



COMMUNITY-BASED REAL ESTATE Development Training Graduate

Real estate agent and property owner **Derelaine Benton-Smith** has an unbreakable commercial bond with the East Side of Buffalo; her father's business, her construction business, and her investment properties are nestled in its city blocks. The area holds a special place in her heart, and she set her mind on bringing it back to its former glory through her love of real estate.

What are your commercial development goals?

My main goal for my property on Genesee Street is to expand it so it can house two businesses instead of one. We also have a billboard on our property that we get income from. We're hopeful that the remodel will jumpstart the area and encourage more companies to improve their businesses and buildings.

How do you think your project will impact the East Side as a whole?

Sometimes it takes one person. When you have neighbors and they see you starting to fix up your property, they'll be inspired to fix up theirs—like a domino effect. And, now, I can tell community members about CBREDT so that they can get great information like I did throughout the program.

What do you want people to know about this class?

I learned a lot from the program, met a lot of great people, and I really appreciate those that are already in the development world taking the time and effort to come and teach us. I think it's great that the course is helping minorities, small businesses and commercial property owners learn how to develop their properties.

What are your thoughts about the future of the East Side?

At one time, the East Side was a very busy, very nice area. If we don't care about our community, then who's going to? This is where we came from and we need to try to help improve it and restore it.

**Derelaine
Benton-Smith**

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For information about the East Side Avenues' Community-Based Real Estate Development Training program, visit: www.EastSideAvenues.org

