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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

Governor Cuomo Announces East Side Commercial District Program Awardees

More Than \$1 Million Awarded to Aid 22 East Side Commercial Property Owners on Buffalo's East Side Funding Will Be Used For Repairs, Expansions And Facility Enhancements That Strengthen Four Commercial Districts

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that more than \$1 million has been awarded as part of the first round of grants being made through the East Side Commercial District Program, part of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund. Twenty-two awardees will each receive up to \$50,000 in funding for exterior and/or interior repairs to commercial properties located within four targeted commercial districts on Buffalo's East Side. See renderings of several properties [here](#).

"We have made targeted and strategic investments in Buffalo, generating economic growth across the region," Governor Cuomo said. "The East Side Commercial District Program is part and parcel of our comprehensive approach, revitalizing neighborhoods and fueling the transformation of the city."

"Since the launch of the Buffalo Billion, we have made a commitment to ensure every neighborhood takes part in Buffalo's renaissance," said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul. "The East Side Commercial District Program is helping do just that by revitalizing and strengthening commercial corridors in Buffalo's East Side neighborhoods. For generations, we saw neglect and disinvestment in areas across the city, and these projects are improving quality of life and transforming communities as we build back better for the post-pandemic future."

Empire State Development Acting Commissioner, and President & CEO-designate Eric Gertler said, "This funding couldn't come at a better time for these property and business owners who are dealing with the pandemic's financial fallout. Through the preservation of historic buildings and funding of capital improvements in four key East Side commercial corridors, the program will continue to expand opportunities for growth."

Lawrence H. Cook II, Vice President of The John R. Oishei Foundation and Co-Chair of East Side Avenues Advisory Council said, "Investment in East Side businesses is critical now more than ever to give them a fighting chance and to support the neighborhoods that they serve. We have great confidence in the success of this program since it was created based on input from the community and the necessary supports have been put in place to ensure that both the businesses and the nonprofits supporting them can leverage this investment effectively."

Mayor Byron W. Brown said, "The more than \$1 million in grants going to these 22 awardees in the first round of the East Side Commercial District Program will be a tremendous help to these businesses and property owners who will be able to undertake physical improvement projects they would not have been able to afford on their own. The awardees applied for these grants before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, so these funds are even more critical in the face of the pandemic's economic fallout. I thank Governor Cuomo and Empire State Development for including the Broadway Fillmore, MLK Park, Kensington Bailey and Jefferson Avenue corridors for these grants which are part of the Buffalo Billion, an initiative that continues to spur economic growth and investment in the City of Buffalo."

Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes said, "These funds couldn't have come at a better time as businesses are struggling to survive and rebound in the face of this ongoing pandemic. Thanks to the state's East Side Commercial District Program, under the Buffalo Billion businesses along Jefferson, Broadway, Fillmore, and Bailey avenues will be able to make the much-needed improvements and upgrades to help attract more businesses and residents to our neighborhoods."

Senator Tim Kennedy said, "This investment from New York State is needed now more than ever, as businesses across the City of Buffalo are still reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With this funding, several East Side property owners will receive the supportive resources they need to preserve our city's historic buildings, and build new opportunities for both economic and community-centered engagement."

Property owners applied for funding in January of 2020 through their districts' community-based organization. Those organizations—the University District Community Development Association, Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services and Citizens' Alliance, Inc. in partnership with the Black Chamber of Commerce of WNY—will administer \$500,000 in grants over five years to building and business owners in four commercial districts along Jefferson, Fillmore, Broadway and Bailey avenues. Grantees are required to contribute a 15 percent match. Program outreach and application review was overseen by the community-based organizations.

Projects in this round of funding will make improvements that include expanding or reactivating commercial spaces (i.e. new signage, lighting, enlargement of storefront windows, window awnings, exterior painting and façade work, and new entryways and doors); enhancing original, historic building features (i.e. uncovering/repairing masonry, stone and wood-working and original window openings); and improving health and safety conditions (i.e. roof, energy efficiency, security, and mechanical systems repairs).

East Side Commercial District Program awards being distributed can be found [here](#).

The East Side Commercial District Program is an initiative of Governor Cuomo's previously announced \$65 million East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund, part of the Buffalo Billion II initiative. It is intended to help revive traditional main streets and commercial corridors through the preservation of historic buildings, funding of capital improvements in neighborhood assets, and expansion of commercial opportunities in these neighborhoods.

East Side Avenues provides capacity building, assistance with program design and development, training and other organizational supports to the community based organizations in order to complement the funding. Working with East Side Avenues' Project Implementation Team and consulting partners, the organizations underwent board and organizational capacity assessments; built action plans and hired additional staff to help implement the grant program.

About East Side Avenues

Understanding the tremendous opportunity to leverage New York State's \$65 million East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund, private and philanthropic organizations created a pooled \$8 million East Side Collaborative Fund to support operations, programs, capacity building, and community infrastructure associated with five capital initiatives. East Side Avenues brings together these public and private funders, community non-profits, anchor institutions, consultants and the City to plan and coordinate revitalization activities aimed at improving economic conditions on Buffalo's East Side. The East Side Avenues Project Implementation Team (PIT), led by UBRI, is working to build organizational capacity by ensuring that appropriate supports such as infrastructure, staff and funding are in place; assisting with strategic planning, program design and problem solving; and reporting on progress. UBRI is a research center of the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning. The East Side Collaborative Fund is administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo.

Empire State Development is New York's chief economic development agency (www.esd.ny.gov). The mission of ESD is to promote a vigorous and growing economy, encourage the creation of new job and economic opportunities, increase revenues to the State and its municipalities, and achieve stable and diversified local economies. Through the use of loans, grants, tax credits and other forms of financial assistance, ESD strives to enhance private business investment and growth to spur job creation and support prosperous communities across New York State. ESD is also the primary administrative agency overseeing Governor Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Councils and the marketing of "I LOVE NY," the State's iconic tourism brand. For more information on Regional Councils and Empire State Development, please visit www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov and www.esd.ny.gov.