BIG THINGS ARE HAPPENING ON BUFFALO’S EAST SIDE
THE EAST SIDE OF BUFFALO, NY, HAS ALWAYS BEEN A COMMUNITY WITH GREAT ASSETS. NOW, IT’S A PLACE WHERE MOMENTUM AND EXCITEMENT ARE BUILDING. A PLACE PRIMED FOR INVESTMENT. AND A PLACE WHERE BIG THINGS ARE HAPPENING.
THE TIME IS NOW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
New York State dedicated $65 MILLION 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.

The Project Implementation Team (PIT), led by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI) and supported by a team of consultants, ensures that appropriate supports are in place for community leaders; assists with strategic planning, program design, and problem solving; leads the team on technical assistance for community-based organizations; and reports on progress while lifting up the voices of the community.

The first year of East Side Avenues was all about sowing the seeds.

In year two, we are CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM.
The community proved resilient despite setbacks from COVID-19.

All community program partners completed their organizational development strategic action plans and were in implementation mode in 2020–2021.

Three major planning efforts were simultaneously underway in 2020–2021 (Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, Central Terminal, and Broadway Market) that will lead the way to the future.

We are working to get much-needed capital funds out the door and onto the streets, but COVID-19 continues to present challenges in construction.

We are changing public perception by elevating the community’s role in transforming the East Side.

We are bringing the East Side Avenues story to the national and world stage.
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.

Executive Summary

The goal of COMMUNITY-BASED REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING (CBREDT) is to provide East Side residents and building owners with educational opportunities in commercial real estate development. In 2020–2021, a second cohort of 19 students completed the tuition-free, non-credit bearing, adult education program that provides an in-depth overview of the commercial real estate development process. The first cohort of students was invited to participate in continuing education opportunities and to complete a pre-application for capital funds from Empire State Development (ESD) for their commercial real estate endeavors.

SECOND COHORT (19 STUDENTS) COMPLETED TRAINING

FIRST COHORT INVITED TO

- Continue Education
- Pre-Apply for Capital Funds

2021 CBREDT cohort touring the Nash Lofts construction site.
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.

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 2020–2021, Central Terminal Restoration Corporation (CTRC) completed a 12-month site master planning process to guide the vision, operations, capital improvements, and financing structure for the Terminal. In order to execute the master plan, CTRC continued their three-year capacity building plan focusing on governance, strategic planning, fundraising, marketing, neighborhood programming, and diversity training. Concurrently, design and construction focused on sizeable asbestos remediation and extensive roof work repairs.
EAST SIDE COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS (ESCD) is a building renovation program targeted in four investment areas to generate wealth for small business owners, combat vacancies, and revitalize commercial corridors. In 2020–2021, the nonprofit Local Program Administrators (LPAs) began implementing their strategic organizational action plans with consultant support. At the same time, with the help of ESD consultants, LPAs worked with 22 building owners to complete environmental reviews, develop work scopes, and undergo bid solicitations on over $1 million in renovation projects. Construction is anticipated to begin on these Round 1 projects in the coming months.

ESD consultants and LPAs worked with 22 building owners on environmental reviews, work scopes, and bid solicitations for $1M in renovation projects.
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.

Executive Summary

The COMMERCIAL BUILDING STABILIZATION FUND establishes a dedicated funding source to support stabilization of at-risk historic buildings in target investment areas. The first round of the program, which invites East Side commercial property owners to apply for up to $50,000 for stabilization-related activities, was designed, marketed, and launched in 2020–2021. Nine projects were awarded a total of $500,000. Capacity building funds allowed PBN to dedicate staff members to this program while implementing their capacity building plan with a focus on fundraising and marketing.

The historic Iroquois Brewing Building received stabilization funding. Its owner, Ellen Shareef, learned about how to develop the building in the Community-Based Real Estate Development Training program.

9 East Side commercial property owners were awarded a total of $500,000 toward stabilization efforts.
MICHIGAN STREET AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CORRIDOR will become a unified international tourism destination around Michigan Avenue’s unique historic assets. In 2020–2021, the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission (MSAAHCC) embarked on a strategic action planning process to formalize a cooperative operating model that can support operations, fundraising, and marketing and prioritize future capital investments. The plan is expected to be completed in February of 2022. MSAAHCC continued to leverage capacity building funding to strengthen foundational elements of the organization, especially governance, marketing/communications, and fundraising. Addressing immediate capital needs for some of the corridor’s historic assets continued to be a priority after experiencing delays due to COVID-19.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FORMALIZING A COOPERATIVE OPERATING MODEL:

- OPERATIONS
- FUNDRAISING
- MARKETING
- FUTURE CAPITAL INVESTMENTS

Aerial view of the corridor shows its proximity to downtown. The corridor’s arch welcomes visitors and designates the tourist area.

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.
Ongoing capital improvements to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and the Buffalo Museum of Science in the MLK PARK DISTRICT ensure these historically significant community anchors remain accessible, safe, and relevant assets for the community.

As a first step in re-establishing the BROADWAY MARKET as a viable and vibrant public shopping hub and attractive regional destination, a comprehensive planning process was completed in 2020-2021 to create a business and marketing plan and concept design services.

A new COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY AT NORTHLAND will power the campus and surrounding neighborhood to benefit residents while attracting new tenants and facilitating hands-on training in the renewable energy sector. A master planning effort to design and install initial components of a microgrid system and a financing package for the project will be completed in 2021.

Construction is completed or underway on 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.
34 PROJECTS
IN PROGRESS ➔ UP 13%
FROM LAST YEAR’S 30 PROJECTS

$874,327
ADDITIONAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT LEVERAGED

2,569 VISITORS AT CENTRAL TERMINAL AND THE MSAAHC
➔ more than a 50% INCREASE in the number of visitors compared to last year. Visitors were attracted through special events including:
- Backpack Giveaways
- Harvest Festival
- Trunk or Treat Event
- Spring Cleaning
- Vaccination Health Day
- Play/Ground

Initiative leaders estimate that OVER 300 ENTITIES PARTICIPATED in East Side Avenues programs over the past year, UP FROM 88 LAST YEAR. POSITIVE MEDIA ATTENTION, the easing of social distancing restrictions, and the continued use of technology for virtual engagement likely all contributed.

Thousands
OF RESIDENTS REACHED THROUGH:

ΕARNED MEDIA: Buffalo News, Spectrum News, Challenger, Criterion, Buffalo Rising

PAID MEDIA: Criterion and Challenger newspapers

DIGITAL MEDIA: UBRI and East Side Avenues eNews
The New Localism national digital newsletter (2X)
East Side Avenues website updates | 8 storytelling videos

4,034 ENTITIES ENGAGED AND/OR CONTACTED THROUGH:

Public meetings
Virtual planning activities
Website visits to planning pages
Focus group leadership sessions

Community Advisory Council Meetings
Volunteer opportunities
Local Businesses

Block Club Coalitions
Colleges
Other Culturals
Churches

➔ THIS NUMBER IS 17 TIMES LARGER THAN THE NUMBER OF ENTITIES ENGAGED LAST YEAR
Initiative leaders report growing impacts from expanded capacities. For some, this past year has been nothing short of transformational, resulting in a shared vision and path forward with community buy-in for an iconic East Side community structure. An expanded, diverse audience base is another outcome. For the first time in history, one organization is reaching residents from outside Buffalo through a new product offering. Progress toward organizational and community goals is another impact, including closings on additional property projects, property improvements, and continued work on commercial corridors. Expanded visibility, growing community interest in preservation, and stronger leadership are other impacts that are evident through new sponsors, partnerships and funding, and requests for anchor representatives to present and participate in panel conversations.

One initiative leader believes impacts would be even greater in the absence of COVID-19, which has disproportionately impacted the East Side.

"We are really excited to be supported to continue our marketing and fund development work, as well as to create a more robust strategic plan that will really help us align our work with our goals."

JESSIE FISHER
PRESERVATION BUFFALO NIAGARA

Initiative leaders are excited about the future and the longer-term impacts from their work with ESA. Initiative leaders mentioned how ESA will impact their organization in myriad ways. They are counting on a partnership with ESA to continue to increase their organization’s visibility and public identification, help with brainstorming and problem solving in a quickly evolving environment for local businesses and residents, overcome emerging administrative barriers to scaling up and growth, support community engagement and partnership building across the broader community, facilitate access to skilled consultants and vendors, and support strategic plan development, fund development, and marketing for their organization.

"The most impactful change has been the engagement with Broadway Fillmore and the Community Advisory Group. It has been joyful and transformational. We’re long-lost friends reunited again."

MONICA PELLEGRINO FAIX
CENTRAL TERMINAL RESTORATION CORPORATION

Over the last year, funding through ESA made a variety of new capacity-building, organizational-strengthening initiatives and achievements possible. These included professional development for staff and board members; thoughtful, strategic approaches to board nominations and member recruitment; website development; positive media coverage and new communication strategies; strategic plan development and action plan milestones; updates to governance and financial systems; and the hiring of talent for long-term growth and stability such as a grant writer and marketing specialist at one organization and a business development specialist at another.

"We are continuing to follow our action plan... We developed a website, and we are continuing professional development for staff and board members."

CORNELIUS JOHNSON
CITIZENS ALLIANCE
Executive Summary

The uncertainties of COVID-19 are still lingering for our nonprofit partners, and they are still facing the consequences of lost revenue from 2020.

Assessing and Fine-Tuning Are Critical.

Going into year three of our program, it is critical for us to look back and identify what’s worked and what hasn’t and think about how we can improve programs and expand our reach moving forward.

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:


MOVING FORWARD NATIONALLY

This is a unique moment in time when the country is looking for innovative, effective ways to stimulate economic development.

MOVING FORWARD AS A REGION

Our region already understands the power of community-driven planning and targeted co-investment and is building on that momentum in Niagara Falls.

MOVING FORWARD ON THE EAST SIDE

While replicating the East Side Avenues model is an exciting prospect, it is equally, if not more important to ensure East Side Avenues continues to succeed.

LOOKING AHEAD: MOVING THE EAST SIDE AVENUES MODEL FORWARD

- Executive Summary
New York State dedicated $65 million 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 the state’s $65 million investment in the East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund administered by Empire State Development (ESD), 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 programs.

In a coordinated effort known as East Side Avenues, 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. To date, 14 foundations and corporations joined this endeavor to complement the state’s investment and committed to an unprecedented five years of funding to organizational capacity building. Together, this unique collaboration sparks transformational change and wealth generation on Buffalo’s East Side.

A Project Implementation Team (PIT) oversees all of the projects. The PIT, led by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI) and supported by a team of consultants, ensures that appropriate supports such as infrastructure, staff, and funding are in place for community leaders; assists with strategic planning, program design, and problem solving; leads the team on technical assistance for community-based organizations; and reports on progress while lifting up the voices of 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.

**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.

**Eastern Roadway Projects Include**
- Infrastructure to Support and Enhance Investments
- Community Solar Array at Northland
- Direct Project Assistance
- Buffalo Neighborhood Stabilization Fund

Areas of infrastructure investments

Building an **EFFECTIVE ECOSYSTEM** to Maximize East Side Revitalization
In 2019–2021, the PIT was thoughtfully constructed, hired additional staff members, and assigned leadership roles. Administrative processes were developed with the Fund’s fiscal agent (Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo). Funding was released and reporting and program evaluation parameters and processes were established with all partners. Communication processes were developed to maximize efficiency and ensure smooth, consistent communications among partners and community organizations. Fundraising efforts continued 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 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, and community videos.

Across programs, capacity building funds were used to hire new staff, in some cases the first-ever executive director. With assistance from consultants, community partner nonprofits completed organizational development strategic action plans. 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 circulated.
Our community nonprofit partners continued to face significant challenges in 2020–2021 due to COVID-19—organizations continued to lose revenue from programs, events, fundraisers and tours and the State’s budget and timing of Federal packages caused delays in construction and capital project timelines. This environment led to the expansion of the PIT’s role as advisors for communications, strategy, and planning. As the pandemic continued, the PIT worked to keep all programs moving forward through ongoing and extensive virtual team/partner communications, project management and community outreach/presentations. We continued to monitor and evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 on the present and future of East Side Avenues, and developed strategies that adapt to this uncertain environment, while staying-the-course on our program goals. Going into year three of our program, the PIT is reviewing and assessing initial progress across the five programs and planning for the next two years. As part of our planning efforts, the team is considering how to support small business development on the East Side by connecting with initiatives like Open4, and how exploring shared services opportunities could bolster organizational capacity.

Despite such challenging times, East Side Avenues made tremendous strides. This is a testament to the dogged persistence of everyone involved. After unforeseen delays, the Commercial Building Stabilization Program launched its first round of funding. Large-scale master planning processes with significant, meaningful community engagement, were underway. A second cohort of prospective citizen real estate developers embarked on potentially life-changing training. And, much needed capital improvements to commercial buildings are beginning. Through all this, our nonprofit community partners worked tirelessly on strengthening their organizations in preparation for future growth. The perseverance of our program partners can’t be understated.

It has truly been the dedication of all community partners that carried East Side Avenues through this unprecedented year and helped accomplish the following.
All community program partners completed their organizational development strategic action plans and were in implementation mode in 2020–2021.

Our nonprofit community-based partner organizations are seeing real growth and planning for the future as a result of East Side Avenues capacity building funds. They are moving beyond operationalizing, and are beginning to grow and professionalize. With help from the PIT, organizations are identifying their most pressing needs and how and when they can be addressed. They are building their capacity and self-sustainability by accessing support from consultants in line with their organizational development strategic action plans. These consultants are assisting in areas such as fundraising, board development, HR training, financial training, communications support, and cross promotion of events and news. As implementation moved into full swing, the PIT provided an increasing level of much-needed technical assistance, for example:

- As part of consultant matchmaking, Glenda Cadwallader held three consultant “meet and greets” for East Side Avenues partners. The first focused on HR, and the others introduced a diverse mix of consultants in other specialty areas. The goal was to ensure that East Side Avenues organizations are aware of the types of support available to them.

- Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC WNY) offered capacity building trainings. Twenty-two board and staff members from our nonprofit partners attended a session focused on financial management. Nineteen participants from nine organizations participated in a two-hour training about succession planning and how to evaluate their executive directors, led by consultant NYCON. Nonprofit partners were offered one-on-one consultant support following this training.

- Catchafire worked with East Side Avenues partners on updates to their websites, along with the development of other communication elements, and received technical assistance regarding HR systems and remote work strategy.

- Executive directors of the East Side Avenues partners continue to meet on a regular basis for peer learning opportunities, to support each other, and to ensure their organizations’ efforts are working toward collective impact and effective, cohesive revitalization of the East Side.
These planning processes, which are made possible with the organizational support provided by East Side Avenues, are building the foundation for future growth and progress. Master planning ensures that we are strengthening our partners from the ground up, and building a solid foundation that leads to their success by creating a clear road map to guide near- and long-term decision making with community voices at the table.

Planning the path is the cornerstone to capacity building, growth, and implementation of high impact actions for the future. Detailed plans identify priorities, incorporate the visions of the community, keep an organization focused and moving forward in the right direction, and help to ensure their success and sustainability.

Three major community planning efforts were simultaneously underway in 2020–2021 (Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, Central Terminal and Broadway Market) that will lead the way to the future.
Alongside these community planning efforts, millions of dollars continue to be invested in the target areas to address immediate capital needs. Despite delays in construction due to COVID-19, ESD capital dollars and matching funds are flowing through programs. For example, a portion of Central Terminal’s historic concourse is under construction. Construction has also begun on Michigan Street’s historic assets to ensure the buildings are stabilized and accessible to the public. Several of the East Side Commercial Districts’ 22 small business improvement projects are either out to bid or under construction. Many of ESD’s direct grants to community anchors, businesses, and cultural assets are completed or under construction. These projects are beginning to change the physical landscape and build momentum on the East Side. Capital improvements will multiply as we launch additional funding rounds for the small business and building stabilization programs.

We are getting much-needed capital funds out the door and onto the streets.
In 2020–2021, we continued our robust marketing communications strategy with a focus on lifting up the voices of people living and working on the East Side. Our storytelling program is ongoing and includes videos with community members and dynamic photography. We continue to build viewership and drive traffic to the East Side Avenues website. Earned media and digital communications efforts ramped up and local news outlets are covering East Side efforts like never before. As programs roll out, community interest is growing. There is new energy and momentum that can be attributed to the following 2020–2021 communication efforts:

- We developed and launched a second series of storytelling videos that provide information about the great work that program partners and community members are doing every day.
- Several featured presentations were made to funders and the community in support of East Side Avenues.
- Our funders continue to promote our work in their communications. East Side Avenues was featured in the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation’s annual report and The John R. Oishei Foundation’s eNews.
- Media outreach is ongoing. Spectrum News featured the East Side Commercial Districts program in November. Black History Month news coverage prominently featured the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor. The Buffalo News ran a story on Commercial Building Stabilization grantees. East Side Avenues was featured in UB communication outlets.
- Digital outreach continued with the creation and distribution of several East Side Avenues eNewsletters.
- We are supporting our nonprofit community partners with communications—reviewing marketing communications materials and providing strategic direction on public relations and events/outreach.
As we plan for future growth, the PIT built the story of East Side Avenues as a national model for ecosystem building and placemaking. We are prepared to tell our story in a way that is compelling to national and international funders. Likewise, in order to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the American Rescue Plan, we are working with national experts who can elevate the East Side Avenues ecosystem and point to it as a model for other cities and regions as they think about economic recovery and resiliency in a post-COVID environment.

UBRI and East Side Avenues are beginning to be referenced nationally and were mentioned in The New Localism newsletter (March 12, 2021) written and published by Bruce Katz and Colin Higgins. The focus was on “Deploying the American Rescue Plan,” and UBRI was described as a “back-bone organization that can connect the dots between all players in the ecosystem.” Katz also wrote a full blog article on East Side Avenues entitled “An Investment Playbook Grows in Buffalo.” The New Localism provides a roadmap for change that starts in the communities where most people live and work.

We applied for our first international funding opportunity. Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo submitted an application for a 10-year, $20 million grant on behalf of East Side Avenues to the Kellogg Foundation’s Racial Equity 2030 program. A compelling narrative and video featured our innovative approach to wealth generation grounded in the work of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable. Our request passed the first two rounds of the grant decision process but we have been eliminated from the highly competitive funding opportunity. The narrative we put together will be used for future funding proposals and for creating awareness of the program, so the effort was beneficial. UBRI is serving as a guest blogger for the Brookings Institute’s Placemaking Postcard Series and will focus on the East Side Avenues initiative and use some of the Kellogg narrative.
AMBITIONS TAKING SHAPE

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS
EMPOWERING
EAST SIDE RESIDENTS
COMMUNITY-BASED REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Train building owners in commercial real estate development to ensure buildings are redeveloped for and by East Side residents.

The Community-Based Real Estate Development Training program (CBREDT) was developed through a collaboration of the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning, UBRI, LISC WNY, Empire State Development, 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 23-week intensive program provides an overview of the commercial real estate development process, including predevelopment, construction, property management, and financing a project from private and public sources. Weekly classroom instruction (transitioned to online in 2020 and 2021 in response to the COVID-19 crisis) is provided by a wide range of local experienced real estate development professionals and includes lectures and hands-on activities. Participants are also CBREDT class member, Glenn Belton, learns about the Nash Lofts development project.
linked with a mentor based on individual needs and interests. Students work toward a final project to present to a panel of jurors. Students who successfully complete the program are invited to apply for capital funds administered by ESD, which target the East Side commercial corridors.

**KEY MILESTONES 2020–2021**

- **Developed continuing education opportunities for the 2020 cohort.** Monthly classes were offered from October 2020 through February 2021. Topic areas were selected based on student and instructor feedback. These were items that they felt needed a deeper dive. The 2020 cohort was also invited to participate in any of the 2021 classes, and some 2020 students participated in “UrbanPlan.”

- **Built a partnership with the Urban Land Institute (ULI)—New York, the oldest and largest network of cross-disciplinary real estate and land use experts in the world.** The CBREDT 2020 and 2021 cohort received a complimentary one-year ULI membership to access additional support in their real estate development endeavors. CBREDT 2020 cohort students under age 40 were matched with a ULI mentor.

- **Opened applications and launched promotion of the 2021 program on December 8, 2020.** Based on 2020 student feedback, we made adjustments to the program and completed program design for the 2021 class.
Marketed the program through the application deadline of January 6, 2021. Robust outreach and marketing included updating the webpage, earned media, online and paper applications, eNews blasts, postcards, and print ads in Challenger and Criterion newspapers. Videos with student stories are posted on the East Side Avenues website to share participants’ experiences and progress with the community.

20 East Side residents and building owners were selected for the 2021 CBREDT class (following a rigorous candidate selection process that resulted in 51 written applications and 25 interviews). 19 students completed the program.

The 2021 CBREDT program ran weekly from March through July. The 2021 cohort boasted high class participation, and a weekly attendance rate of over 90%. Highlights of the program and special events included: “UrbanPlan”—an 8-hour, realistic and engaging exercise on forces that impact real estate development; “2021 Meet a Lender” session with KeyBank, Evans Bank, M&T Bank, and Bank on Buffalo; ULI “Meet & Greet;” in-person construction tours of Nash Lofts and a student-owned property; and a virtual graduation ceremony. Ongoing student evaluation of the program was overwhelmingly positive.

ESD launched the capital funding program for 2020 cohort graduates. A pre-application with a rolling deadline was launched on April 29, 2021. After submitting the form, applicants were invited to a pre-application interview to determine project readiness to apply for ESD funds. Four submitted a pre-application, two proceeded to a full application.

Looking Ahead: Goals for 2021–2022

- Continue to share participants’ progress with the community through stories and videos.
- Focus on continuing education opportunities for previous classes.
- Based on program evaluations, make adjustments to program and curriculum for 2022.
- Plan and launch outreach and application process for third cohort to begin in March of 2022.
- Continue to check in with CBREDT participants on their real estate development project status and readiness to apply for ESD and other funding.
Nestled between Broadway and William is 230 Pratt Street—the last remaining section of the former Iroquois Brewery. For over three decades, Ellen Shareef and her husband have owned and operated their business, C&R Housing, Inc., out of this historic building. But they’ve always had a bigger vision.

After participating in the Community-Based Real Estate Development Training, Ellen now has the knowledge and tools to take on a significant redevelopment process, with the goal of creating a multi-use facility the community can take pride in. “I’m more confident now. I’m ready. I’m excited.”
Why would someone who doesn’t know much about bowling purchase a bowling alley? For Dan Adams, the answer was simple— to save a much-needed entertainment venue in his neighborhood. Dan learned about the Kerns Bowling Center while working in real estate, and rather than seeing the building boarded up, he purchased the business in 2008. As a graduate of the Community-Based Real Estate Development Training program, he continues to explore options to expand the bowling center and improve the quality of life for East Side residents.
REACTIVATING THE HISTORIC CENTRAL TERMINAL
CENTRAL TERMINAL

Increase community access by transforming the iconic Central Terminal into a year-round, neighborhood venue.

This project aims to restore the Central Terminal, one of Buffalo’s most iconic buildings, and better connect it to the Broadway Fillmore business district to attract private investment and visitors to the area. 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. With the infusion of New York State funds to support planning and capital improvements, and support from East Side Avenues for capacity building and full-time operational staff, the Central Terminal will be transformed into a year-round regional venue and asset for the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood.

The CTRC is using New York State capital funds to restore the Terminal’s historic concourse. These capital improvements will create a year-round regional venue using the diversity of spaces on the Main Concourse of the Terminal and will include parking accessibility and full capacity for catering and entertainment. In 2020–2021, design and construction focused on sizeable asbestos remediation and extensive roof repairs. These projects will fully use the $5 million East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund grant, a $300,000 National Grid grant, and a $400,000 state Consolidated Funding Application grant. Next steps are interior projects to prepare the former restaurant area adjacent to the concourse for “white box” tenant fit out.

Concurrently in 2020-2021, CTRC embarked on a 12-month site master planning process led by consultant SmithGroup in coordination with the Broadway Market planning process to guide the vision, operations, capital improvements, and financing structure for the Terminal. The planning process engaged residents and community members 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.

East Side Avenues 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. After completing a three-year capacity building plan with Glenda Cadwallader, CTRC began implementing their plan in 2020-2021 focusing on governance, strategic planning, fundraising, marketing, neighborhood programming, and diversity training.
KEY MILESTONES 2020–2021

- The 12-month site master planning process was completed and the final report was submitted in July. This master plan positions the Terminal as an economic, social, and cultural hub—accommodating large-scale events, local businesses, and institutions, as well as cultural and community functions and programming. This plan builds a solid foundation for strategic, effective, and focused community-informed action steps. It includes buildings and grounds (i.e., building conditions assessment, preliminary programming, circulation, access and phased redevelopment) within the neighborhood context (i.e., neighborhood analysis, analysis of other planning efforts, and story mapping), as well as a financing and development plan.

- Site master planning process engaged the community in every step. The plan was steeped in listening and understanding, with three well-attended public meetings, five Community Advisory Group meetings, focus groups, and web-based activities—all designed to gather feedback and ideas from those who are familiar with the building and the neighborhood.

- CTRC has hired an Associate Director with the support of consultant Tanya Staples. The new staffer will help with the implementation of the site master plan and advance the reuse of the Central Terminal while continuing to engage the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood.

This is the first step in transforming Central Terminal into a year-round regional venue—and an asset for the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood.
CTRC undertook a methodical process to identify board of director candidates and appointed two new board members.

A five-year Facility Maintenance Plan was completed by Buffalo Construction Consultants in May 2021.

Following an RFP process, CTRC hired fundraising consultant Linda Ray to create a fund development system that supports the longer-term sustainability of CTRC. This nine-month process began in April 2021. Executive Director Monica Pellegrino Faix also attended the Linda Ray Fund Development Boot Camp—an eight-week program on the basics of fundraising.

Following an RFP process, CTRC selected Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultant Dr. Ida Gibson.

Numerous in-person community-based art, music, and health activities were presented at Central Terminal in summer 2021. CTRC hired a temporary Activities Coordinator from May to September 2021 to assist with organizing neighborhood and community-based programming that are part of the Central Terminal’s efforts to build a stronger connection with Broadway Fillmore and the East Side.

“Rainbow Gate” is being constructed and will be installed in October of 2021 with a public celebration. CTRC partnered with Arts Services Inc. on an RFP process, and selected artist Nando Alvarez Perez to create an imaginative design as a welcoming entry visible from the circle at Memorial Drive and Paderewski Drive. The project is intended to be temporary (3–5 years) and increase foot and bike traffic. The Terminal was awarded a $5,000 competitive grant from CFGB that funded the project.

Construction on the former restaurant area adjacent to the Concourse is underway. The project started with asbestos remediation by Mark Cerrone, Inc. to facilitate roof repairs, which was completed in March 2021. Roof and general trades (associated structural steel, masonry, plumbing) bid was released in April. The roof contract was awarded to Weaver Metal and Roofing and the General Trades contract was awarded to Telco Construction.

Looking Ahead: Goals for 2021–2022

Complete roof repairs and continue to fundraise for capital improvements.

Begin to implement master plan recommendations.

Continue strengthening CTRC in line with the capacity building plan.

Continue to engage the public with events and programming.
Growing up, James remembers riding his bike around the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood and gazing up at the beacon that is the Buffalo Central Terminal. Now a public transit planner, James is combining his personal and professional experiences as a board member of the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation.

He credits East Side Avenues’ capacity building support for elevating the board’s collective excitement and optimism. In August 2021, the Buffalo Central Terminal Master Plan was released — the first step in a large-scale project to restore and repurpose this iconic building.

View this story at eastsideavenues.org/stories
TRANSFORMING THE CORRIDORS’ BUSINESS DISTRICTS

One-hundred-thirty-year-old East Side business, Al Cohen’s Bakery, will get a facelift using ESCD funding.
Create a building renovation program to generate wealth for small business owners, combat vacancies, and revitalize commercial 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. ESCD provides funding for building renovations in four investment areas through three community-based 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).

AnnRhod’s Tailoring on Bailey Avenue will undergo improvements as part of the ESCD program.
LPAs ensure that outreach and priorities are made on a local level. The role LPAs play as community-based conduits is critical to the program’s success and to re-establishing the corridors as viable and revitalized business districts. In 2019–2020, each LPA hired a dedicated commercial district staff person and was paired with a consultant funded by ESD to assist with program administration, marketing, and project selection. LPAs also underwent organizational assessments and capacity mapping with LISC WNY and completed strategic organizational action plans to help increase overall capacity. In 2020–2021, the LPAs began implementing their unique plans with consultant support.

At the same time, LPAs began administering a total of over $1 million to 22 building renovation projects selected in Round 1. With the help of ESD consultants, LPAs worked with building owners to complete environmental reviews, develop work scopes, undergo bid solicitation, and enter into contract. Construction is anticipated in the coming months.

**KEY MILESTONES 2020–2021**

- Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services, with assistance from LaBella Associates, continues to perform due diligence work on Round 1 projects, including environmental reviews and development of work scopes and bid solicitation for seven projects in the Broadway Fillmore District and two projects in the MLK District. One project in Broadway Fillmore is nearing completion, and the remainder are out to bid and anticipate entering into contract to begin work.

Sydney Brown from Citizens’ Alliance helped Mike’s Lounge owner, Tommy Fluker, apply for ESCD funding to improve the long-time community gathering place.
University District Community Development Association and Citizens Alliance, with assistance from Developments by JEM, LLC, finalized work scopes for eight projects in the Kensington Bailey District and five projects in the Jefferson district. Three projects in the Kensington Bailey District are in construction, with the remainder finalizing contracts or seeking contractors. Projects in the Jefferson area are in the contractor selection process with construction anticipated in the fall.

All four districts jointly sponsored a contractor open house so that area contractors could learn more about bidding opportunities for capital projects awarded funding through the ESCD program.

LISC WNY and Glenda Cadwallader are facilitating consultant matchmaking with LPAs to assist in implementing their strategic organizational action plans. LISC WNY continues to provide CapMap Coaching support to LPAs—monitoring the implementation of their capacity building plan.

LPA staff and board members participated in collaborative peer learning sessions.

Citizens Alliance launched its new website with assistance from consultant WNY Media House.

Citizens Alliance hired MWB Ignites, LLC to create a three-year strategic plan that will enhance the capacity of the board and management team to achieve their goals and objectives through clarifying their roles and responsibilities and strengthening their ability to collaborate effectively.

University District Community Development Association completed Board Governance Training with consultant MWB Ignites, LLC in March.

Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services was awarded $100,000 over 4 years from the Zemsky Family Foundation.

LOOKING AHEAD: GOALS FOR 2021–2022

- The application process and timeline for Round 2 of funding will be developed.
- Construction will continue on Round 1 projects and will be managed by LPAs, with assistance from ESD architecture and engineering consultants.
- Outreach to business owners will continue.
- Strategic organizational action plans will be implemented.
TOMMY FLUKER

When Tommy was hired by Mike’s Lounge to take out the trash as a child, little did he know that one day he would own the popular Jefferson Avenue establishment. After taking over the business in 2011, the Buffalo Music Hall of Fame member knew he wanted to add live music and provide mentorship to younger musicians.

Tommy worked with Citizens Alliance and the Black Chamber of Commerce of Western New York to apply for a grant from the East Side District Commercial program. He is using the funds to make necessary repairs and building upgrades, as well as build a new outdoor patio—the first of its kind in the area.

View this story at eastsideavenues.org/stories
PROMOTING
A ONE-OF-KIND ATTRACTION
**MICHIGAN STREET AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CORRIDOR**

**Build a unified international tourism destination around Michigan Street’s unique assets.**

This project supports Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission’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 and hiring its first executive director, Terry Alford. In 2020-2021, MSAAHCC continued to leverage capacity building funding to strengthen foundational elements of the organization, especially Commission governance, with assistance from Roxanne Kise Consulting. The Commission and staff also contracted with additional organizational consultants to assist with marketing/communications and fundraising.
Concurrently in 2020–2021, MSAAHCC embarked on a strategic action planning process, rooted in community engagement, led by consultant Moody Nolan—the nation’s largest African American-owned design firm. The plan 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. The plan is expected to be presented in early 2022.

Addressing immediate capital needs for some of the Corridor’s historic assets continued to be a priority in 2020–2021, after experiencing delays due to COVID-19.

**THE COLORED MUSICIANS CLUB (CMC)** capital improvements include constructing a new ADA compliant building entrance; restoring the building’s façade; renovating performance space; and improving streetscapes. The CMC selected The Kanaka Group as Construction Manager for their project. Kanaka is preparing an independent cost estimate that will be reconciled with estimates prepared by the project design team (Stieglitz Snyder Architecture/ Trophy Point) and then will develop and issue bid documents. CMC anticipates construction will begin in late fall with project conclusion in summer 2022.

**THE NASH HOUSE** is also making progress on its initial capital improvements. Fabrication, delivery, and installation of custom-made weatherization components are ongoing.

**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 a more cost-efficient and elegant approach to ADA access. Foit Albert is currently developing the bid documents for the project and is expecting construction to commence in late fall 2021. The City Planning Board approved the project.
KEY MILESTONES 2020–2021

- Consultant Moody Nolan completed Phases 1 and 2 of the Strategic Action Plan. Phases 1 and 2 focused on project familiarization, scoping, existing condition analysis, consensus building, and concept design, which included stakeholder meetings with assistance from local community liaison consultant Mustard Seed, visioning exercises, and best practice research. Moody Nolan reported on early concepts and community stakeholder input at a public meeting on July 27.

- The Corridor’s historic assets opened to the public again. The MSAAHCC project manager is now coordinating all tours for historic assets. The project manager, in coordination with historic assets, identified docents and conducted docent trainings.

- A virtual tour and video by iTours 360VR launched. This project highlights the rich history of the Corridor, keeps its historic anchors in the public eye (especially during COVID-19 restrictions), and introduces Executive Director Terry Alford to the community.

- MSAAHCC continues to leverage capacity building funding to strengthen its foundational elements with assistance from Roxanne Kise Consulting. Highlights include conducting SWOT assessments and follow-up workshops with the board that led to an approved board manual and committee work plans for 2021.

- The MSAAHCC hired Charity Consultants and began its fundraising plan. In June, it launched a fundraising giving program mailer and online campaign targeted to 5,000 city residents.

- Terry Alford is working with Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN) to expand the City Historic District to include the Sycamore and Michigan block.

- The Corridor installed a new board member, the Honorable (Retired) Judge James McLeod.

- MSAAHCC is gaining interest and attention locally. Terry Alford and staff continue outreach to community leaders, local businesses, and block clubs with a strong message about the direction of the Corridor and enhanced communication materials. The strategic action planning process garnered local press in a variety of news outlets. Black History Month news coverage prominently featured the Corridor. Several local civic and cultural organizations, including the Buffalo African American Museum (BAAM), the Harriet Tubman 5K, FreeThem Walkers, and the Jesse Clipper VFW Post have expressed interest in building collaborations. Local schools and organizations coordinated in-person tours of historic anchors leading into Juneteenth Celebration and beyond into August.

- Consultant Sheri L. Mooney provided Code of Conduct and Harassment Prevention training to MSAAHCC.
LOOKING AHEAD: GOALS FOR 2021–2022

- The strategic action plan will be completed by the end of February in 2022 and will guide all future operations and capital improvements.

- MSAAHCC will continue to strengthen its organizational infrastructure and administrative functions with the help of consultants.

- Initial capital improvements to the historic assets will be completed.

- Outreach and engagement with the community will continue.

- Capacity building for historic anchor institutions will be explored.

Terry Alford facilitated a partnership between a local artist and the ownership of the new Tim Horton’s restaurant to create a mural for its restaurant lobby. The dedication of the new restaurant and artwork took place on March 26.

The City of Buffalo announced that WUFO Radio owner Visions Multi Media Group was selected as the anchor tenant for 509 Michigan, as well as the soon-to-be-built 507 Michigan sister structure. A significant restoration and expansion project is planned for these properties located next to the Michigan Street Baptist Church.

State Senator Tim Kennedy identified funding for and announced his partnership with MSAAHCC and East Side Garden Walks to renovate and expand the Freedom Wall.

Local students created quilt pieces as part of the Story Cloth program, which shares the history of the Underground Railroad in Buffalo.
For Terry, names like Reverend Nash, Mary Talbert, and Bishop Henderson aren’t just important to the East Side’s past—but of paramount importance to its future. As Executive Director of the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission, he works to align the corridor’s four cultural anchors and create a unique historical destination. Now that the Commission’s board has been reconfigured to include community members, Terry is excited to embark on the next step of the Michigan Street corridor’s journey—developing a strategic action plan. “I stand on the shoulders of so many before me. There’s great responsibility and obligation that comes with this opportunity.”

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STABILIZE AT-RISK HISTORIC BUILDINGS
COMMERCIAL BUILDING
STABILIZATION FUND

Support East Side building owners and maintain neighborhood character by stabilizing at-risk historic buildings.

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. Developed in partnership with Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN) and the City of Buffalo Department of Permits and Inspection Services (DPIS), the program is designed to identify at-risk historic buildings and administer funds to stabilize them for future use (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 to help 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 is 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.

The first round of the program was designed, marketed, and launched in 2020–2021. There was tremendous interest in the program, with 71 applications submitted and $500,000 awarded to nine projects. Capacity building funds allowed PBN to dedicate staff members to conduct outreach and community engagement for identifying potential properties and building owners; manage the collection of grant applications and aid in the selection process; administer capital grant funding provided by ESD to building owners for conducting stabilization repairs to their properties; and serve as the construction manager for each property and project. In 2020–2021, PBN also began implementing its capacity building plan with support from consultant Glenda Cadwallader with a focus on fundraising and marketing.
KEY MILESTONES 2020–2021

- Based on the capacity building plan, PBN worked with Glenda Cadwallader on technical assistance, organizational development, consultant matchmaking, and a 10-year strategic framework.
- PBN hired fundraising and grant writing consultant Cynnie Gaasch of Buffalo Moose Group following an RFP process.
- PBN held a Board retreat in March.
- PBN selected 19 Ideas as a marketing consultant following an RFP process.
- PBN launched the first round of the program on December 4, 2020, completed the applicant selection process, and received a total of 71 applications. The Advisory Committee, made up of PBN, ESD, UBRI, the City of Buffalo, and community members, reviewed applications based on program criteria and priorities.
- PBN conducted site visits and marketed the program through the January 15, 2021 deadline with emphasis on a targeted list of East Side at-risk commercial buildings developed in partnership with the City of Buffalo. Robust outreach and marketing included emails and mailings to a targeted list; outreach to East Side Avenues nonprofit partners to inform their constituencies; earned media; eNews blasts to PBN’s entire email list; and posts on PBN’s Facebook page.
- Nine Round 1 projects were awarded $500,000 in grant funds. Funded projects include several promising yet unused structures in key business district segments of Broadway, Jefferson Avenue, Genesee Street, and William Street. Seven projects are moving forward and two buildings were sold and will not likely move forward in this round.
- PBN finalized scopes of work for the selected buildings in Round 1. Projects will go out to bid and construction will begin with PBN administering ESD funds and providing oversight for the projects.

LOOKING AHEAD:
GOALS FOR 2021–2022

- Outreach to building owners will continue.
- Construction on projects will begin.
- The application process and timeline for Round 2 of funding will be developed.
- PBN will continue to implement its capacity building plan.
Since 1995, Western New York Minority Media Professionals, Inc. has used the power of media to help hundreds of students discover their talents. While looking for a permanent home for his program, Michael Quinniey came across the Broadway Theatre, which was built in 1914 and was a community hub until its closing in the 1960s. With help from Preservation Buffalo Niagara and the Commercial Building Stabilization Fund, Michael and his business partner are in the process of restoring the historic theater and creating “a cultural art center like Buffalo has never seen.”

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Golden Cup Coffee has been a go-to meeting place on the East Side since 2009. With a growing business and limited space, the Stitts purchased 1362 Jefferson Avenue, just a block from their current location. Built in 1941, the building features unique mid-century architecture and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Working with Preservation Buffalo Niagara, the Stitts secured a grant from the Commercial Building Stabilization Fund to repair the roof and floor. The future home of Golden Cup Coffee will offer an expanded coffee shop with outdoor seating, a full-service roastery, and space for a business incubator and educational programs.

View this story at eastsideavenues.org/stories
RESILIENCE IN ACTION

ANCHORS + INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS
Improvements to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park ensure this historically significant community anchor remains an accessible, safe, and relevant asset for the community.

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 summer 2021. Further infrastructure and amenity upgrades to MLK Park will 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.

The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, which stewards Buffalo’s Olmsted system under a maintenance and management agreement with the City, is leading work on making improvements to MLK Park as identified through community engagement in its five-year planning process.

In 2020, the Conservancy completed an assessment of the historic greenhouses in the Park, which produce annuals and plants for all the parks and circles in the Olmsted system and create maintenance and horticulture jobs. They are refining the scope of the project and will begin work in spring of 2022. The Conservancy also completed the design of lighting improvements within the park, which will begin installation in spring 2022.

Another component of this effort entails restoring the Buffalo Museum of Science’s original north entrance and façade—the original main entrance—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. The facility is also undergoing security and ADA-accessibility improvements. Construction will begin in the first quarter of 2022.
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. 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.

As a first step in re-establishing the Market as a viable and vibrant public shopping hub and attractive regional destination, the Broadway Market completed a comprehensive planning process to develop business and marketing plans and concept design services. The process was led by CJS Architects and included 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. The final report was released in January 2021 after the comprehensive planning process that included community feedback through virtual public meetings and a regionally distributed online survey, with all community engagement efforts modified in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The final plan provides recommendations for a non-profit operator; considers demographics and socio-economic characteristics and trends within the Market’s trade area; provides recommendations for future marketing and branding of the Market; and identifies transformational interior and exterior facility improvements aimed at creating a more attractive, customer-friendly, and manageable space.

Key stakeholders are engaged in determining next steps for implementing the report’s recommendations.
COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY AT NORTHLAND
COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY AT NORTHLAND

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 will 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 master planning effort for the system and 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 will be completed in December 2021. 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.

THE FREY TEAM’S PLANNING EFFORT AND FINANCING PACKAGE TO BE COMPLETED DECEMBER 2021

- 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, Empire State Development (ESD) provides direct capital funds to key projects in each target commercial corridor as part of its overall East Side effort. Understanding the East Side’s unique real estate development challenges, ESD uses its existing capacity and expertise to fund capital projects that align with the region’s strategies for economic development and ensure that East Side revitalization is driven by the community.

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

The expansion at MANDELLA MARKET on Jefferson Avenue was completed in late 2020. The addition provides more retail space for offering produce and fresh food selections in a neighborhood that meets the federal definition of an urban food desert.

Located on the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, the NASH LOFTS are under construction, with major stabilization and repurposing efforts underway to convert the 19th-century block of buildings into 18 new apartments, office space, indoor parking, and a restaurant.

After completing restoration efforts of the historic Adam Mickiewicz Library and Dramatic Circle building and improvements to their recent addition, the TORN SPACE THEATER complex celebrated its grand opening in June 2021 with a full schedule of performances and events as a revived icon in the Broadway Fillmore District.

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.

Renovations to the commercial community spaces at 1021 BROADWAY were complete in August 2021. 716 Ministries will be leasing and managing the space as a café, kids’ play place, and event space and will provide on-the-job training for its clients as the space’s operators.

BEVERLY GRAY BUSINESS EXCHANGE CENTER completed its interior upgrades and furnishings in July 2021, further increasing its ability to provide services to minority businesses that are a stronghold of East Side commercial activity.

The historic 662 Fillmore Avenue property, once home to the Schreiber Brewing Company, was acquired in June 2021 and extensive renovation work will begin in spring 2022. BUFFALO BREWING COMPANY will relocate its operations to the 30,000 square-foot site that will include a brewery production area, tasting room, a museum, warehouse space for brewery and tank equipment, and a restaurant/banquet facility at the historic brewery and bottling plant.
There’s something about the former Schreiber Brewery complex that keeps John coming back. After almost purchasing the historic bottling plant on Fillmore Avenue in 2010, John and his wife finally took ownership in 2021. Unfortunately, the building suffered significant deterioration over those 11 years. Working with Broadway-Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services, John applied to Empire State Development and received funding to replace the roof. The renovated building will be the new home of Buffalo Brewing Company, the Buffalo Brewing History Museum, and other businesses. John is so committed to the Schreiber Brewery project and the East Side, his family plans on moving into an on-site owner’s apartment after renovations are complete.

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INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE INVESTMENTS
INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT AND ENHANCE INVESTMENTS

In coordination with the City of Buffalo, funding is 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. “Complete Streets” projects have been identified on Jefferson (two segments from Main Street to Utica Street), Bailey (two segments from Winspear Avenue to Kensington Avenue), and Michigan (one segment from Genesee Street to South Division Street). In addition, construction on a complementary street project (planned prior to East Side Avenues) on Fillmore (from Kensington Avenue to Ferry Street) began in 2020.

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, help promote community identity through streetscape and public art features, and provide a proper public realm setting for adjoining private sector uses.

In 2020, the City of Buffalo received public approval to add these projects to the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, procured consultant teams for the Jefferson and Bailey Avenue projects, and began to advance required preliminary engineering and environmental review processes for initial projects. The City’s Public Works Department is also coordinating with the Consultant Team advancing the strategic plan for Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, in advance of engaging an engineering consultant for the Michigan Avenue Complete Streets project. It is anticipated that these street projects will be contracted for design and construction progressively over the next two-to-three years.
5.2021
Central Terminal began hosting in-person community events

7.2021
12-month Central Terminal site master planning process completed
Consultant Moody Nolan reported on early concepts for Michigan Street’s Strategic Action Plan at second community meeting

8.2021
2021 CBREDT virtual graduation ceremony held
ESA featured in “An Investment Playbook Grows in Buffalo” in The New Localism newsletter

9.2021
East Side Avenues created a second series of community storytelling videos
Construction began on renovations to several buildings funded through the East Side Commercial Districts program

6.2021
City of Buffalo announced WUFO to be anchor tenant for 509 & 507 Michigan Avenue

4.2021
Nine projects—of 71 applications submitted—were awarded grants for first round of Commercial Building Stabilization Fund
ESD launched capital funding program for 2020 CBREDT cohort graduates
Central Terminal held final of three community meetings to inform site master planning process

3.2021
East Side Avenues referenced as a national model in The New Localism newsletter
2021 CBREDT classes began
Central Terminal former restaurant area asbestos remediation completed
MSAAHCC launched 12-month Strategic Action Planning process

2.2021
Local Black History Month news coverage prominently featured Michigan Street
Applied for our first international funding opportunity to the Kellogg Foundation’s Racial Equity 2030 program
20 East Side residents and building owners were selected for 2021 CBREDT class

1.2021
LISC WNY held capacity building training for nonprofit partners focused on succession planning

11.2020
Glenda Cadwallader held three consultant “meet and greets” for nonprofit partners
Michigan Street’s virtual tour and video by iTours 360VR launched

10.2020
2020 CBREDT cohort began participating in continuing education opportunities
Commercial Districts LPAs jointly sponsored Contractor Open House

12.2020
First round of Commercial Building Stabilization Fund launched
LISC held capacity building training focused on financial management
Application process for 2021 CBREDT class launched
MSAAHCC began fundraising plan with Charity Consultants
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:


It is clear that economically disadvantaged neighborhoods are more vulnerable to a pandemic recession. Local, community-based organizations and anchor institutions that provide essential services to these communities were especially hard-hit economically. The needs, which are great to begin with, are only compounded by the crisis. The pandemic devastated minority and women-owned small businesses in many places, including WNY, exacerbating what were already substantial gaps in the number, size, and growth potential of these firms. The pandemic similarly decimated many commercial corridors that co-locate these businesses. The commercial vacancy rate in neighborhoods of color in WNY is 15% compared to 13% for the rest of the region (HUD-USPS, Address Vacancies, Q1, 2020 and Q1, 2021). East Side Avenues was always designed as a community-driven economic development strategy in a climate of economic recovery. While the deficits may be deeper now, the strategies are still relevant and, in many ways, more critical than ever. The core foundational principles that drove these approaches with the community from the outset are not only still applicable but crucial, to a post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery.

THE IMPACTS OF COVID ARE NOT OVER

The uncertainties of COVID-19 are still lingering for our nonprofit community partners. They are still facing the consequences of lost revenue from 2020, but hope there will be a light at the end of the tunnel. Doors are starting to reopen throughout the community, including at those organizations and businesses assisted by East Side Avenues. Construction schedules continue to be challenged by labor shortages and delays, supply chain delays, increased material costs, and a challenging bidding environment, even as construction activity picked back up this past spring and summer. Construction progress expectations need to take these factors into account. There is planning for both virtual and in-person programming. While acknowledging the setbacks from 2020-2021, we are taking steps to plan for a post-COVID-19 future where growth is the focus over recovery.
ASSESSING AND FINE-TUNING ARE CRITICAL

Going into year three of our program, it is critical for us to take a moment to look back and acknowledge where we succeeded, identify what’s worked and what hasn’t, and think about how we can improve programs and expand our reach moving forward. From things like class length and sessions per week for the CBREDT program, to how we continue to connect with the community and communicate effectively with partners, to assessing the outcomes of capacity building, fine-tuning programs allows us to build on our successes and helps to ensure we’re making the most of our investments of time, talent, and dollars. As we operate and evaluate knowing that things will continue to be in flux and that our metrics are still impacted by COVID-19, we continue to adjust our collective expectations accordingly.

TAKING GROWTH TO THE NEXT LEVEL: SCALING UP EARLY SUCCESSES AND INNOVATING

As we learned with the community about what was working, we needed to continue to innovate and find creative solutions to fill the gaps that emerged and scale up the models that were successful to ensure growth. The more people we can reach with good programs that work, the better.

In filling the gaps to innovate better solutions, we are exploring a few things. We are looking to bring the KIVA model, a LISC National program, to East Side Avenues programs. KIVA uses a crowd sourcing lending platform that provides loans from $500–$15,000 at a 0% interest rate for working capital, equipment, and inventory business expenses. If endorsed by a KIVA trustee, the borrower is entitled to matched resources.

East Side KIVA fund development would provide East Side businesses with short-term funding necessary to pay pre-development and other relevant implementation costs. We are also working with the ESA community-based organizations to see what options they have for shared services. Small nonprofits often pay larger premiums individually, but we are looking into options where organizations can share capacity in order to maximize efficiency and cost, as well as promote collaboration across East Side organizations.

When programs are going well and the community is benefiting, it is time to scale up. We are working to promote the community’s incredible work and find larger-scale, multi-year funding to give the East Side a true catalytic boost in a time where aggregating state, federal, and philanthropic resources is a unique opportunity. Working with collaborative partners, the ESA team is ready to empower the community with fundraising to build on success, grow programs and opportunities, and ensure a strong future for Buffalo’s East Side.
Moving forward nationally

This is a unique moment in time when the country is looking for innovative, effective ways to stimulate economic development.

East Side Avenues is a national model that says effecting economic change for disadvantaged communities cannot be limited to a series of public infrastructure investments and real estate projects by outside developers. Planning must be driven by solid data and community voices. There must be an unprecedented level of public and private collaboration and co-investment that directly invests in the community’s vision, and is targeted, coordinated, and large enough to drive real, transformational change. The investments themselves must create vibrant commercial corridors and neighborhoods of opportunity; strengthen historical, cultural, and natural assets; and connect people with family-sustaining jobs. Investments must be made in human capital to equip residents, businesses, and property owners with the tools to invest in their own assets, start or expand businesses, and grow wealth with the idea of bolstering resident leadership while generating economic wealth for the people in the community. With new unprecedented infusions of federal and state COVID-19 recovery funding to leverage private and philanthropic dollars, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to promote the East Side Avenues model on a national level.

Moving forward as a region

Our region already understands the power of community-driven planning and targeted co-investment and is building on that momentum in Niagara Falls. The East Side Avenues model is replicable, and the collaborative effort created tremendous momentum among partners.

In collaboration with ESD subsidiary USA Niagara, the City of Niagara Falls, and UBRI, ESD is replicating the strategic planning process employed for Buffalo’s East Side to foster new and widespread economic opportunities in Niagara Falls. A new Niagara Falls Strategic Economic Development Fund will provide capital investments in targeted areas to enhance these neighborhoods and connect them back to the waterfront and downtown tourist district. Investments will help retain and attract residents, promote mixed-use, walkable commercial corridors, support and grow new businesses and entrepreneurship, and attract tourists from downtown into adjoining neighborhoods.

Moving forward on the East Side

While replicating the East Side Avenues model is an exciting prospect, we are focused on ensuring East Side Avenues continues to succeed.

East Side Avenues is at a critical point. As we reflect on what we have accomplished, it is undeniable that East Side Avenues paved the way for future thinking on the East Side. We carefully developed the foundational building blocks. The time is now to both scale up efforts and make sure the East Side Avenues cohort of projects and partners moves forward together. We know this is a model that works. We must double-down on our existing partners and projects—through increased commitments to funding, collaboration, and strategy—to ensure East Side Avenues outcomes are transformational and impact is maximized.
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:
Paths to prosperity through commercial, historic and human investment.

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