



COMMUNITY-BASED REAL ESTATE Development Training Graduate



Brandi Barrett

"This program made me confident that I can truly be a commercial developer. I feel privileged to have been a part of this incredible learning experience and to have connected with many talented professionals."



Brandi Barrett grew up in the Fruit Belt district and has seen first-hand what gentrification can do to a neighborhood. She was connected to a vacant lot at the corner of Laurel and Michigan Avenues through her family. She plans to build a mixed-use facility which will include an eco-friendly laundromat.

Could you tell us about your project?

When I found out about this vacant lot, I saw it as a great opportunity to add something special to our area. I thought a lot about the needs of our community. I took a look at what is missing here. I asked myself: what type of business could serve the community well? I've been working on laying the groundwork for building something that can have affordable housing, maybe a small business, plus the laundromat. I hope to create an integrated, community-focused place that connects people and serves the neighborhood. a

How will what you learned in the training class help you?

I was introduced to people who are essential for making things happen in our City. I will be able to reach out to them to help me take my vision to fruition. Plus, I learned about the specific steps involved in development -- from creating a pro-forma to applying for funding -- I now feel prepared to tackle this project. I also learned that I have a knack for bringing people together -- that helped me recognize why I'll be good at expanding my role as a community real estate developer.

Would you recommend the class to others? If so, what would you say?

Yes - anyone interested in real estate commercial development would benefit greatly from this class. I'd tell them to be serious -- get ready to make your project or vision a reality, because you'll meet the people you need to know and gain the skills necessary to dive right in. Be prepared to get rolling! Stay connected with the instructors, mentors, and participants as you gain more feasibility to your project or vision. The level of support is invaluable!

What is your vision for the East Side?

My vision for commercial real estate on the East Side of Buffalo is to provide accessibility and walkability, and empowerment to businesses that enhance the quality of life for the surrounding communities. It is also my vision to help educate residents on opportunities for co-ops, homeownership, and financial literacy.

What are your hopes for your community?

My goal is to continue to work with community organizations, local groups and nonprofits to bridge the gap of displacement to transparent integration. Important historic communities are at risk of gentrification and displacement and need to be protected in order to save the identity that evokes the true mission of the City; which is the city of good neighbors.