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Community leaders announce market analysis and commercial district study for Elmwood Village

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Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN) and the Elmwood Village Association are excited to kick off a market analysis and commercial district planning process to be conducted by the National Main Street Center (NMSC) through its UrbanMain program. The plan will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the Elmwood commercial district's assets and build a framework for moving forward.

Funding for the study is being provided by Preservation Buffalo Niagara, New York State Assembly member Sean Ryan, and Buffalo Common Council Member David Rivera.

Preservation Buffalo Niagara and the Elmwood Village Association are partnering on the study and engaging small business and property owners, community residents, and area leaders to strengthen the retail center of the Elmwood Village.

Says Jessie Fisher, Executive Director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara: "The Elmwood Village is the largest National Register Historic District in New York State and its rich historic fabric is part of what has made it such a successful community. Part of PBN's mission is to act as a resource to communities regarding continued use of historic properties, ensuring that our traditional neighborhoods are strong, stable places in which to live, work, and play. The National Main Street Center has been a leader for over 35 years in helping neighborhoods to undertake and implement preservation-based economic development strategies and we are thrilled to be able to bring them to Buffalo and to the Elmwood Village."

Says NYS Assemblymember Sean Ryan: "Small businesses are the backbone of the Elmwood Village. This project will allow us to look at the historic village and develop a comprehensive plan that will allow small business owners, property owners, neighbors and area leaders to work together to make Elmwood Village an even better place to live, work and shop. I'm excited to work with Preservation Buffalo Niagara, The Elmwood Village Association, Councilman Rivera and the National Main Street Center to ensure our vibrant neighborhood continues to grow for years to come."

Says Buffalo Common Councilmember David Rivera: "I thank the Elmwood Village Association, Preservation Buffalo Niagara, and my colleagues in State and City government for collaborating on this effort to improve the Elmwood Village shopping district. I am excited to have an outside expert take a close look at the retail scene on Elmwood and provide concrete ideas for how we can take Elmwood and other neighborhood commercial districts to the next level of the local shopping experience. This study will not be one that will sit on a shelf for the rest of its life, as we've already taken steps to ensure the proper pieces are in place to turn the study's recommendations into implementable solutions. Council Member Feroletto and I held listening sessions earlier this year and out of those meetings came the idea for a Elmwood Village Retail Committee where business owners, residents, community organizations, building owners, and government partners can build collaborative strategies to combat store front vacancies and improve shopping experience for residents and visitors alike. This study will be just one piece of a puzzle to solving the local business concerns of both owners and shoppers and it will build on all the successful work from residents, business owners, community organizations, and volunteers that have made Elmwood Village what it is."

Says Ashley Smith, Executive Director of the Elmwood Village Association: "Small businesses are of critical importance to the Elmwood Village district. The Elmwood Village Association (EVA) is excited to continue its work to support the future of small business in the Elmwood Village by partnering with PBN to bring national main street best practices to Elmwood. The

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EVA's mission is to encourage a balance of growth and preservation, to support community-led projects and to promote an inclusive neighborhood for people to live, work, visit and prosper. The organization's forthcoming strategic plan prioritizes small business support. Outcomes of the NMSC Retail Market Analysis will directly inform the EVA's strategies to promote a strong mix of businesses within the commercial corridor. The study could not come at a better time; the EVA and district stakeholders are aligned to make use of this opportunity to realize the district's strengths and contribute to a stronger neighborhood and city."

The National Main Street Center is a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation with a mission to help communities across the country revitalize their traditional downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. Since its launch in 1980, it has assisted over 2,000 communities nationwide to develop and implement market-driven strategies, bringing renewed vitality and economic opportunity to their traditional downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts. The NMSC's new UrbanMain program brings this national expertise to bear on the distinct opportunities and challenges of urban commercial districts. The program utilizes a set of community-driven economic development tools and services to bring sustainable growth back to traditional neighborhood centers like Elmwood Village. UrbanMain offers specialized services, professional development, networking, and advocacy for the field of urban commercial district practitioners.

Says Dionne Baux, Director of Urban Programs with the National Main Street Center: "We are thrilled to be working with Preservation Buffalo Niagara and the Elmwood Village Association on this project. Elmwood Village has incredible assets in place, from engaged grassroots partners to historic mixed-use building stock to strong community anchor institutions. We look forward to supporting local efforts to strengthen the economic competitiveness of this neighborhood, while preserving local history and culture."

Over the next two months, consultants from the National Main Street Center will collect and analyze market analysis data, survey community members, and meet with stakeholders. The Elmwood Village Association and Preservation Buffalo Niagara will jointly host a community-wide meeting in early October. Work will continue through the fall and winter, with final recommendations expected in January. Final recommendations will be shared with the community in another public forum.

For more information, please contact Olivia Cammisa-Frost at 852-3300 or ocammisa-frost@pbnsaves.org.

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