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GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

**GOVERNOR HOCHUL ANNOUNCES GROUNDBREAKING FOR NEW WEST SIDE
BAZAAR IN BUFFALO**

***Small Business Incubator Will Quintuple Its Size, Attract More Customers, and
Support Additional Opportunities for Economically Disadvantaged
Entrepreneurs***

Renderings for New West Side Bazaar Available [Here](#)

Governor Kathy Hochul today announced construction has begun on a \$11.5 million project to create a new and significantly expanded West Side Bazaar. Founded by the Westminster Economic Development Initiative in 2011, the West Side Bazaar small business incubator quickly became a popular shopping and dining destination for locals and tourists searching for unique food and retail opportunities.

"For over 10 years, the West Side Bazaar has given disadvantaged entrepreneurs the opportunity to turn their dreams into reality," **Governor Hochul said**. "I have enjoyed visiting the market, meeting and hearing the stories of the vendors at the Bazaar. The new location of the West Side Bazaar will be a significant economic boon for the community, drawing thousands of visitors and helping the Niagara Street neighborhood and Buffalo thrive."

The [Bazaar](#), which is operated by Westminster Economic Development Initiative, is a one-of-its-kind small business incubator supporting entrepreneurs on their path to becoming successful business owners. It consists of several food and retail vendors which sell quality authentic products from all around the world. The Bazaar serves women, minorities, refugees, immigrants and others who do not qualify for support from traditional banking and financial institutions by providing microloans and technical business assistance. To date, the West Side Bazaar has incubated more than 48 small businesses.

Westminster Economic Development Initiative Executive Director Carolynn Welch said, "We're thrilled about this development and are looking forward to transforming a vacant building into a vibrant destination for the West Side community and all

of Western New York. We look forward to seeing other businesses join us on Niagara Street to add to the momentum we are already experiencing in the community. With this larger space comes greater opportunity for the economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs who are excited to own and operate a business in our city. Together, we are creating a place that holds great promise for our region."

The current West Side Bazaar at 25 Grant Street attracts thousands of visitors a week and has a waitlist of 125 aspiring entrepreneurs wanting to sell. The capital campaign to move and expand the Bazaar "Building Community, Building Opportunity, Building the New West Side Bazaar" was launched in the spring of 2021. The renovation of the 16,000 square foot vacant building at 1432 Niagara Street will provide space for 24 restaurant, retail and professional services businesses, test and rental kitchens for independent chefs, classrooms, event space and seating for 200+ patrons.

[WEDI's Economic Feasibility Study](#) projects a significant economic impact through direct and indirect spending, estimated at approximately \$34 million over five years and may have as many as 250,000 visitors annually. It will also contribute to the vibrancy and walkability of the West Side community and increase sales for area businesses.

WEDI's business incubator assistance, including small business loans and business plan coaching, are available to everyone from economically disadvantaged backgrounds — not just immigrants — who need support starting a business.

West Side Bazaar Vendor Akec Aguar said, "To open a restaurant is my lifelong dream and I am forever grateful to WEDI for the opportunity. Everyone should ask themselves what they can do for the West Side Bazaar to make it a success at its new location."

CJS Architects, a firm well-known for its adaptive reuse projects, designed the new home for the West Side Bazaar on Niagara Street. The two-story brick building was constructed in 1910. The transformation will light the street with large-windowed garage-style doors, preserved historic glass block windows on both floors, and will boast a two-story sky-lit atrium and a reclaimed gym floor wood center staircase.

To help the Bazaar relocate and expand, Empire State Development, through the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council, awarded capital grant funding totaling \$539,187. The Bazaar also received a Round 5 Better Buffalo Fund Buffalo Main Streets Initiative award of \$500,000, administered by NYS Homes and Community Renewal.

The West Side Bazaar will remain open at 25 Grant Street until the renovations to the Niagara Street building are completed in the fall of 2023.

Empire State Development President, CEO and Commissioner Hope Knight said, "The West Side Market has been a beacon of hope for so many talented entrepreneurs working to get a new business started. It is more than just a place to set up shop; the

Bazaar also provides the crucial support needed turn a dream into a successful business. Thanks to Governor Hochul, the new larger location will allow for many more entrepreneurs to take advantage of this unique opportunity."

New York State Homes and Community Renewal Commissioner

RuthAnne Visnauskas said, "Through the Buffalo Main Streets Initiative, we invest in community-driven projects that result in more active, vibrant, and attractive mixed-use commercial districts in Buffalo that contribute to the city's economic growth and improve quality of life. The new West Side Bazaar will transform a historic vacant warehouse into an economic hub that will benefit local entrepreneurs, including refugee and immigrant-run businesses, and will serve as an exciting destination and gathering place for residents and visitors alike. In the first year alone, West Side Bazaar expects to create or retain 24 businesses and increase annual visits by fifty percent. We thank Governor Hochul and our many partners for getting this innovative project off the ground."

Western New York Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chair and

Buffalo State College President Dr. Katherine Conway-Turnersaid,"The REDC recognizes the vital importance of the West Side Bazaar, which is attracting visitors, supporting the community and enhancing urban opportunities for immigrants and refugees who are excited to grow their businesses. The investment in a new building will make the West Side Bazaar experience even more enjoyable."

Western New York Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chair and

Campus Labs Co-Founder Eric Reich said, "Everyone loves the West Side Bazaar, so much so that it has outgrown its Grant Street location. The REDC recognizes that by supporting the expansion to the new location we are helping provide incubator space to a greater number of dynamic entrepreneurs, increasing tourism in the region, and improving the overall vitality of a Niagara Street neighborhood."

Representative Brian Higgins said, "The new location of the West Side Bazaar affirms what we know - that Buffalo's diversity is its strength and is a catalyst for small business development and economic stability. The Bazaar's Niagara Street location will provide greater opportunities for entrepreneurs to create new markets for their products. It will also revitalize another historic building, continuing efforts to bring our industrial past into the future. We are proud to see this long-awaited expansion project begin."

State Senator Sean Ryan said, "I thrilled to be celebrating another step in the continued transformation of Niagara Street - and this is a big one. The West Side Bazaar is already a shining symbol of the many great contributions our immigrant and refugee populations make to our community. This expansion will bring even more great small businesses to the West Side."

Assemblymember Jon D. Rivera said, "Since its inception in 2011, the West Side Bazaar has been more than an incubator within which enterprising, immigrant business owners can turn their professional dreams into fruition. The space has turned into a communal hub, and it now serves as a microcosm for Buffalo's immigrant-fueled

vibrancy and resurgence. The Bazaar's new location, which will offer more space and resources for its entrepreneurs, will be yet another example of Buffalo's continued upward economic trajectory and will represent the West Side's latest success story."

Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown said, "The West Side Bazaar has been a tremendous asset to the many immigrant, refugee, and other disadvantaged entrepreneurs who have called it home over the past decade. It has also added tremendous variety to Buffalo's food culture, becoming a must-visit stop for locals and visitors, alike. The much larger site will allow the Bazaar and its vendors to soar to higher levels, providing greater economic benefits to its tenants, the City of Buffalo, and our region."

For more information about the West Side Bazaar, click [here](#). For more information about WEDI, click [here](#).

About Empire State Development

Empire State Development is New York's chief economic development agency (www.esd.ny.gov). The mission of ESD is to promote a vigorous and growing economy, encourage the creation of new job and economic opportunities, increase revenues to the State and its municipalities, and achieve stable and diversified local economies. Through the use of loans, grants, tax credits and other forms of financial assistance, ESD strives to enhance private business investment and growth to spur job creation and support prosperous communities across New York State. ESD is also the primary administrative agency overseeing the Regional Economic Development Councils and the marketing of "I LOVE NY," the State's iconic tourism brand. For more information on Regional Councils and Empire State Development, visit www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov and www.esd.ny.gov.

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