

Empire State Development and Preservation Buffalo Niagara Announce East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund Awardees

April 7, 2021

Building Owners will Stabilize At-Risk Structures for Commercial Use and Redevelopment

See photos of properties [here \(https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/East-Side-Projects.pdf\)](https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/East-Side-Projects.pdf).

Empire State Development (ESD) and Preservation Buffalo Niagara today announced that \$500,000 has been awarded as part of the first round of grants being made through the East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund, part of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund. Nine awardees have been selected to receive funding for the stabilization of historic at-risk buildings on Buffalo's East Side.

The \$5 million program, part of Governor Cuomo's previously announced \$50 million [East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund \(https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-50-million-east-side-corridor-economic-development-fund-improve\)](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-50-million-east-side-corridor-economic-development-fund-improve), will help protect the fabric, density and character of the East Side – making sure that neighborhood buildings in need of preventative bilization can be maintained for prospective mixed-use, retail, commercial or residential redevelopment. These restorations will also help to further increase the area's commercial activity.

"Each of the nine projects chosen to receive funding from the East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund represents an opportunity to restore buildings and reinvigorate neighborhoods," said **Empire State Development Acting Commissioner and President & CEO-designate Eric Gertler**. "We applaud the awardees for working hard to preserve and renew these historic structures, which in the long run will help to both anchor and grow local businesses."

Jessie Fisher, Preservation Buffalo Niagara executive director said, "The East Side of Buffalo has a rich historic legacy, and we are thrilled to be able to help protect these important buildings as our community works to revitalize Buffalo's East Side. By stabilizing and preserving historic buildings in targeted areas, the Commercial Building Stabilization Fund preserves the unique fabric of this part of the City and helps create a brighter economic future."

The fund increases opportunities for reuse of the stock of historic buildings located on Buffalo's East Side. It ensures that the region's unique history, beauty and sense of place are retained through its architecture, landscapes and urban design, and reverses the decades-long practice of demolishing building stock. The grants will support seal-up efforts, such as roof patching and mothballing precautions, and more complicated structural issues that will help return buildings to use and prevent crisis-level failures in the future or, even worse, additional emergency demolitions of the existing urban fabric. The fund ensures that viable buildings, regardless of code violations or structural deficiencies, are not torn down as a short-sighted "solution;" instead, these buildings will remain intact and ready for reuse.

East Side Avenues Co-Chair and M&T Bank Community Reinvestment Manager

Brad Dossinger said, "By stabilizing and preserving historic buildings on the East

Side of Buffalo, the Commercial Building Stabilization Fund will ensure the community's unique sense of place is retained and can help serve as a building block for ongoing, community based economic development. Historic preservation is an important element of any economic development strategy—and Buffalo is especially rich with history and beauty that can be preserved and celebrated."

The nine East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund Spring 2021 awardees, listed below, will be making structural repairs to commercial properties located on the East Side.

The Broadway Theatre at 512 Broadway Avenue

- Owned by Western New York Minority Media Professionals (WNYMMP), the highly significant historic structure, formerly known as the Sattler Theater, is in immediate danger of collapse despite the hard work of its owner. While the WNYMMP has done its best to fundraise, the advanced state of the deterioration of the building has made all those efforts much more difficult. The WNYMMP will receive \$132,000 to put a new roof on this building, which will have a major effect on their ability to bring this important project to fruition.

343-345 Broadway Avenue

- Owned by Broadway Development and Management Group, LLC., these properties comprise a rare intact grouping of turn-of-the-century brick factory buildings. The buildings will receive \$38,000 for repairs, masonry work, and partial roof repairs. After stabilization, the plan to reopen includes a new storefront, utilization of available warehouse space, and work on long-term plans for mixed use development.

349 Broadway Avenue

- Sharing the same block with 343-345 Broadway Avenue, owner Ms. Ramona Griffin will receive \$25,000 to make repairs to the roof and masonry of 349 Broadway Avenue, which will allow her to properly stabilize this mothballed building.

1362 Jefferson Avenue

- Lawrence and Jacqueline Stitts will receive \$79,800 to replace the collapsed roof and floor of 1362 Jefferson Avenue. This stabilization work will enable the property's owners to transform this mid-century Art Modern building on culturally significant Jefferson Avenue.

1380 Jefferson Avenue

- Ms. Valeria Cray will receive \$35,000 to make repairs to the roof, gutters, masonry and siding of this structure whose condition of the roof and the rear elevation is placing this structure at significant risk for rapid deterioration. After stabilization, Ms. Cray plans to again offer this space to interested small businesses.

339 Genesee Street

- Mr. Glenn Belton will receive \$50,000 for roofing and façade repairs to this mixed-use commercial building which still retains a significant amount of historic details including corbelled brick, terra cotta accents, and two-story copper bay windows. The work will not only protect the building, but also will allow him to pursue a mixed-use development plan.

696 Genesee Street

- This c. 1923 building will receive \$40,000 to make repairs to the building's roof, masonry, and front façade bay windows, which will ensure that it continues to be able to serve its important community function. Its architectural features include patterned brick and a stone parapet.

The Criterion Building at 625 William Street

- Built originally as the Savoy Theatre in 1909, 625 William Street has been owned by Ms. Evelyn Merriweather's family for the past 50 years. Ms. Merriweather will receive \$50,000 for needed structural work including roof replacement and masonry repairs, ensuring that this cornerstone of the community continues and thrives for the next 50 years. After structural repairs are completed, the Merriweather family plans to renovate the structure's commercial space and add a residential component.

The Niagara Frontier Food Terminal Inc at 1500 Clinton Street

- The Niagara Frontier Food Terminal is a large, unique campus of buildings constructed in 1931 as a rail terminal marketplace. The 10 original buildings on the 60-acre site were each large enough to serve as an individual market. While the structures are in reasonably good condition at present, the historic canopy roofs covering the loading docks are rapidly deteriorating, causing ongoing structural damage. The NFFT will receive \$50,000 to make these necessary repairs to the canopy roofs.

All the awardees are required to maintain their properties in a manner consistent with the Fund objectives for a minimum of five years from date of completion of the stabilization project.

The ESCBSF program is open to owners of commercial and mixed-use structures that were built more than 50 years ago and meet additional program criteria as outlined in the program guidelines. The full program guidelines and applications can be found at <https://preservationbuffaloniagara.org/east-side-commercial-building-stabilization-fund/> (<https://preservationbuffaloniagara.org/east-side-commercial-building-stabilization-fund/>). Second-round funding award applications will be made available soon. For more information, contact Bridge Rauch at (716) 852-3300 or brauch@pbnsaves.org (<mailto:brauch@pbnsaves.org>).

Senator Tim Kennedy said, "All of the nine awardees of the East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund are buildings that have strong potential to add to the economic vitality of the East Side. I applaud the individuals and organizations who are doing the difficult work of restoring these structures. The unique buildings each have stories to tell from the past but with stabilization they will be a step closer toward a solid future."

Assembly Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes said, "I'd like to thank Empire State Development for creating the East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund as one of many tools to address properties in need of repair. This fund will help stabilize structures and in many cases aid in preserving local history. These efforts will strengthen our commercial corridors with the goal of bringing back increased economic activity and vibrancy."

County Executive Mark Poloncarz said, "The nine projects that will be awarded funding in this round of the East Side Commercial Building Stabilization Fund provide targeted improvements for historic East Side structures, reusing and restoring these buildings rather than razing them. Keeping these buildings intact and ready to host businesses adds to the vitality, vibrancy and economic opportunity of the East Side."

About Empire State Development

Empire State Development (ESD) is New York's chief economic development agency (www.esd.ny.gov (<http://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 (<http://www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov>) and www.esd.ny.gov (<http://www.esd.ny.gov>).

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