

**For Immediate Release**

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**\$500,000 in Grants Awarded from the East Side Collaborative Fund**

*“East Side Avenues,” Which Will Support the Funding, Announces Leadership Team*

Buffalo, N.Y., August 23 -- Over a half a million dollars has been awarded to local nonprofits from the East Side Collaborative Fund for revitalization work in four commercial corridors on Buffalo’s East Side. Capacity building, training and other supports will be provided through the East Side Avenues program to augment the funding. The grants and supports are being provided to complement capital funding that is being awarded by Empire State Development (ESD) as part of its \$65 million [East Side Corridor Economic Development Fund \(ESCEDF\)](#).

East Side Avenues is backed by a unique partnership of private and philanthropic organizations that created the pooled, \$8 million East Side Collaborative Fund to complement ESD’s program, which is part of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s Buffalo Billion II initiative.

East Side Avenues will be run by a Project Implementation Team (PIT) from UB’s Regional Institute (UBRI). The project’s goal is to fund, plan and coordinate revitalization strategies and initiatives aimed at improving economic conditions on Buffalo’s East Side. UBRI is the research enterprise of the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning.

UBRI partnered with ESD and The City of Buffalo to reach out to community members, to listen, analyze past investments and create a comprehensive plan focused on what key stakeholders said they’d like to see happen and what projects they believe are important for promoting economic activity. The five-year initiative will prioritize projects providing economic benefit to people living in the community and support locally-owned businesses. It will take a “building on” rather than “building new” approach.

Over \$500,000 for “year one” has been awarded from the East Side Collaborative Fund to support these five initiatives:

- 1) **East Side Commercial Districts** program funds small business improvements and building renovations in targeted geographic investment areas. Citizens Alliance, in partnership with the Black Chamber of Commerce; Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services; and the University District Community Development Association will serve as Local Program Administrators.
- 2) **Community-Based Real Estate Development Training** harnesses the East Side’s human capital and ensures that revitalization is driven by the community through real estate development education. Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Buffalo will work with the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning to develop and implement the program.
- 3) **Building Preservation Fund** supports the stabilization of at-risk historic buildings in target investment areas for potential future redevelopment projects. Preservation Buffalo Niagara will spearhead this component.
- 4) **Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission** for the development of a cooperative operating/business model and capital improvements plan that will create a unified, unique tourist destination.
- 5) **Central Terminal Restoration Corporation** for the development of a plan for the site’s future and for the creation of a robust organization that will guide capital improvements and improve connection to the Broadway Fillmore neighborhood.

UBRI’s Project Implementation Team (PIT) will be led by Program Director Chiwuike (Chi-Chi) Owunwanne. Chi-Chi is a Buffalo “re-pat” who brings over 15 years of economic development and management experience to the team. He holds a Master of Public Administration from the Fels Institute of Government, University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from SUNY at Geneseo. Monique Sullivan James, UBRI’s new Associate Director of Operations, will also support the East Side Avenues effort. Monique was most recently with LISC Buffalo where she wrote and managed over \$6.7 million dollars in project investment and other grants and consultant contracts. She brings with her over 20 years of industry-related experience working with non-profit organizations, financial institutions, philanthropic organizations, foundations, and government funders. The team’s roster is rounded out with seasoned project managers; urban and strategic planners; economic developers/strategists; researchers; analysts; graphic designers; technical writers; policy specialists; legal and information systems experts; and communications professionals. Laura Quebral, UBRI

Director, will provide strategic direction, general oversight and guidance for the initiative. Quebral is a planner, analyst, team builder, strategist and fundraiser.

The PIT will assess organizational capacity; ensure that appropriate supports such as infrastructure, staff and funding are in place; support strategic planning, program design and problem solving using expertise in research and analysis to guide decision-making; and track, monitor and report on initiatives to measure progress and ensure responsible use of resources.

The East Side Collaborative Fund supports East Side Avenues and is administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. To date, funders include: Bank of America, Cannon Heyman & Weiss, LLP, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Empire State Development, Evans Bank, Five Star Bank, Key Bank/First Niagara Foundation, The John R. Oishei Foundation, M&T Bank, The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, Northwest Bank, Ralph C. Wilson Jr., Foundation, The Weiss Family Foundation, and Western New York Foundation.

For more information about East Side Avenues visit [eastsideavenues.org](http://eastsideavenues.org) or contact Sally Crowley, East Side Avenues' Communications Director at [sallycro@buffalo.edu](mailto:sallycro@buffalo.edu) or 716-392-6947.

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