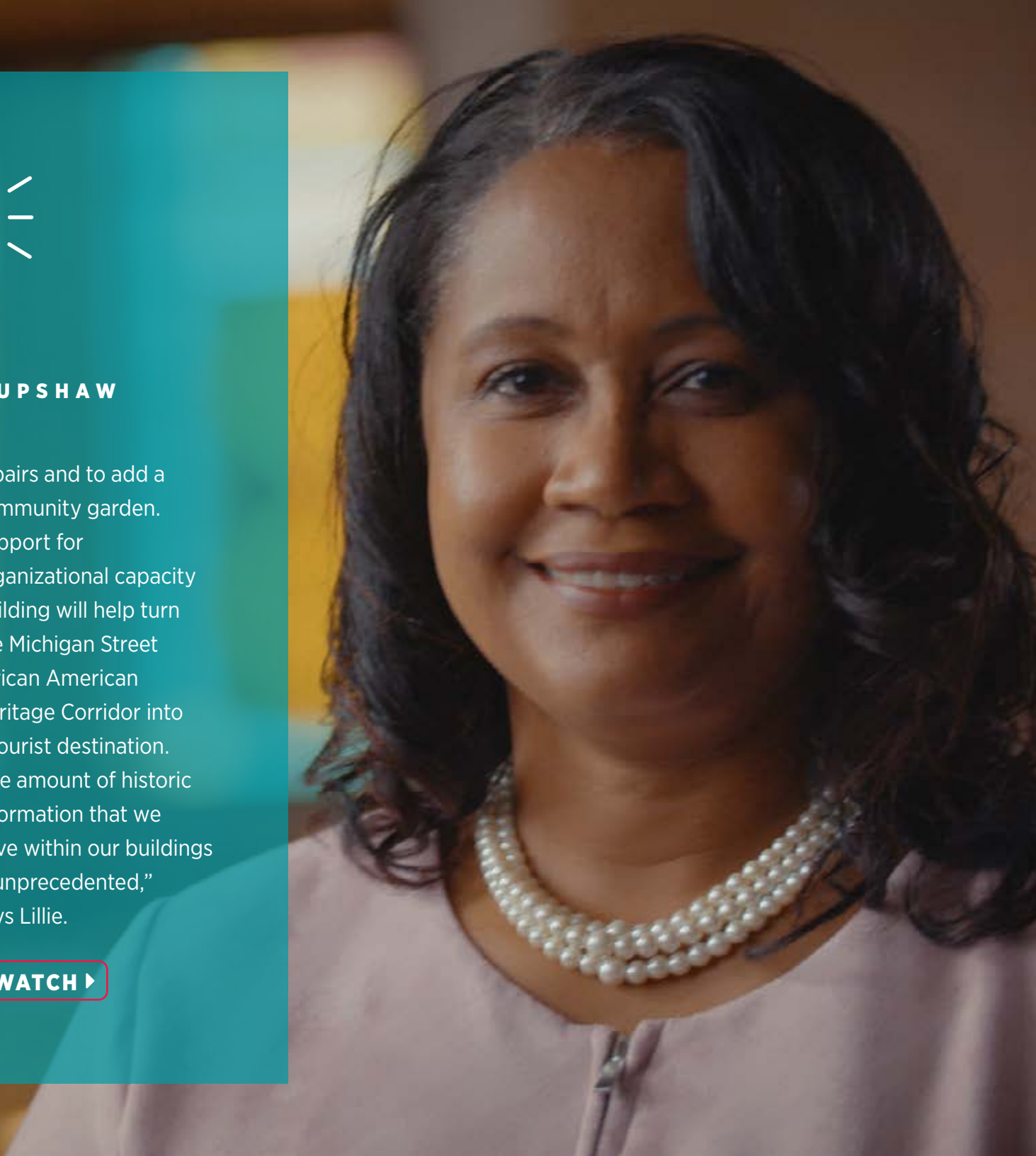


## LILLIE WILEY-UPSHAW

Lillie's first experience of the East Side was through wonderful stories from her husband, who grew up in the area. Today, she's working to preserve and share the neighborhood's stories in her role as board chair of the Buffalo Niagara Freedom Station Coalition, caretakers of the Michigan Street Baptist Church. New funding is being used for much-needed structural

repairs and to add a community garden. Support for organizational capacity building will help turn the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor into a tourist destination. "The amount of historic information that we have within our buildings is unprecedented," says Lillie.

[WATCH ▶](#)





## MICHAEL THREAT

An East Side resident since 1968, Michael has witnessed firsthand how the area has changed over the past few decades. That inspired him to start the East Side Field of Dreams Block Club Association to improve the neighborhood and help longtime residents stay in their homes. For example, in 2019, the block club partnered with 716 Ministries to reroof

the home of a senior citizen who was born and raised on the East Side. Michael also works with Fillmore Forward to support business growth. He recognizes the neighborhood is changing again and sees families moving back. “The people feel the momentum because, right now, we’re spreading hope.”

**WATCH ▶**





**ANCHORS + INFRASTRUCTURE**  
INVESTMENTS

An aerial photograph of a Buffalo neighborhood, showing a mix of residential houses, some with porches, and larger commercial-style buildings. A central street runs north-south, with several yellow school buses and other vehicles. The trees are in various stages of autumn color, ranging from green to bright yellow and orange. A large, semi-transparent red rectangle is overlaid in the center of the image, containing the text 'BUFFALO NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION FUND' in white, bold, uppercase letters.

**BUFFALO NEIGHBORHOOD  
STABILIZATION FUND**



## BUFFALO NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION FUND

This multi-pronged housing initiative will increase homeownership, prevent foreclosure, and target zombie properties on the East Side.

**\$1.4 million was allocated to the Homeownership Opportunity Program, a revolving fund to repair 28 long-vacant, abandoned properties** acquired by the Buffalo Erie Niagara Land Improvement Corporation (the local land bank) on behalf of the City and make them available for purchase. The properties, which will be owner-occupied and sold at market value, were identified in stable residential neighborhoods.

In partnership with the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo and based on the successful Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, **\$2M was allocated to the Housing Preservation Program.** Thus far repairs have been completed on 97 homes at risk of foreclosure or abandonment due to high costs of maintenance and energy usage, and an additional 69 homes have been approved for repairs. By partnering with local not-for-profit housing organizations this initiative is addressing low-income homeowner needs for energy efficiency, home health, and safety.

**Up to \$1.02 million has been allocated for an anti-foreclosure measure—helping prevent zombie properties.**

Under the program, the State of New York Mortgage Agency will purchase the mortgages for properties facing foreclosure, provide one-on-one counseling with each mortgage holder, and direct outreach with lenders to modify loans.

**\$120,000 was allocated to Habitat for Humanity** for the purchase of homes that are being renovated and made available for purchase to new families.

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**\$1.4M** TO THE HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM

**\$2M** TO THE HOUSING PRESERVATION PROGRAM

**UP TO \$1.02M** FOR ANTI-FORECLOSURE MEASURES

**\$120K** FOR HOME PURCHASE THROUGH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY



**MLK PARK DISTRICT**



## MLK PARK DISTRICT

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**Improvements are being undertaken within Martin Luther King, Jr. Park to ensure this historically significant community anchor remains an accessible, safe, and relevant asset for the community.**

Funding will be used for infrastructure and amenity upgrades to MLK Park, including traffic calming measures along Fillmore Avenue to help meld portions of the park on either side of this busy corridor, as well as lighting, sidewalk, and historic pathway reconstruction. This will increase accessibility within the park and facilitate park programming, as well as improve connectivity between the park and the adjacent business district. Funding will also be used to renovate the park's greenhouses, which produce 10,000 annuals and hundreds of other plants for all the parks and circles in the Olmsted system—creating maintenance and horticulture jobs. The funds are being administered through the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, which stewards Buffalo's Olmsted system under a maintenance and management agreement with the city.

To date, the Conservancy completed a conditions assessment of the greenhouse facility and is working on a program of improvements for the structure. It is also designing a lighting improvement project for which construction is expected in 2020.

Concurrently, the City of Buffalo has implemented interim “road diet” measures along Fillmore Avenue, involving a reduction of travel lanes and accentuated crosswalks to facilitate traffic calming, and undertook a program of lighting and sidewalk improvements in the park this past summer.

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**Another component of this effort entails restoring the Buffalo Museum of Science's original north entrance and façade—the main entrance when it opened in 1929—**

to fully remediate deterioration that barred it from public use for several decades. This will involve restoration of the museum's monumental grand steps, limestone façade, public plaza, and associated sidewalks and curbing. When completed, the restored outdoor space will provide a destination for passive recreation and pedestrian gathering for museum guests and support community programming.

In late 2019, final design of the work was completed to allow for public bidding and contracts will be awarded in fall 2020. The facility is also undergoing security and ADA-accessibility improvements.



**BROADWAY  
MARKET**



## BROADWAY MARKET

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The City of Buffalo-owned Broadway Market is one of the oldest and largest public markets in the United States and a significant asset to the City and the East Side in particular. However, after decades of demographic and economic changes in its surrounding neighborhood, the Market now supports only limited activity outside of its strong, nostalgia-driven traditional pre-Easter season, which is run primarily by descendants of Polish-American residents who have long-since migrated to suburban neighborhoods.

**The project aims to use an initial capital infusion to begin a process to progressively transform the Market into a year-round attraction that provides growth potential for small businesses, better reflects the changing ethnic and demographic character of the neighborhood, and establishes stronger connections to the Broadway Fillmore business district and nearby Central Terminal.**

The project aligns with recommendations in three separate Market reports issued over the last two decades and builds on recent capital investments. In 2019, through a competitive solicitation process, ESD hired a consultant team to create business and marketing planning and concept design services.

Led by CJS Architects, the team also includes Aaron Zaretsky of Public Market Development, who has provided guidance to public markets in more than 50 cities, after serving as the director of Seattle's Pike Place Market.

This process, expected to be completed by the end of 2020, will:

- provide recommendations for operations;
- help the City understand the demographics and socio-economic characteristics and trends within the Market's trade area;
- provide recommendations for future marketing and branding of the Market;
- identify suggested interior and exterior facility improvements aimed at creating a more attractive, customer-friendly, and manageable space.

A major capital campaign could be required in order to transform the Market.

***This planning process, which included opportunities for community feedback through virtual public meetings and a regionally distributed online survey, is the first step in re-establishing the Market as a viable and vibrant public shopping hub and attractive regional destination.***



**COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY AT  
NORTHLAND BELTLINE CAMPUS**





## COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY AT NORTHLAND BELTLINE CAMPUS

This \$2 million project will develop a solar array and a microgrid electrical system at the City’s newest manufacturing hub. **Powering the campus and surrounding neighborhood will benefit residents while drawing in new tenants and facilitating hands-on training in the renewable energy sector.** In March 2020, after a public solicitation process, the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC)—ESD’s public partner and developer/landlord of the Northland Beltline Campus—contracted with a team led by Frey Electric of Buffalo to plan, design, and install initial components of a microgrid system at Northland. The components are anticipated to include rooftop solar at the Northland Central building (683 Northland Avenue); upgrading the BUDC-owned

substation on the campus to allow distribution of generated power; and other upgrades aimed at future expansion that will accommodate other types of power generation as well as battery storage to ensure continuation of service via the microgrid during power outages. The Frey team’s work included a master planning effort for the system that was recently completed. It also developed a financing package for the project to best leverage ESD grant funds to obtain other types of tax credits and incentives and set up the legal framework for neighborhood power. BUDC will own the microgrid and contract with energy providers. The team is also developing a two-year training curriculum at the Northland Workforce Training Center to teach workers the skills needed for renewable energy jobs.

DEVELOP  
ROOFTOP  
SOLAR AT 683  
NORTHLAND TO  
CREATE POWER



UPGRADE  
SUBSTATION  
TO **DISTRIBUTE**  
**GENERATED**  
**POWER**



MAKE  
OTHER  
UPGRADES FOR  
**FUTURE EXPANSION +**  
**OTHER TYPES OF**  
**POWER GENERATION**



DEVELOP  
TRAINING  
**TO TEACH THE**  
**SKILLS NEEDED**  
**FOR RENEWABLE**  
**ENERGY JOBS**





**DIRECT PROJECT  
ASSISTANCE**



## DIRECT PROJECT ASSISTANCE

In an effort to facilitate business growth and job creation, ESD provides direct capital funds to key projects in each of the target Commercial Corridors as part of its overall effort on the East Side. **ESD will use its existing capacity and expertise to fund capital projects that align with the region’s strategies for economic development and ensure that revitalization on the East Side is driven by the community.**

Understanding the East Side’s unique real estate development challenges, ESD, with a team of consultants, developed a plan to identify East Side property owners with reasonable plans for infill, expansion, or redevelopment projects, assessed what their needs were to execute the project, and provided them with technical expertise to successfully utilize state capital funds to realize their visions for the properties. Proposed projects include funding for:

-  **BUILD OUT OF COMMERCIAL SPACES IN MIXED-USE BUILDINGS**
-  **RESTORATION AND REUSE OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES**
-  **FUNDING FOR FUTURE PROJECTS CURRENTLY RECEIVING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Each project was selected to best complement or leverage other planned revitalization efforts.

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Work was recently completed on an expansion at **MANDELA MARKET** on Jefferson Avenue to provide additional produce and fresh food selections in a neighborhood that meets the federal definition of an urban food desert.

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Work began this past summer on **NASH LOFTS**, a major historic rehabilitation involving a mixed-use project adjacent to key assets in the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor.

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The last phase of work at the **TORN SPACE THEATER** complex is also nearing completion this year and is fast becoming a mainstay in the fabric of the Broadway Fillmore District.

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Fabrication and installation of exhibits at the **BLACK ACHIEVERS MUSEUM** on Jefferson Avenue was completed in early 2020, bringing a new cultural amenity to this part of the East Side.

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Construction on two new retail spaces at **1021 BROADWAY** is nearing completion, bringing an opportunity for new small businesses and community retail resources.

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And, interior upgrades and outfitting are being completed at the **BEVERLY GRAY BUSINESS EXCHANGE CENTER**, further increasing its potential for providing services to minority businesses that are a stronghold of East Side commercial activity.





**INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT  
AND ENHANCE INVESTMENTS**

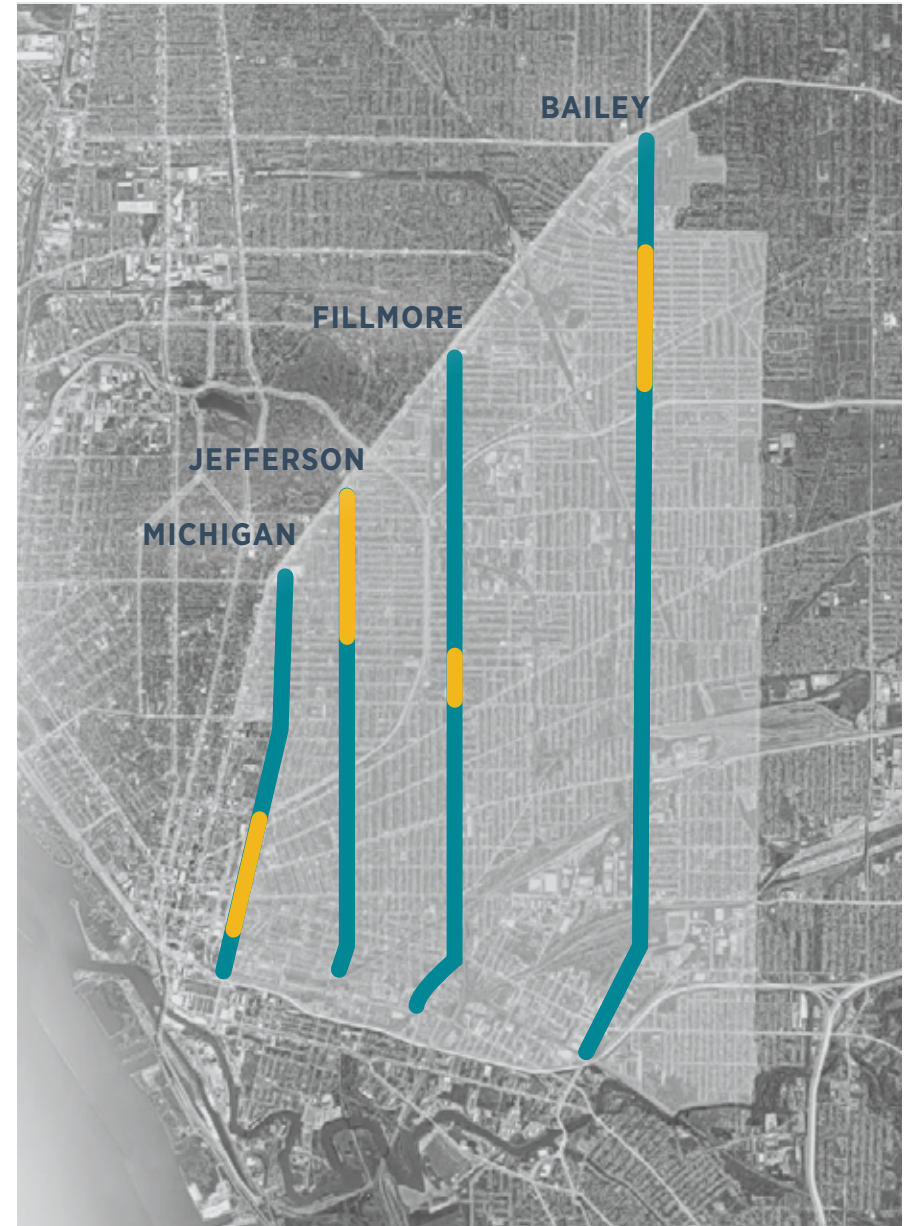


## INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE INVESTMENTS

In coordination with the City of Buffalo, funding is being dedicated to infrastructure investments along the corridors that directly align with the projects and programs of the East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund—maximizing the portfolio’s leverage potential and capitalizing on opportunities for federal matching funds. Infrastructure projects have been identified on Jefferson (Main to Utica), Bailey (LaSalle to Kensington), Michigan (Sycamore to Swan) and Fillmore at MLK Park. Specifically, the funds are being used as the “non-federal” match for a series of federally-financed “Complete Streets” efforts on each of the corridors, targeted at improvements to calm traffic, expand multi-modal access and pedestrian safety, and provide a proper public realm setting for adjoining private-sector uses.

In 2019–20, the City of Buffalo received public approval to add these projects to the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, procured consultant teams, and began to advance required preliminary engineering and environmental review processes for initial projects. It is anticipated that these corridor projects will be contracted for construction progressively over the next two to three years.

-  areas of infrastructure investments
-  4 main corridors



📍 30 PROJECTS

IN PROGRESS

\$967,083

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT LEVERAGED

1,695

VISITORS AT CENTRAL TERMINAL AND THE MSAAHC

\$33,793

IN REVENUE GENERATED\*

*\*It is estimated that \$300,000 in lost revenue was incurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Thousands

OF PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH:

**EARNED MEDIA:**

*Buffalo News, Spectrum News, Challenger, Buffalo Rising*

**PAID MEDIA:**

*Criterion and Challenger newspapers*

**DIGITAL MEDIA:**

UBRI and East Side Avenues eNews  
Invest Buffalo Niagara eNews  
Oishei Foundation eNews | East Side Avenues website  
Virtual tour creation | Videos

**OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

Door-to-door canvassing | Flyers, posters, postcards  
Inclusion in The John R. Oishei Foundation  
and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation annual reports

Hundreds

OF PEOPLE ENGAGED INCLUDING:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Applicants           | Instructors                             |
| Program participants | Developers/tour guides                  |
| Program coordinators | Attendees/presenters at public meetings |
| Mentors              |   |

**Funding through ESA** allowed initiative leaders to build organizational capacity through additional staffing, strategic planning, professional development, access to specialized consultants in areas of need, new partnerships and collaborations, operational improvements, positive media attention, and technical assistance in adapting programs to a new environment created by COVID-19.

“The ESA funding is a **once-in-a-lifetime opportunity** to shift from day-to-day survival **TO LONG-TERM PLANNING, community building and stakeholder connections.**”

**MONICA PELLEGRINO FAIX**  
CENTRAL TERMINAL RESTORATION CORPORATION

**Looking forward to the future,** initiative leaders expect that ESA will positively support their organization and work in myriad ways. These positive impacts will come through the implementation of thoughtful strategies, through stronger and expanded partnerships and more meaningful connections with the community, through new grants for commercial property renovation, through a stronger business association that connects and promotes local businesses, through closer integration of affordable housing and business development, through increased visibility, and by applying best practices to a rapidly evolving environment created by COVID-19.

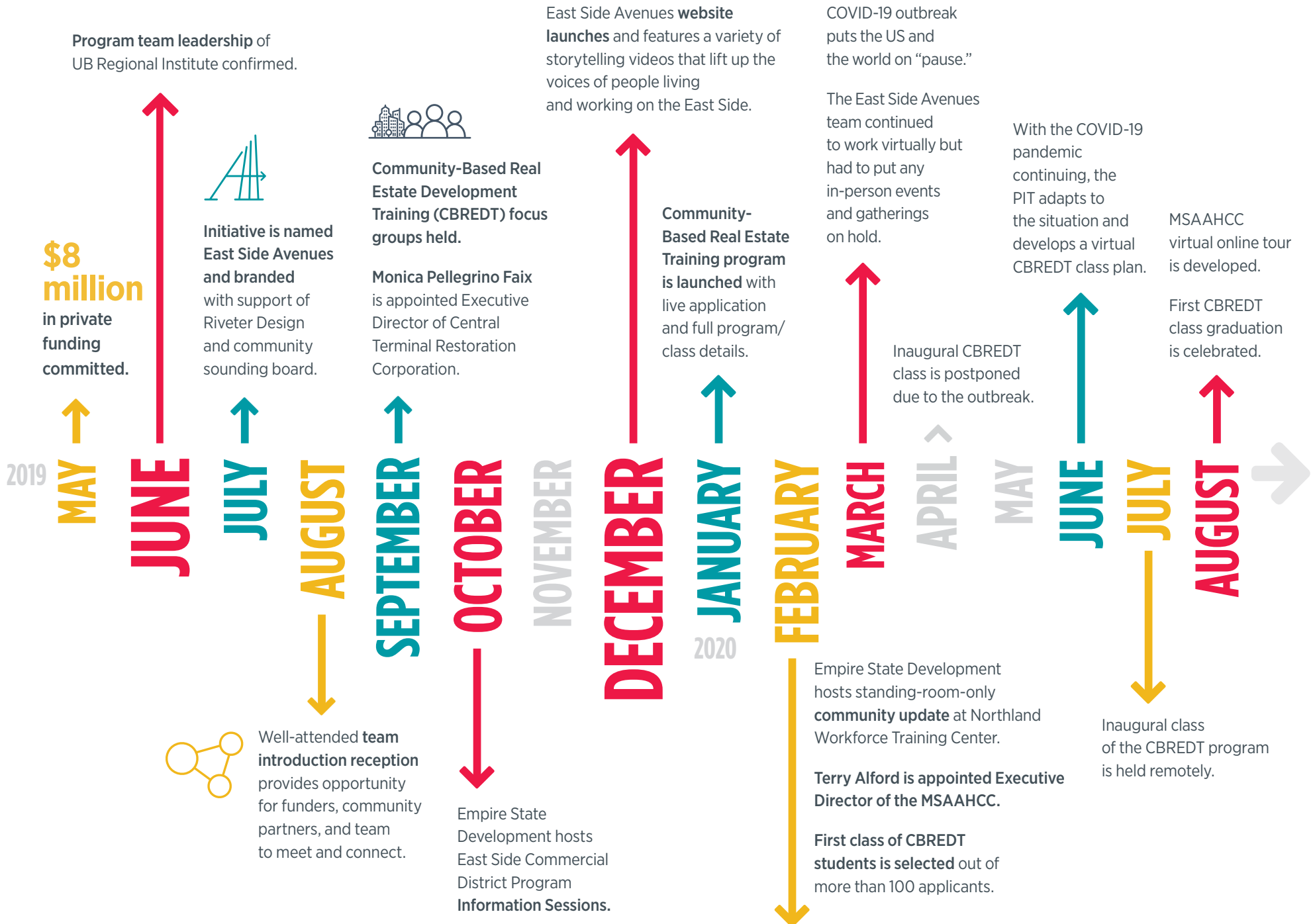
“THE TYPE OF **neighborhood-by-neighborhood** work required in the environment would have been **very difficult to accomplish WITHOUT THIS SUPPORT.**”

**JESSIE FISHER**  
PRESERVATION BUFFALO NIAGARA

**Most initiative leaders report** that ESA increased their impact over the last year. Because of ESA, these anchor organizations were able to engage more effectively with property owners, offer incentives for redevelopment, deliver information and resources during unprecedented times, offer critical technical assistance for funding to businesses in a time of crisis, shift thinking from day-to-day survival to long-term planning and growth, increase awareness and support for preservation, and raise visibility that generated interest, inquiries, volunteers, donations, and social media followers.

“Having comprehensive and **well-thought-out strategies** in place will only serve to ensure our success in becoming a viable and sustainable standalone organization under strong leadership over the next three years, and for many more years to come.”

**TERRY ALFORD**  
MICHIGAN STREET AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION





## LESSONS LEARNED

*While building the East Side Avenues ecosystem, the team regularly reflects on its work and identifies lessons learned on implementation, considerations for improvements, and thoughts for moving forward efficiently. Here are some of the biggest takeaways from the past year:*

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### ➔ EAST SIDE AVENUES IS ON THE RIGHT PATH FORWARD.

No one pleases everyone all of the time. Having so many partners makes things complex. Gaining consensus can be a difficult process and decision-making can take longer. However, the PIT is learning that while collaborating on program development can elicit challenges and delays, the outcomes are stronger because of the process. And, in the end, the broad partnership that makes up East Side Avenues is fundamental to its effectiveness and success.

As the team learns from these challenges, it remains confident that the community feels it is fundamentally on the right path forward.

### ➔ STORIES ABOUT THE EAST SIDE ARE INSPIRING AND CHANGING THE CONVERSATION.

The process of creating the storytelling videos provided even more information about the great work that program partners and community members are doing every day. As programs roll out, community interest continues to grow. Local news outlets are covering East Side efforts, including the *Buffalo News* and *Spectrum News*. There are new conversations about potential investments. There is new energy and momentum. The team will continue to tell these stories to elevate the community's role in transforming the East Side.

### ➔ THE REALITIES OF FISCAL CHALLENGES FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ARE JUST BEGINNING TO EMERGE.

We need to plan for the future to ensure the initiatives are sustainable in the short and long term.

### ➔ PARTNER NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS CONTINUE TO HIRE GOOD TALENT, ASSESS THEIR OWN NEEDS, AND GROW.

From the inception of East Side Avenues, it was apparent that team building would be a major part of building capacity. The program's nonprofit partners are reflecting on the needs of their organizations; successfully running leadership and support staff searches; and finding talent that is energizing and strengthening each organization as it grows. After completing organizational assessments, the community-based organizations are open to learning more about how to increase their capacity and expand their capabilities and programs.

### ➔ THE NEED ON THE EAST SIDE IS GREAT.

All of those involved in revitalizing the East Side realize that funding isn't the be-all, end-all solution for all community issues. As programs launch, more community needs are emerging. The hope is that identified initiatives begin to catalyze longer-term programs that provide additional community benefits, and that there will be opportunities to meet more community goals than East Side Avenues can accomplish alone.

**2020 WAS A YEAR  
LIKE NO OTHER  
IN RECENT HISTORY**

Major global and national events—the COVID-19 pandemic and social unrest caused by racial injustices—had ripple effects felt on a very local level. East Side Avenues had to navigate unknowns we never could have anticipated. What we do know is that our East Side partners are resilient and determined as they have been working hard to adapt in a challenging environment.

**Adapting, not abandoning.**

We are staying the course on our strategies and programs, but the mechanics of moving them forward, while being cognizant of the public health crisis and NYS on PAUSE executive order, had to change. Since March, we have been evaluating the impact of COVID-19 on the present and future of East Side Avenues and developing strategies that adapt to this new environment but don't shift focus away from our program goals. Not surprisingly, one of the main areas where we are adapting is communications—shifting the way we communicate with our partners, thinking about how we can provide meaningful community engagement while physically distancing, and designing opportunities for remote learning.



**The commitment of NYS funding remains, but timing will be impacted.**

The commitment for East Side funding remains, but the timing of cash flow will be impacted by the State's budget planning needs and as Federal packages emerge. There were also NY on PAUSE orders on construction activities (now lifted) that are impacting the timelines for certain capital planning, design, and construction projects. We have been preparing and will be ready to proceed quickly.



**The work didn't stop.**

Even as this crisis emerged, the community stayed on target to reach East Side Avenues' collective goals. The work didn't stop. In fact, people were more determined to make sure we didn't let anything fall down amid the panic of the pandemic. We evaluated and researched, engaged with participants and partners, and resolved to find solutions to move everything forward together. No one wanted to halt the progress they were making on this important work. Decisions had to be made quickly and thoughtfully, ensuring we were giving everyone the right tools to succeed in this challenging moment.



**The community has unfaltering determination.**

Despite the local challenges of a global pandemic and our need to adapt East Side Avenues programs to the circumstances, the East Side community's energy and momentum remain strong. Our nonprofit partners took this time to focus on their core missions and how they can be most responsive to the communities they serve. At this time of economic uncertainty, the small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs we are engaging with continue to be passionate about their endeavors—knowing how important they could be to shaping their futures. While remote working and learning environments prove challenging, they also provide an opportunity for our partners and stakeholders to focus on the future they want for themselves and for their organizations.

## **THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS**

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The East Side is a place with momentum... a place with active and engaged residents and visitors, significant historical resources, community-based assets, training and educational resources, and more. East Side Avenues' important work would not be possible without the support, commitment, and enthusiasm of these dedicated funders:

**BANK OF AMERICA**

**CANNON HEYMAN & WEISS, LLP**

**COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR GREATER BUFFALO**

**THE CRAVENS FOUNDATION**

**EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT**

**EVANS BANK**

**FIVE STAR BANK**

**THE JOHN R. OISHEI FOUNDATION**

**KEY BANK/FIRST NIAGARA FOUNDATION**

**M&T BANK**

**THE MARGARET L. WENDT FOUNDATION**

**NORTHWEST BANK**

**RALPH C. WILSON, JR. FOUNDATION**

**THE WEISS FAMILY FOUNDATION**

**WESTERN NEW YORK FOUNDATION**



Paths to prosperity through commercial,  
historic and human investment.



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East Side Avenues is led by  
a Project Implementation Team  
from the UB Regional Institute.