EAST SIDE BUILDING FUND

EAST SIDE SMALL PROJECTS PROGRAM

HOW TO APPLY & PARTICIPANT GUIDANCE

MAY 2025

New York State

Empire State Development

Regional Revitalization Partnership

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Small Projects Overview

The East Side Building Fund, through the East Side Small Projects Program ("the Program") is intended for commercial and mixed-use projects on the East Side that are smaller in scale and are targeted towards a specific building improvement such as a façade replacement that improves the buildings presence on the commercial corridor or a stabilization measure that prevents a key, at-risk East Side building from further deterioration or demolition.

In an effort to streamline the fund delivery process to East Side property owners, Empire State Development (ESD) maintains a grant agreement with a nonprofit organization Heart of the City Neighborhoods, Inc. to serve as the Small Projects Local Program Administrator (LPA) which distributes the funds for projects on ESD's behalf. The LPA was selected through a competitive bidding process. The LPA procured and contracted with their own dedicated Architecture/Engineering/Construction Management consultants ("Technical Consultants").

Properties that are selected for Small Projects Program are eligible to receive grants from the LPA of a minimum of $100,000 to a maximum of $400,000 to cover the costs of renovations per building, for stabilization-related activities, exterior facade and storefront renovations, interior renovations, and/or selected site improvements for commercial or mixed-use buildings.

Property owners will be required to provide a 10% contribution to the total construction cost of their project, provided directly to the LPA. Property owner contribution commitments are to be demonstrated upon applying to the program, delivered to the LPA prior to construction commencement.

All applicable project design and development, environmental review, construction monitoring, and construction close out costs will be covered at no cost to participating property owners. Should a property owner wish to use their own design/technical professionals, these costs will not be covered by the program grants but can be counted towards the owners' required contribution, if deemed appropriate by ESD and LPA.

Projects with scopes that have construction bids with an identified need more than the $400,000 maximum grant amount will require that the Owner pay for the outstanding balance, in addition to the required 10% owner's contribution.

The LPA will be responsible for paying all construction costs, inclusive of the property owner's 10% contribution, directly to the contractors on behalf of the property owner.

Basic Project Eligibility & Project Focus Areas

Applicants and buildings must meet the following criteria for program eligibility:

The building must be a commercial or mixed-use property (commercial space and residential space) located on Buffalo's East Side. For the purposes of the East Side Building Fund, the East Side is defined as 17 square miles, bounded by the University at Buffalo (UB) to the north; Main Street and Michigan Avenue (excluding the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and Central Business District) to the west; I-190 and the Buffalo River to the south; and the City line to the east.

Applicants must demonstrate ownership of all buildings/real estate considered part of the proposed project. Buildings must be privately owned.

In addition, strong preference will be given to projects which fall within one or more of the following categories:

1. **Are located within or adjacent to the following Commercial District target areas.**

Jefferson Avenue Commercial District
- Boundaries: Jefferson Avenue addresses between East Ferry Street and BFNC Drive, as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.

Fillmore Commercial District
- Boundaries: Fillmore Avenue addresses between East Ferry Street and North Parade Avenue, as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.

Broadway-Fillmore Commercial District
- Boundaries: Fillmore Avenue addresses between Sycamore Street and Paderewski Drive, and buildings with a Broadway address between Memorial Drive and Reed Street, as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.

Kensington-Bailey Commercial District
- Boundaries: Bailey Avenue addresses between Winspear Avenue and Route 33, as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.

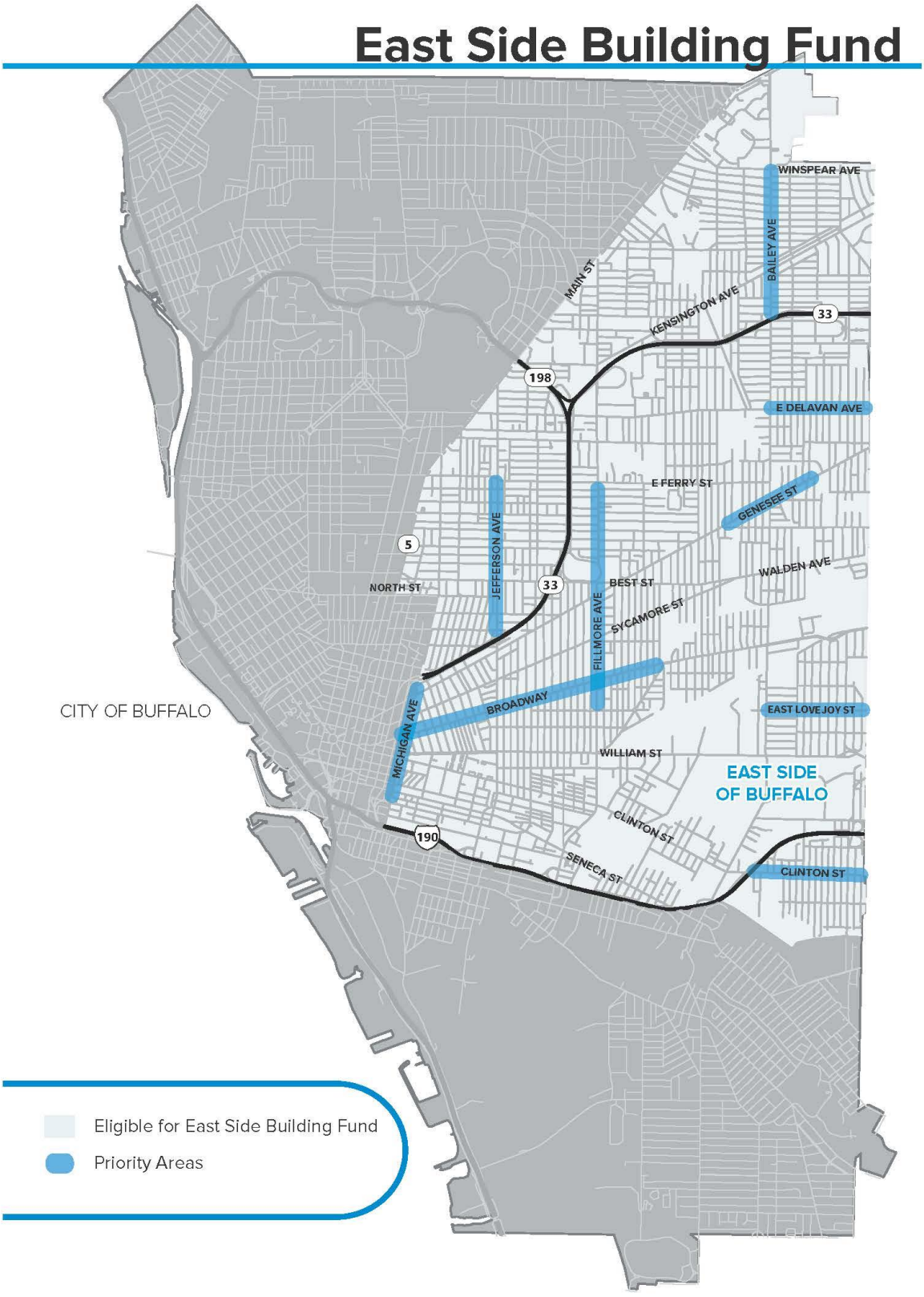
Michigan Avenue (Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor)
- Boundaries: Michigan Avenue addresses between Cherry Street and Seneca Street as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.

East Delavan Commercial District
- Boundaries: East Delavan Avenue addresses between Bailey Avenue and the City of Buffalo line, as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.

Genesee Commercial District
- Boundaries: Genesee Street addresses between Doat Street and Kerns Avenue, as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.

Lovejoy Commercial District
- Boundaries: East Lovejoy Street addresses between Bailey Avenue and the City of Buffalo line, as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.

Kaisertown Commercial District
- Boundaries: Clinton Street addresses between I-190 and the City of Buffalo line, as well as establishments on corner lots in this targeted area.


East Side Building Fund
CITY OF BUFFALO
WINSPEAR AVE
BAILEY AVE
MAIN ST
KENSINGTON AVE
33
198
E DELAVAN AVE
E FERRY ST
GENESEE ST
JEFFERSON AVE
5
NORTH ST
33
BEST ST
WALDEN AVE
SYCAMORE ST
FILLMORE AVE
MICHIGAN AVE
BROADWAY
EAST LOVEJOY ST
WILLIAM ST
EAST SIDE
OF BUFFALO
CLINTON ST
190
SENECA ST
CLINTON ST
Eligible for East Side Building Fund
Priority Areas

2. **Projects that involve at-risk historic buildings to preserve the community's historic fabric**

   For purposes of the Small Project Program, "historic" shall mean any building that has existed on the site since prior to urban renewal, or for at least 50 years; or that contributes to the unique neighborhood character of the place in which it is located and/or contributes to the vision for revitalized business districts through providing an opportunity for business development at the site and wealth creation in the neighborhood. Such buildings may or may not be listed on or determined to be eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NRHP).

3. **Are initiated by graduates of the 2020, 2021, 2022 or 2023 Community-Based Real Estate Development Training (CBREDT) program.**

   Who upon successful completion of the CBREDT program, have engaged with the Technical Assistance from the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning and CRS to assess readiness of a project to move forward; determined specific needs to advance a project, and have a shovel ready development plan for their project.

Eligible & Ineligible Use of Funds

Small Project Program funds must be used solely for commercial/mixed-use building upgrades and associated site improvements. Program funds must be used for capital purposes, including work pertaining to code compliance, plumbing, electrical, stabilization measures and cosmetic renovations.

Eligible:

- Program funds must be used for capital purposes, including work pertaining to code compliance, plumbing, electrical, stabilization measures and cosmetic renovations
- Environmental remediation required in order to proceed with construction
- Roofing
- Structural repairs
- Masonry/Cement work
- Building concrete work/repair (topping of decks, repair of expansion joints, etc.)
- Chimney repair/replacement
- Foundation repairs
- Correction of drainage deficiencies
- Repair/stabilization of other building systems that pose a near-term (i.e., five year) risk of prompting a major building failure if left unchecked
- New Windows, Doors, Awnings
- Façade repairs, storefront systems, rehabilitation, and/or upgrades
- Building lighting
- New business signs
- Energy efficiency upgrades
- Health and safety repairs/building code compliance
- Accessibility improvements
- Interior repairs and build outs of commercial spaces
- Any associated permanent site improvements, including on-site landscaping, screening, concrete work, public art/building murals
- Additions to existing buildings, limited to fifty percent (50%) of the space in the existing building, up to a maximum of 4,000 square feet of space, and further provided that the addition would be on property already owned or controlled by the applicant, would be in full compliance with zoning, development,

and construction laws and regulations, and does not involve a property listed on the State/National Registers of Historic Places
- Exterior improvements to a mixed-used building that contains residential units (e.g., roofing over a residential apartment above a storefront, upper-level façade/window improvements for apartments above a storefront) are permitted as eligible

Ineligible:

- Improvements to structures owned by religious or private, membership-based organizations (e.g., not including former buildings of this type owned by non-sectarian entities)
- Residential only properties
- Improvements to municipally owned buildings used for municipal purposes
- Construction of new parking lots or repaving/repairs to existing parking lots
- Purchase of non-permanent fixtures, such as furnishings, appliances, electronics, and business equipment
- General organizational and/or operating expenses
- New construction on vacant sites
- Project costs incurred by the property owner, including design costs, prior to formal acceptance into the program
- Demolition that is not connected to a larger redevelopment/renovation scope of the applying building
- Improvements to properties listed for sale or with intent to sell
- Expenditures to cover late fees or interest.

How to apply:

Small Project Program Applicant Requirements

All applicants must meet the following criteria and provide supporting documentation as part of the application requirements for funding a project:

- Proof of property ownership for purposes of Program participation (i.e., project by property owner or project by property owner on behalf of tenant with tenant's written consent)
- Proof of property owner's contribution within an estimated scope's range (bank statement, line of credit, other grant source)
- Proof of insurance for subject property
- Proof of tax compliance for subject property and other properties owned by applicant; evidence of payment plan for taxes in arrears
- Evidence of the absence of any liens on subject property and other properties owned by applicant
- Explanation of any open housing court violations on the proposed property
- No recent or pending felony or misdemeanor (other than a minor traffic violation) convictions by applicant
- Absence of any or threatened litigation that would have a material effect on Applicant's financial condition
- Affirmation of understanding of Technical Consultant services, required owner's contribution, LPA Payment Process, Five-Year Property Maintenance Declaration.

These criteria and supporting documentation will be reviewed and verified prior to a project being considered for funding. Applicants that fail to submit the required documents may not be competitive in the process.

Application & Project Review Process

The Application is a three-step process consisting of a (1) Application Form (2) Application Review and Determination of Finalists and (3) Technical Review—further due diligence and a walk through of the applicant's building by the LPA and Technical Consultants. The Technical Review is limited to a group of selected applicants.

1.) Complete Application Form

Fill out the online application form (https://eastsidebuildingfund.org/) and submit by June 27, 2025 at 4:00PM.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Applicants will not receive word on the status of their application until July 2025.

2.) Application review and determination of Program Finalists

ESD, CRS, the LPA, representatives from the City of Buffalo, technical consultants and selected community partners will review the applications based on the selection criteria and determine the slate of Finalists that are eligible for Technical Review.

3.) Finalist projects receive Technical Review

Based on the information provided in the application, a **select group** of building owners will be recommended for an eligibility Technical Review of their buildings by the LPA and Technical Consultants. Buildings selected for Technical Review will be considered Program Finalists. **At time of application, the applicant must give reviewers permission and access to their building in order to be considered for funding.**

Questions

Questions about the East Side Building Fund Application and should be submitted in writing via email to info@EastSideBuildingFund.org with the subject line: **East Side Building Fund**.

Questions and responses will be posted in the Q&A section on the website: https://esd.ny.gov/east-side-building-fund

If you have questions about the application process or want to discuss your project in more detail, program staff will be available for in person office hours at **136 Broadway, Buffalo, NY 14203 in the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor** at the following dates and times:

Thursday, May 29, 2025, 4:00PM – 7:00PM

Monday, June 2, 2025, 8:00AM – 12:00PM

Thursday, June 5, 2025, 4:00PM – 7:00PM

Monday, June 23, 2025, 8:00AM- 12:00PM

Project Review & Selection Process

Once the deadline to submit an Application Form closes, ESD, the LPA, Technical Consultants, Community Stakeholders, representatives from the City of Buffalo, and the Center for Regional Strategies (CRS), known as the "Selection Committee", shall commence Project Review using the following project selection criteria.

Review Criteria

Eligibility
- Is the building a commercial or mixed-use property located on Buffalo's East Side?
- Has the applicant demonstrated ownership?

Project Preference
- Is the project located within or adjacent to targeted East Side commercial areas?
- Does the project involve an at-risk historic building that preserves the community's historic fabric?
- Is the building owner a graduate of the Community-Based Real Estate Development Training program in 2020, 2021, 2022 or 2023 and has engaged with the Technical Assistance from the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning (SAP) and Center for Regional Strategies (CRS)?

Financial Feasibility
- Are the cost estimates reasonable in relation to the amount requested + match?
- Does the owner demonstrate a 10% match?
- Are there significant back taxes owed on the property (>$2,000) without a payment plan?

Project Feasibility
- Is the project feasible given the overall condition of the building?
- Are the proposed repairs appropriately prioritized?
- Will this investment "complete" the building?
- Are there significant structural repairs to the point where there may not be enough funding for façade repairs?
- Is the building in housing court?

Visual Impact
- Are significant façade improvements included in the project?
- Is the project consistent with neighborhood design guidelines?
- Are the proposed visual improvements transformative for a commercial corridor?
- Will the project improve a historically significant building and/or will the project promote the building's architectural value?

Neighborhood/Corridor Stability
- Does the project involve a significant investment in the property?
- Does the project address existing code deficiencies?
- Is the building currently occupied by an existing business or will it be renovated to accommodate a new business(es)?

After selection of a slate of Program Finalists, the technical review staff will evaluate the project during a desk review and site review based on the following:

Further due diligence by Program staff:
- State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) initial consultation
- State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)
- Zoning

Information gathered from a walk-through of the building (Full Building Walkthrough Checklist):

- Consideration of needs for environmental review and assessment for environmental hazards
- Exterior Inspection: Roof, Walls & Siding, Windows & Doors, Foundation
- Interior Inspection: Basement, Attic, Floors, Walls & Ceilings
- Mechanical Systems: HVAC, Plumbing, Electrical
- Water Leakage & Damage: Signs of Water Intrusion, Drainage
- Miscellaneous: Pest Infestation, Fire Safety
- Summarize findings into three categories: Urgent Repairs, Recommended Repairs, and Maintenance.
- Attach annotated photos and include descriptions of problem areas.

The results of the technical review of Finalists will be evaluated and the Selection Committee will determine a final slate of accepted projects.

Program Acceptance

Accepted applicants will receive a letter that outlines that they have been recommended for participation in the program and the next steps in the process. Accepted applicants will be requested to send a signed letter confirming their participation in the program.

Scope of Work

After a property and/or business owner has confirmed its willingness to participate in the program, they will meet with the assigned LPA and its Technical Consultant to develop a Scope of Work. The LPA and its Technical Consultant will discuss guidance related to Program requirements and then complete the Scope of Work.

The LPA and its Technical Consultant are responsible for coordinating work write-ups with local code officials, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) consultation, and review by other regulators, as necessary. Additionally, when required, the Technical Consultant will provide required architectural, engineering, and/or environmental services for each project. These additional services will be covered by the program at no cost to the property owner, unless otherwise determined by the LPA.

If, upon scope completion, a project is not feasible or is not eligible for funds under the program, ESD and the LPA reserve the right to decide not to award a building funding. Any services provided by the Technical Consultant will be provided at no cost to the property owner even if they are not ultimately awarded funding.

Once the scope of work is finalized and has been agreed to by the LPA and property owner, the LPA and its Technical Consultant, are authorized to develop and seek construction bids for the work on behalf of the property owner.

Award Amount and Awardee's Contribution Determination

Once the final contractor is selected, the LPA and property owner will finalize the award amount to each property owner based on the selected contractor's proposal. In the event that value engineering is required to reduce the scope to stay within the program or property owner's budget, the LPA and its Technical Consultant will work directly with the Contractor in revising the scope to achieve the revised final scope amount.

Once final scope is determined and the contractor is selected, the LPA will be responsible for communicating to the property owner the final amount of East Side Building Fund financial assistance per project as well as determining the owner's 10% contribution to the project.

The property owner and LPA will determine the sources of funds for the property owner's 10% contribution (personal funds, line of credit, additional non-ESD public grant assistance, private grant assistance) during the application process and verify upon their acceptance into the program. These funds will be confirmed and collected by the LPA and all proof of owner's contribution will be required upon final payment request by the LPA to ESD.

Examples of prospective grant awards:

Example 1: $111,111 Project

East Side Building Fund Grant	$100,000
Property Owner Required 10% Contribution	11,111
Total Project Cost	**$ 111,111**

Example 2: $250,000 Project

East Side Building Fund Grant	$225,000
Property Owner Required 10% Contribution	$25,000
Total Project Cost	**$250,000**

Example 3: $400,000 Project

East Side Building Fund Grant	$360,000
Property Owner Required 10% Contribution	$40,000
Total Project Cost	**$400,000**

Example 4: $444,444 Project

East Side Building Fund Grant	$400,000
Property Owner Required 10% Contribution	$44,444
Total Project Cost	**$444,444**

Example 5: $600,000 Project

East Side Building Fund Grant	$400,000
Property Owner Required 10% Contribution + Total Project Cost Balance in Excess of max grant	$200,000
Total Project Cost	**$600,000**

Once the final scope amount is confirmed and the property owner's 10% has been remitted to the LPA, the LPA can begin the contracting process and construction can commence.

Each individual project's construction must be completed within 12 months from Notice to Proceed, unless otherwise approved by ESD.

All funds are subject to recapture at the discretion of ESD, based upon the executed Grant Disbursement Agreement between ESD and the LPA.

Ongoing Maintenance

Obligations

Property owners will be required to maintain properties that received grant assistance with East Side Building Fund funds for a period of five (5) years from the date of project completion and final inspection. This requires that any assisted commercial or civic units be maintained in a manner that is consistent with the goals of the East Side Building Fund program for the enforcement period.

At project completion, the LPA will file a Property Maintenance Declaration, in a form approved by ESD, with the Erie County Clerk, on behalf of each property owner receiving East Side Building Fund Funds. In the Declaration, the property owner will declare that he/she has received assistance from East Side Building Fund and will maintain the property in a manner consistent with the program objectives for a minimum of five years from project completion. In the event of non-compliance or resale, the amount of grant funds will be subject to repayment in accordance with a simple annual declining balance, based on the five-year enforcement period.

Program Timeline

Small Projects will run on the following schedule:

Date	Milestone
May 9, 2025	Program Launch
May 21, 2025	Public Information Meeting
May/June Selected Dates	Application Technical Assistance Office Hours (See above for dates and location)
June 27, 2025	Application Deadline
July 2025	Selected Projects Chosen for Technical Review
July 2025	Building Walk-Throughs
August 2025	Notice to Applicants of Acceptance into the East Side Building Fund Program

ESD reserves the right to change any of the dates and specifications stated in the East Side Building Fund Small Projects Program Participant Guidance.