



# ASSEMBLYMAN SEAN RYAN

*New York's 149<sup>th</sup> Assembly District*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 2, 2020

Contact: Dave Thompson (315) 592-8687

## **RYAN, COMMON COUNCIL MEMBERS, AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP PRESERVATION REFORMS FOR BUFFALO**

*Run Of Recent Demolitions In Historic Elmwood Village  
Could Put Historic Tax Credits At Risk*

BUFFALO – Friday, October 2, 2020, New York State Assemblyman Sean Ryan joined Jessie Fisher, Executive Director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara, Buffalo Common Council Members David Rivera and Mitch Nowakowski as well as members of a newly established Blue Ribbon Commission on Historic Preservation that has been put together by state and city leaders to discuss preservation regulations in the City of Buffalo.

The Commission is made up of the following developers, attorneys, and community stakeholders:

- Jason Yots, attorney/developer - Preservation Studios
- Rocco Termini, developer - Signature Development
- Terry Alford, Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor
- Gail Wells, Coppertown Block Club
- Stephanie Cole Adams, attorney
- Gretchen Cercone, Residents of the Elmwood Village (REV)/ Lancaster Avenue Block Club
- Catherine Faust, Architect/Residents of the Elmwood Village (REV)

Representatives from the offices of Assemblyman Ryan as well as Buffalo Common Council Members David Rivera, Rasheed Wyatt and Mitch Nowakowski will also participate. The findings of the panel will be used to make recommendations to the Buffalo Common Council and relevant state agencies as to how buildings that contribute the unique nature of Buffalo's built environment can be preserved.

The Recent Demolition at 184 West Utica Street, and Ellicott Development's application for a demolition

permit for a house located at 787 Elmwood Avenue are two of several projects that lead to the creation of this Commission. Currently, the city of Buffalo Department of Permits and Inspection Services believes they are required to issue a demolition permit 30 days after the permit is applied for. This 30-day time frame doesn't give the Buffalo Preservation Board and City Council enough time to consider a building for landmark status before the building is demolished. In addition, buildings that are currently listed on the National Register do not enjoy any special review status in the City, and are most often left unprotected, unbeknownst to community members.

The current process gives owners seeking demolition an insurmountable advantage and has led to the demolition of nearly two dozen historic properties in the Elmwood Village, and countless others across the City. This system does not follow the New York State suggested model that recommends providing enough time for a fair landmark hearing before a demolition permit is issued. This statewide best practice allows for the contribution of the building to the historic fabric of the community to be weighed equally against the developer's request for demolition.

This Commission will examine possible changes to the existing process and look at ways development can be encouraged while keeping the historic integrity of the City of Buffalo.

Continued demolitions in Historic Districts could also lead to a loss of access to tax credits for homeowners. Historic Districts allow owners access to the New York State Historic Homeowner Tax Credit Program, which covers 20% of rehabilitation costs for owner-occupied historic homes. If the alarmingly high number of demolitions occurring in the City continues, it is possible the state will no longer offer this tax credit to people living in neighborhoods with a substantial number of demolitions.

Assemblyman Sean Ryan said: "Throughout our history, the City of Buffalo has done an amazing job of preserving our historic architecture, but over the past few years it's become obvious that there is more work to be done. This Commission will look at ways we can continue to promote growth in our economy while ensuring the integrity of our historic buildings. I thank everyone who volunteered their expertise to their community and look forward to working with this group to find a solution that will allow Buffalo to continue to grow while preserving our rich architectural history."

"Preservation in Buffalo is not just limited to one street or one Council district. We must take a step back and think big picture to preserve the fabric of the neighborhoods that make our city one-of-a-kind. The Fillmore District is home to four historic preservation districts — Allentown, Cobblestone, West Village, and Broadway-Fillmore — and I am eager to work with this commission and Preservation Buffalo Niagara to make common sense recommendations and reforms which preserve our rich history and architecture block by block."

"The incredible value that Buffalo's historic built environment presents, coupled with the fact that currently less than 10% of buildings enjoy local landmark status means that it is imperative that we have local laws that allow us the requisite time to evaluate and protect historic resources and that those laws line up with statewide and national best practices," said Jessie Fisher, Executive Director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara. "We are honored to assist the work of these great legislators and the Commission as they ensure that Buffalo's built environment is protected for future generations."

The Commission expects to present their findings to the Common Council and other agencies before the end of the year.

###

*Assemblyman Sean Ryan represents New York's 149th Assembly District, which includes portions of the Cities of Buffalo and Lackawanna, the Town of Hamburg, and the Villages of Hamburg and Blasdell. For more information, please contact Assemblyman Ryan's Buffalo office at 716-885-9630.*