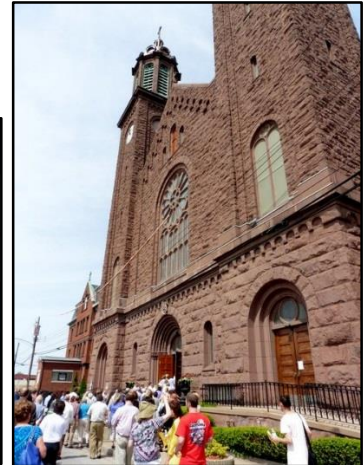


COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT
Commercial Revitalization for the
Broadway-Fillmore and MLK Neighborhood Districts
Buffalo, New York
JUNE 8 – 11, 2015



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§ I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT VISIT

This report is a summary of the observations and recommendations of a National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) Smart Growth Assessment Team that visited the Fillmore Corridor neighborhood in Buffalo, NY from June 8 – 11, 2015. The visit focused on assessing the climate for revitalization of both the Broadway-Fillmore and Martin Luther King commercial districts. The findings are based on numerous meetings and interviews with individuals and groups having a stake in either or both of the two districts, a tour of the districts and surrounding residential neighborhoods, on-site evaluation sessions with Fillmore Corridor Main Street Steering Committee members, research and examination of background materials provided before the team’s visit, and follow-up information gathering.

The visit and this follow-up report of the Assessment Team’s findings and recommendations are provided to the Fillmore Corridor Main Street Steering Committee through a Smart Growth grant awarded to the Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors (BNAR) by the NAR. The NAR has given Smart Growth grants to local realtor networks in the interest of promoting smart growth principles in communities across the country.

The purpose of the visit was to deliver community assessment services that would respond to Fillmore Corridor Neighborhood Coalition’s (FCNC) efforts to preserve the integrity of its two neighborhood commercial districts – Broadway-Fillmore and Martin Luther King – while generating economic vitality through the application of smart growth principles and a proven process for commercial revitalization strategies that uses the comprehensive national Main Street Four Point Approach® in analyzing the issues and providing solutions for remedying problems.

Specifically, the Assessment Team concentrated its study on recommending strategies that would respond to the following issues identified in the NAR Smart Growth grant application as being essential to the revitalization of Broadway-Fillmore and MLK neighborhood commercial districts:

- Coalesce support of stakeholders around the revitalization effort
- Guide the Fillmore Corridor Main Street Steering Committee in the establishment of a community-based, volunteer-driven program capable of managing revitalization of the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK neighborhood commercial districts
- Deliver a comprehensive and implementation-oriented action plan that addresses organizational, design, marketing, and economic issues affecting the two neighborhood business districts.

It is worth referencing a few general principles of smart growth in discussing this assessment, particularly:

Smart Growth principles emphasize development and density in the core of the community (vs. uncontrolled growth of “Greenfields,” i.e. undeveloped or agricultural

land on the outskirts of town), and recognize the importance of community character to entice residents and shoppers to the community and core. Therefore, any and every effort should be made to retain the historic character, fabric and buildings in the city's core, while controlling growth on the periphery.

This report focuses on the revitalization of the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK neighborhood commercial districts and provides findings and recommendations leading to:

- Mutually-beneficial partnership arrangements and collaborations among FCNC representatives and other community organizations, institutions, and government agencies that are interested in expanding economic growth and enhancements in the Fillmore Corridor.
- Economic development strategies that would encourage entrepreneurial development and create businesses that are responsive to the needs of the MLK and Broadway-Fillmore neighborhoods.
- Identification of potential uses for vacant and underutilized buildings; ideas for rehabilitation and re-use of commercial properties; and fair, predictable, and cost-effective incentives to encourage property development.
- A marketing plan that would promote a positive image of the MLK and Broadway-Fillmore commercial centers; increase promotional activities within the commercial districts; and present community-focused special events and activities that appeal to the Fillmore Corridor's diverse population.

THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

The Assessment Team consisted of the following members:

Teresa Lynch, an independent Commercial Revitalization Specialist, is a former National Main Street Center (NMSC) Senior Program Officer, with 30 years of Main Street® experience. Teresa has directed two statewide Main Street® coordinating programs – the Main Street Arkansas program and the Virginia Main Street Program – and also served as a Main Street® manager in Orange, Va. In her 14 years of working with the NMSC, Teresa provided consulting services to hundreds of local Main Street programs across the country. Her earlier career in writing, editing and publishing add valuable skills for producing well-thought out reports and strategic plans.

Teresa's particular expertise is in organizational development and leading new commercial revitalization initiatives. During her time with the NMSC, she created and managed the Army Community Heritage Partnerships Program, delivering downtown commercial revitalization services to 11 communities with adjoining Army installations. Teresa also helped to establish a regional Main Street® coordinating program in the Western Erie Canal corridor of New York State.

Teresa is currently involved in another innovative project, working as part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Treasure's team, where she is helping the Sweet Auburn district in Atlanta establish an urban neighborhood Main Street® program.

Matthew Wagner, Ph.D. is the president of Nitro Development LLC. Nitro Development is focused on building innovative downtown and community economies. Through Nitro Development, Matt blends his professional and academic background in entrepreneurship, downtown and urban commercial revitalization to impact communities through a comprehensive focus on driving grassroots economic vitality.

As a former manager of the Sheboygan Falls Main Street Program (Great American Main Street Award Winner), executive director of the Downtown Racine Corporation (International Downtown Association, National Sierra Club, and American Institute of Architects Urban Planning Award Winner), and a Senior Program Associate at the National Trust National Main Street Center in Washington D.C, Matt has nearly 20 years of award-winning downtown development experience.

Recent consulting engagements included market analysis training, performance metrics development, community assessment teams, and various conference presentations in West Virginia, New York and the State of Washington. In addition, Wagner brings a unique focus on urban issues, having worked with urban Main Street districts in Philadelphia, PA, Oakland, CA, and Dayton, Ohio, as well as earning his Ph.D. in urban economic development with a research concentration in minority entrepreneurship from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Most recently Matt was awarded the US Small Business Administration – Wisconsin District's honor as Champion for Women-Owned Businesses, and also served on a White House Counsel examining workforce and economic development issues in auto industry economies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The team is grateful for the contributions of the National Association of Realtors (NAR) in making the community assessment visit and this follow-up study possible through the award of a Smart Growth grant. The team's special thanks go to Dan Locche, Director of Public Affairs, Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors (BNAR), for developing the grant proposal and for all his help in organizing the visit; and to Doreen Fahey, BNAR Education and Event Director, who participated in, and supported so many aspects of, the on-site visit.

Thanks also go to the following individuals and organizations who provided a local funding match for the Smart Growth grant: Councilman David Franczyk, the Fillmore Corridor Neighborhood Coalition (FCNC), the Martin Luther King CDC, and the BNAR.

The Assessment Visit could not have been planned, coordinated and facilitated without the assistance of the following Fillmore Corridor Main Street Steering Committee members: Rita Gay, Sharon Benz, Carl Skompinski, Tony James, Kelly Maurer, Paul Harris, and Stephen Karnath. A very big "Thank You" goes out to those individuals.

And finally, this report reflects observations and recommendations based on interactions with a large and varied cross-section of the community -- representatives of organizations involved in the physical and social betterment of the districts, City department heads, and individual Fillmore Corridor stakeholders – all of whom generously gave their time to provide the team with ideas on how to make the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts more economically viable. More than 100 of those representatives and individuals participated in meetings and interviews the team conducted while on site in the Fillmore Corridor neighborhood. These stakeholders identified key issues affecting revitalization in both commercial districts; voiced their concerns about matters they felt needed attention; provided ideas for resolving problems; and pledged their support to the Fillmore Corridor Main Street initiative.



THE MAIN STREET FOUR POINT APPROACH®

The Assessment Team’s observation of issues and challenges confronting the two neighborhood commercial districts (Broadway-Fillmore and MLK) within the Fillmore Corridor were gleaned from preliminary review of background materials and on-site meetings and tours during the team’s visit to the community. The analysis of these issues and the recommendations contained in this report are sifted through the lens of the Main Street Four Point Approach®, which was developed more than 35 years ago by the National Main Street Center, a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Main Street’s comprehensive methodology incorporates the following points into a long-term commercial revitalization strategy:

Design takes advantage of the visual opportunities inherent in a historic commercial district by directing attention to all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, landscaping, merchandising, displays, and promotional materials. Its aim is to stress the importance of design quality in all of these areas, to educate people about design quality, and to expedite improvements in the commercial district.

Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image in order to rekindle community pride. Promotion seeks to improve retail sales events and festivals and to create a positive public image of the commercial district in order to attract investors, developers, and new businesses.

Economic Restructuring strengthens the commercial district's existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding existing businesses to provide a balanced commercial mix, converting unused or underutilized space into productive property, sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of the district's business people, and attracting new businesses that the market can support.

Organization establishes consensus and cooperation by building partnerships among the various groups that have a stake in the neighborhood's commercial core. This will allow the Main Street revitalization program to provide effective, ongoing management and advocacy of the district. Diverse groups from the public and private sectors must work together to create and maintain a successful program.

While the Main Street Four Point Approach® provides the framework for success, implementing the methodology is based on eight principles that pertain to all areas of the revitalization effort. These eight principles are overarching values for the four points:

- **Comprehensive.** Downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization is a complex process that cannot be accomplished through a single project. For successful, long-term revitalization, a comprehensive approach must be used.
- **Incremental.** Small projects and simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help to develop skills so that more complex problems can be addressed and more ambitious projects undertaken.
- **Self-help.** Local leaders must have the desire and will to make the project successful. The Main Street® approach can provide direction, ideas, and training; but continued and long-term success depends upon the involvement and commitment of the community.
- **Public-Private Partnerships.** Both the public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical viability of the commercial district. Each sector has a role to play, and each must understand the other's strengths and limitations so that an effective partnership can be forged.
- **Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets.** Business districts must capitalize on the assets that make them unique. Every district has unique qualities, like distinctive buildings and scale that give people a sense of place. These local assets must serve as the foundation for all aspects of the revitalization program.
- **Quality.** Quality must be emphasized in every part of the revitalization program. This applies equally to each element of the program, from storefront design to promotional campaigns to educational programs.
- **Change.** Changes in attitude and practice are necessary to improve current economic conditions. Public support for change will build as the program grows.
- **Implementation-oriented.** Activity creates confidence in the program and ever greater levels of participation. Frequent, visible changes are a reminder that the revitalization effort

is under way. Small projects at the beginning of the program pave the way for larger activities as the revitalization effort matures.

HISTORY OF FILLMORE CORRIDOR MAIN STREET® INITIATIVE

The following provides a capsule history on how the Fillmore Corridor Main Street® Initiative came to be.

- In 2011, conversations began among community stakeholders about how the Broadway-Fillmore and Martin Luther King (MLK) neighborhoods could work together. By 2012, the Fillmore Corridor Neighborhood Coalition (FCNC) was established.
- Shortly thereafter, Daemen College, through its Center for Sustainable Communities and Civic Engagement, joined the FCNC and became a major partner bringing with it the support of various Daemen College department heads and students supporting the Coalition's work.
- In summer of 2013, FCNC's primary focus turned toward revitalization of the commercial cores of both MLK and Broadway-Fillmore districts, leading to the visit in October, 2013 by a specialist in the Main Street Four Point Approach®, who presented to the community the comprehensive methodology at the core of the National Main Street Center's successful commercial revitalization process.
- FCNC leadership decided to adopt the Main Street® comprehensive approach for managing the redevelopment of both the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts and initiated the revitalization effort by creating a Fillmore Corridor Main Street Steering Committee. Over the past two years, the following projects and activities have occurred through the efforts of the Main Street Steering Committee:
 - A collaboration between Main Street Steering Committee members and Daemen College staff and students resulted in the development of an FCNC organizational brochure.
 - The partnership between the Main Street Steering Committee and the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning produced a Fillmore Neighborhood Corridor Study. The student class project researched the social, cultural and physical history of the Fillmore Corridor; inventoried each commercial property in the two neighborhood districts; created maps of the corridor which defined residential, vacant, commercial, recreational, community service, and industrial uses; and put forth proposals for development and reuse of vacant lots and buildings along the corridor. An additional UB studio focused on developing renovation plans for the Eckhardt building on the northwest corner of the Broadway-Fillmore intersection.
 - A partnership between the FCNC and the National Trust's Preservation Green Lab was initiated. Once fully implemented, the partnership will assure that the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK redevelopment efforts are undertaken in an environmentally sensitive manner.

- The Main Street Steering Committee established relationships with city-wide and neighborhood community organizations, institutions, and agencies. Those new partnerships resulted in projects that had a positive impact on the two commercial districts.
- Joint efforts of the Main Street Steering Committee and Daemen College created a business program for entrepreneurial development.
- Main Street design assistance will be provided to both Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services and the Community Action Organization for properties receiving façade improvement grants as a result of the \$300,000 awards each organization received from the Better Buffalo Fund.
- The visibility the Main Street Steering Committee has brought to the neighborhood through implementation of successful projects over the past two years is generating private investment in the two commercial districts. Examples of private reinvestment in the Broadway-Fillmore district can be seen in the purchase of both the Eckhardt and K-Mart buildings, with plans for positive redevelopment; and the purchase, rehab and re-use of the Chudy Paper warehouse as the Bison Distillery.
- The Main Street Steering Committee, through Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services, submitted an application for an Oishei Foundation grant to support future Main Street® technical assistance and training and help with start-up costs for a Fillmore Corridor Main Street program. The grant has been awarded.
- The Buffalo Niagara Realtors Association was awarded a National Association of Realtors Smart Growth grant that funded a Fillmore Corridor Community Assessment Visit and this follow-up report.

§ II. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Community development represents a planned effort to build assets that increase the capacity of residents and businesses to improve their quality of life and economic vitality. An asset is usually a “stock” that can be drawn upon, built upon, or developed, as well as a resource that can be leveraged to serve as a catalyst for additional private and/or public investment to occur. This focus on community assets, rather than the needs, represents a significant shift in how community development practitioners have approached their work in recent years, in terms of focusing on a proactive approach to improving the community.

In engaging the local stakeholders and touring the two districts, the team noted a number of community assets that can be leveraged and promoted to build additional customer traffic and investment within the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts. The following represents both observed and participant acknowledgements of area assets:

- Blues/Jazz/Music cultural history
- Churches
- Olmstead Park
- Science Museum



- Historic Commercial Architecture
- Urban Farms (e.g. Wilson Street Farm; Common Roots Farm; Urban Habitat Project)
- Broadway Market
- Torn Space Theater
- Numerous civic and community organizations in both districts with missions that intersect with the Main Street initiative
- Block Clubs that harness the energies of local residents for quality-of-life projects. (Members identify issues that are affecting reinvestment in the neighborhood and create activities that will address those issues.)
- Willing property owners, such as those utilizing Better Buffalo matching grant funds to rehab facades of their commercial buildings; and those doing some major redevelopment projects in the Broadway-Fillmore district, such as: the Eckhardt building; the K-Mart building; the old Chudy Paper Company building; and the Torn Space Theater.
- Involvement of Daemen College – led by the College’s Center for Sustainable Communities and Civic Engagement; with assistance from professors and students from other college departments
- University of Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning assistance developed through the partnership with the Fillmore Corridor Main Street initiative
- Buffalo State College’s Design and Communications department’s assistance in the revitalization process -- also brought to the table through the Main Street initiative.
- Investment of the City in streetscape improvements in MLK district – sidewalks, light standards, streetscape enhancements
- Infusion of \$\$ for building rehab and streetscape enhancements from Better Buffalo Fund – with three Better Buffalo grants awarded to benefit Broadway-Fillmore and MLK districts
- City-wide attention focused on the East Side through the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation’s redevelopment of the Northland Avenue Belt Line Corridor

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

While there are tremendous community assets within the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts, like many urban cores throughout the United States, Buffalo was somewhat impacted by the real estate crisis of 2007-2008. The flight of residents and commercial establishments that could relocate outside the urban neighborhood districts along with numerous tear downs of commercial and residential property propelled a cycle of disinvestment which severely weakened the economic vitality of the Fillmore Corridor area.

The following represent critical community challenges noted by the assessment team that, while overwhelming in some ways, must be addressed in a comprehensive and thoughtful manner in order to rebuild investor confidence as well as obtain the type of development that will lead to sustainable economic investment:

- There is a need to maintain integrity of building fabric. Currently there is a lack of design guidelines for both the MLK and Broadway-Fillmore commercial districts.

- Many of the commercial and residential buildings in the two neighborhood districts are in poor condition.
- There has been rampant demolition in both commercial and residential areas.
- Both residential and commercial property owners have difficulties in getting loans.
- Homeowners are beginning to feel trapped – properties are devalued and residents are trying to preserve quality of life. Strong residential neighborhoods are necessary to support commercial districts.
- There are safety concerns in both the residential and commercial areas of the two districts.
- There is a perception that there is a lack of police presence.
- There are no gateways forming a sense of entrance into both the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts.



MLK District entry from north looking south on Ferry



B-F District entry from north looking south on Fillmore

§ III. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This report addresses issues and makes recommendations for both MLK and Broadway-Fillmore commercial districts in the following areas: Economic Restructuring, Design, Outreach, and Promotion. None of the recommendations made for business and property development, urban landscape and building design projects, or image development/promotional/marketing activities can be accomplished without the Fillmore Corridor Main Street Steering Committee fully developing a sustainable, comprehensive non-profit revitalization organization that is capable of implementing a program of work that integrates the Main Street Four Point Approach® methodology.

SETTING UP ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

OBSERVATION #1: The following recommendations for structuring a Fillmore Corridor Main Street organization represent the initial focus and work plan for the Main Street Steering Committee. It is estimated that it will take approximately three months for the Steering Committee to move from its present status to the development of a full-fledged board and a non-profit organizational structure ready to fully address the balance of recommendations made in this report.

Recommendation #1: Adopt an organizational chart that describes the structure of a Fillmore Corridor Main Street program. The team is including in the appendix to this report an organizational chart that will work in an atypical organizational situation such as this – a revitalization program that includes two distinct neighborhood districts (Broadway-Fillmore and MLK).

Note: A suggested Organizational Chart is included in the Appendix.

Recommendation #2: Develop the member composition for the Board of Directors. Currently the Fillmore Corridor Main Street Steering Committee is composed of seven members. It is recommended that all seven (7) members be made members of the newly-created Board. It is further recommended that an additional eight (8) members be selected for the board. Thus the total number of voting board members would be fifteen (15).

Recommendation #3: Elect board officers. Once the board of directors is in place, it should move to electing officers. Those officers (executive committee) should be:

Chair (or President) -- develops agendas for meetings; is the chief spokesperson for the organization; chairs meetings; manages daily supervision of program; and facilitates participation

Vice Chair (or Vice President) -- the Chair/President in training

Secretary -- takes BOD minutes; and keeps program records

Treasurer -- keeps the organization's books; handles the money; and does financial reports

Recommendation #4: Invite ex officio members to sit on the board by virtue of the position they hold with a community group, organization, or government office. These ex officio board members would be non-voting; however, they would participate in the board meetings when there is an opportunity to discuss how their agency's/ organization's/ group's projects can intersect with, or support, Fillmore Corridor Main Street activities. Also, through these ex officio members, the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program will learn how its Main Street organization can help benefit and support the objectives and projects undertaken by the various community groups.

Recommendations #5: Define geographic boundaries for the two districts. The following are the boundaries suggested by the team for both the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK Districts:

Broadway-Fillmore District

- North boundary of Fillmore Ave:
Unia Polska Building (east side of Fillmore) & BFNHS Building (west side of Fillmore)
- South boundary of Fillmore Ave:
Intersection of Fillmore and Paderewski Drive
- East boundary of Broadway:
Intersection of Broadway and Memorial Street
- West boundary of Broadway:
Intersection of Broadway and Reed Street

MLK District

- North Boundary
Intersection of Fillmore and Ferry
- South Boundary:
Intersection of Fillmore and Best

Once the geographic area has been established, create simple maps of each district that can be used as a visual when communicating the purposes of the revitalization effort to the community. Also create a singular map that includes both districts and shows the relationship between the two districts.

Note: A map with district boundaries is included in the Appendix.

Recommendation #6: Define a name for the Fillmore Corridor Main Street organization. The team is not suggesting a name for the overarching organization that will be responsible for managing the revitalization of Fillmore Corridor's two commercial districts – Broadway-Fillmore and MLK. But the team does recommend that the title of the organization infer that the organization's mission and work is focused on revitalizing those two commercial districts.

Recommendation #7:

- **Name the Broadway-Fillmore Commercial District.** The team is suggesting that it be called "Broadway-Fillmore Center Renaissance."
- **Name the MLK Commercial District.** The team is suggesting that it be called "MLK Center Renaissance."

Recommendation #8: Draft bylaws and articles of incorporation and apply for 501 (c)(3) non-profit tax status. It is generally recommended that a Main Street program be organized as a 501 (c)(3) to reflect its status as a non-profit, community-based organization that has a charitable or educational purpose and does not engage in lobbying efforts. Legal advice and assistance should be obtained to guide the incorporation and tax status process. The University of Buffalo provides legal assistance through an economic development clinic that will help nascent programs such as the Fillmore Corridor Main Street initiative set up 501 (c) (3) organizations. The team suggests that the Steering Committee make an application to the UB Law School for such assistance.

Note: *The team has provided the steering committee with an example of bylaws which have been used by communities developing Main Street organizations.*

Recommendation #9: The Board of Directors should establish standing committees for the four work areas of Main Street – Organization (Outreach), Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. Establishing these four standing committees and work plans for each will provide opportunities to engage more members of the community in the revitalization effort. It will gain additional support for the organization and broaden community participation as more volunteers will be needed to serve the organization as committee members.

The following are the general work areas assigned to each of the four standing committees:

Outreach

Public Relations
Volunteer Development
Fundraising Support

Design

Historic Preservation/Design Education
Architectural Assistance
Building Improvements
Developing Underutilized Space (with ER Committee)
Public Spaces
Design Regulation & Review

Promotion

Image Development
Business Promotions
Special Events

Economic Restructuring

Identifying Market Opportunities
Strengthening Existing Businesses
Filling Vacancies with Complementary Businesses
Assembling Incentives and Capital for Business and Property Development
Developing Underutilized Space (with Design Committee)

Recommendation #10: Secure funding to administer the revitalization program. The Board should develop a system for soliciting contributions and creating other revenue streams to fund the revitalization organization's operational budget. The operational budget will need to cover all program activities as well as the salary for staff. Funding should come from a variety of public and private sources so that the revitalization program will not be threatened if any one source dries up.

Note: *The team has attached a sample budget and potential revenue sources in the report Appendix.*

Recommendation #11: Develop a Work Plan. Once the Board is fully formed, it should turn the recommendations in this report into goals, objectives and tasks. Determine which committee will be responsible for undertaking the work. Assign responsibilities to individuals/groups, identify timeframes for completion of projects, and list any expenses that will be entailed in the planning and implementation stages.

Note: *An example work plan template is included in the Appendix.*

Recommendation #12: Set up a Fillmore Corridor Main Street office in a central location in the Broadway-Fillmore district. The Board should work with Daemen College's Center for Sustainable Communities and Civic Engagement, which is making an application to Citizens Bank Foundation for a grant to support commercial revitalization activities in the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK districts. A portion of the grant request is targeted for funding rental costs and equipment for an Entrepreneurship Incubator and New Business Training Center in the Fillmore Corridor. This office will establish a presence for Daemen College student interns who will be providing support services to the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program. If this project is funded, it is likely that the Fillmore Corridor Main Street office can be co-located in the same leased space.

Recommendation #13: Hire staff. After the Board is fully functional, a budget and fundraising plan initiated, standing committees in place, work plans established, an operational funding revenue stream firmly established, and an office location set up, the Board should move forward with advertising and hiring staff to manage and coordinate all activities and projects for the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program and to provide support to volunteer board and committee members. The team is anticipating that in order to provide the kind of support needed to cover the needs of both the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK districts, two staff persons will be required – a full-time Executive Director and a part-time Deputy Director.

As an interim step, prior to actually hiring those two recommended staff positions, the team suggests that the Board apply to the Service Collaborative of Western NY for an AmeriCorps intern. These interns commit one year of full-time service to work in non-profit organizations across New York State. Members work closely with the administrative staff of non-profits, enhancing the organization's ability to provide quality programming and support for its clients. Here is the website to access information about AmeriCorps/Vista interns:

<http://www.tscwny.org/programs/ameri-corps-builds-lives-through-education-able/>

§ IV. ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

The following represents the team's observations and recommendations concerning the economic restructuring components for the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts. This particular section focuses on strategies and tactics to both jump start and sustain economic vitality within the respective commercial districts. This is accomplished in a comprehensive fashion by the Economic Restructuring Committee through the following activities:

- Studying the economics of the district in the form of a market analysis to better understand potential opportunities. (We will need to create the market here!)
- Sharing opportunities with potential start-up businesses or existing businesses seeking second/expanded locations.
- Serving as an ombudsman in facilitating connections for new and existing businesses seeking financing options.
- Linking entrepreneurs with retail/office/manufacturing space opportunities.
- Developing and implementing, through marketing, a "wish list" of key business type targets.
- Assisting the Developer community with tenant and building opportunities.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBSERVATION #1: The *Broadway-Fillmore* commercial district represents what was historically considered Buffalo's 2nd downtown. However, residential displacement through massive housing demolition and historic flight from the Corridor neighborhoods have resulted in a commercial environment void without a large enough market density to support the amount of square footage existing within the district. The district's neighborhood has lost more than 50 percent of its resident population, yet the commercial district has many more buildings than can be supported by a resident-only shopping base. In order to effectively promote property and business development, a multifaceted and comprehensive approach will be needed, highlighting entrepreneurship, creative retail practices, non-traditional "retail" recruitment, and -- over time -- additional housing density.

It is important to note that, while the *MLK* district has a residential neighborhood which is largely intact, its business district has been negatively impacted by a number of demolished commercial buildings, resulting in empty lots that could encourage infill strip development. It has also been harmed by inappropriate façade renovations to commercial buildings, resulting in the loss of the buildings' architectural integrity. There is a need for preservation-based rehab of these structures, since restoration of their historic architectural elements will differentiate this commercial district from a cookie-cutter approach and help bring back into the district local neighborhood residents and visitors looking for an authentic shopping experience.

Recommendation #1: *In order to effectively develop a revitalization strategy, the organization needs to establish good baseline economic, building- and business- related data.* The Economic Restructuring (E.R.) Committee should leverage the building and business inventory data that resulted from an on-site survey of each property in the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK districts undertaken by senior Environmental Design Studio students at the University of Buffalo

School of Architecture and Planning. The class of 18 students, under the direction of Prof. Harry Warren, partnered with the FCNC, to conduct a study that recommended design and other changes to the Fillmore Corridor, concentrating its attention on businesses and properties within the two neighborhood commercial districts of Broadway-Fillmore and MLK. Prof. Warren's class conducted the survey and documentation of existing conditions along the Fillmore Ave. corridor as a starting point and resource tool for the Fillmore Corridor's Main Street initiative.

One of the E.R. Committee's first tasks will be to take the existing building and business documentation that the UB study produced and to complete the work of inventorying businesses and commercial properties within the two business districts.

It is critical that the E.R. Committee gain a complete understanding of the commercial districts' business mix, including ownership, business type, product mix, number of years in business, etc. A second baseline data point revolves around each property within the respective districts. Data collection on the properties would consist of, for example, the name of the property owner; building square footage, sale price and/or lease rate; current occupancy, etc.

As the inventory data is assembled, it should be electronically recorded on a software program that suits the collection of business and property data as well as other information commonly stored by Main Street programs. An example of such a software program that is used by many Main Street programs across the county is available from a company known as "Downtown Diva." Here is a link to the Downtown Diva website: <http://www.downtown-diva.com/about.php>

Recommendation #2: Examine business mix data for possible retail and service clusters.

Clusters represent a potential strength within a unique collection of businesses that can be promoted to attract outside consumers as well as used to promote like type and/or complementary businesses to locate to the area. Here are some examples of Clusters:

- Complementary Clusters: Home-related businesses (hardware, furniture, etc.); Wedding (bakery, florists, etc.)
- Competitive Clusters: Restaurants; Apparel
- Demographic Clusters: Businesses that appeal to a particular demographic (ethnic; age – e.g. Millennials)

Recommendation #3: Work with one of the colleges to develop a Fillmore Corridor Main Street program app. Its menu could include promotional events; business highlights; visitor attractions; available properties for sale or lease, as examples.

Recommendation #4: Rebuild market density through niche retail development that encourages outside customer visitors to the district. Throughout the city's history, the Fillmore Corridor has represented a melting pot of new immigrant communities locating in Buffalo. This history is something that is authentic and experiential, which are top considerations for consumer shopping. Populated since the dawn of its history, wave after wave of hardworking immigrants came in search of a better life in the



factories, rail yards, and grain silos of what was then one of America's top industrial centers. First came the Germans, then the Poles and the Italians, then Russian Jews and an assortment of Eastern Europeans, then the African-Americans who migrated up from the South starting in the early 20th Century and were the East Side's dominant group by the '60s and '70s. And over the last decade there has been a large influx of Arab and Native African groups locating to the district.

Celebrate and embrace this diversity by developing a business mix focused on key assets of the district – its international flavor, historic architecture, outstanding churches, jazz/blues music history, and its growing urban farming culture. All of these assets are important components for increasing visitor/tourism traffic into the districts and they should be reflected in the districts' business mix. Here are some potential business development opportunities that leverage these historic and cultural assets:

- Restaurants with Jazz/Blues music
- Businesses that feature architectural salvage/building materials
- Pop-up retail that highlights locally-grown produce and other seasonal selections
- Religious book store and gift items
- Healthy living grocery store
- Ethnic food restaurants
- Art shops/galleries that feature local artisans connect well with historic/cultural tourism

There are additional thoughts on these and other business opportunities in recommendations made below.

OBSERVATION #2: Like many commercial corridors across the country, the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts lack an entrepreneurship ecosystem to support new and expanding ventures. Moving forward, the ability to help launch new retail- and service-related businesses within the Corridor will be key to maintaining the area's unique authenticity rather than encouraging national “anywhere USA” type of growth.

Recommendation #1: Broaden the current relationship with Daemen College to expand its business training program for new business start-ups with the establishment of an 'entrepreneurship incubator.' This will encourage new business development in both the MLK and Broadway-Fillmore commercial districts.

The Daemen College business training program was developed through a partnership between the Fillmore Corridor Main Street initiative and Daemen College's Center for Sustainable Communities as a way to attract new small businesses to the Fillmore Corridor. The program, which is opened to anyone who would like to start a business or expand an existing business, follows Daemen College's academic calendar and, thus far, three semesters of the program have been completed. Classes are held one night a week for 8 to 9 weeks.

During its first semester the program utilized a variety of speakers and instructors who volunteered their services and provided information on starting a business -- attorneys, bankers,

Small Business Development Center personnel, and Daemen College marketing/ business/ entrepreneurship professors.

For the second and third semesters, funds were obtained from a small literacy grant to hire a Daemen College entrepreneurship professor to organize and manage the program.

The assessment team believes that this initial effort to form a business training program that would encourage start-ups in the Fillmore Corridor's business districts has been very laudable and is definitely headed in the right direction. However, it is now time for the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program's E.R. to assure that this training program expands and works to benefit start-ups that will be located in either the MLK or Broadway Fillmore commercial districts. To attain this goal, the team recommends that the E.R. Committee work with Daemen College to take the following steps to move the business training program to the next level:

- **Develop an “Entrepreneurship Incubator program.”** Invite those who have successfully completed the business training course work to move into a ‘real life’ business start-up situation. An entrepreneurship incubator can nurture the development of start-up businesses, helping them survive and grow during the start-up period, when they are most vulnerable. The incubator program can provide the entrepreneurs with business support services and other resources that will help them move forward.
- **Locate the Entrepreneurship Incubator in a very visible location in the Broadway-Fillmore business district.** The commercial space that is leased for the Incubator program should include an office that can serve for private consultations with the entrepreneurs, separate stalls or cubicles that can be used by the individual entrepreneurs to handle their business, and be outfitted with equipment for sharing internet, computers, fax, phone, and general networking activities. There should also be included in the leased space an equipped training room in which the continuing business start-up training sessions can be held.
- **Restrict admittance to the Entrepreneurship Incubator.** Only those prospective business owners who have successfully completed the business training program should be admitted to the Entrepreneurship Incubator and only after they have certified that they will locate in either the Broadway-Fillmore or MLK business district if they start a new business.
- **Work with Daemen College to find a source of grant funding to support the Business Training Program and the development of the Entrepreneurship Incubator.** Obviously, the Business Training Program could use an infusion of funding to make it a first class enterprise, with consistency in its training staff and a well-equipped space where the training sessions can occur. Also, financial support will be needed to initiate the Entrepreneurship Incubator and to outfit the space that will house that venture. The team is recommending that the E.R. Committee and Daemen College seek out opportunities for funding.

Recommendation #2: An emerging concept, and one that works well in districts with available green space or “open gaps” within their commercial district, is to use the space for “Pop-up Retail” operations. Pop-up retail typically involves food trucks or other retail operations that set up on vacant lots with varied hours and days of availability. The concept provides a low-cost

way for new entrepreneurs to get into business. In addition, the unique nature of these businesses provides a “funky” quality to the district. Create an inventory of available spaces and then promote through area entrepreneurship training courses to new start-ups seeking low cost space opportunities to try out their ventures. The following represent examples from Main Street programs in the Alberta commercial corridor in Portland, Oregon:



Two “Pop-Up Retailers” operating in the Alberta Main Street district in Portland, Oregon

Recommendation #3: Traditional sources of start-up financing, i.e. bank loans, etc., have become nearly impossible to obtain for a new venture. The following is a more advanced economic revitalization strategy, and thus, a little too soon to consider for the Fillmore Corridor Main Street initiative. However, it is worth noting that a number of communities across the country have developed “crowd-source” funding opportunities whereby individual investors can provide small amounts of capital (e.g. \$100) to help launch a new business. National examples of this funding mechanism include: Kickstarter, <https://www.kickstarter.com/>, GoFundMe <http://www.gofundme.com/>, and Kiva <http://www.kiva.org/#>. Kiva also recently launched a unique initiative focused on communities. An example can be found at Kiva City Milwaukee: <http://www.kiva.org/milwaukee>.

Moving forward, the E.R. Committee can and should play a role in being a resource for new and existing businesses to discover sources of business financing. In the initial phases, the committee can build a database of existing financial resources, both traditional bank financing and public sector financing options, as well as non-traditional crowd-funding sources. This database can be shared with businesses seeking to launch and/or grow within the Fillmore Corridor and showcase Main Street as a critical resource for district businesses and entrepreneurs.

OBSERVATION #3: The team observed a number of key economic assets during the community assessment, including some significant existing and emerging retail anchors that are critical for future growth. Like many downtown and urban neighborhood commercial districts, while there are a number of assets, having large traffic generators is essential to supporting smaller retail operations.

Recommendation #1: Broadway Market with 30 permanent vendors has the market potential to create density that will draw a number of daily visitors to the Corridor. However, the Market’s current status dictates that additional marketing, niche international food offerings, and

design engagement with the street are all needed for this to happen. The Fillmore Corridor Main Street program should support the Market with a single voice that works with the City to provide additional operating dollars for marketing, as well as capital for physical (interior and exterior) Broadway Market business development improvements, e.g.:

- ***Creating a shared kitchen.*** The City has completed a study of the Market, which outlines both design and business development opportunities. One particular objective is to establish a shared kitchen facility within the market. Commercial kitchens are very expensive and often serve as a barrier for food-related production businesses to launch. This facility will provide a key ingredient to the development of food-based entrepreneurs within the Corridor district.



- ***Adding Wi-Fi to the facility for visitors.*** The Market needs to create a “third space” element to encourage visitors and local independent business owners (i.e. consultants; sales, etc.) to utilize the market for more than just a retail shopping area, but also a “business” gathering area.

- ***Making exterior facade enhancements.*** There is a direct correlation between a consumer’s interest in shopping within a store, and the exterior image that the shop promotes. In other words, how the exterior looks makes an important impression as to whether someone will stop and shop. Unfortunately, the Broadway Market currently has a number of blank walls that fail to showcase the variety of food and food-related retail within the Market. This is something that could be rectified through a wall mural on a portion of the blank exterior façade.

Note: *More detail on a mural enhancement to the Broadway Market follows within the Design section of this report.*

- ***Displaying food-related businesses in front windows.*** The front of the Broadway Market is currently filled with service businesses. Moving forward, it is critical through both signage and the actual relocation of tenants, that food-related businesses are featured in the front windows of the Broadway Market.

Note: *More detail on remedying the front window issue of the Broadway Market is contained in the Design section of this report.*

Recommendation #2: Create a business recruitment strategy focused on the Social Venture movement. This would involve non-profits and/or for-profits that sell products/services with a social justice or environmental mission rather than returning profits to shareholders/owners. For example:

- GoBike could develop a facility in the district that upcycles old bikes. There are a number of examples from around the country. One the best models is Bike Depot in Denver, Colorado.

<http://www.thebikedepot.org/>

- GroOperative could develop a hydroponic system for growing food and fish. One example to review is Sweet Water Organics in Milwaukee.

<http://sweetwater-organic.com/>. The organization

specializes in raising lake perch and has also developed branded merchandise as part of its revenue stream.



- The E.R. Committee can work with Habitat for Humanity to locate and launch a Habitat Restore in the Broadway-Fillmore business district. There are currently two “Restores” in Buffalo. A recruitment effort to bring a third to Broadway-Fillmore would be an effective strategy to complementing the current business mix as well as filling a large amount of vacant or underutilized retail space. <http://www.habitatbuffalo.org/>.

- Consider establishing a “Rebuilding Exchange.” This is an extension of the Habitat Restore concept. The Rebuilding Exchange in Chicago is a non-profit social enterprise. Its mission is to create a market for reclaimed building materials. The facility diverts materials from landfills and makes them accessible for reuse through its retail warehouse. They’ve taken the concept one step further by hiring designers to develop new product concepts, which they mass produce and wholesale to other retail outlets across Chicago. The photo is an example of custom bottle openers from reclaimed wood.



See: <http://rebuildingexchange.org/about>

OBSERVATION #4: The growing urban farm sector prevalent within the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts represents a unique opportunity to create both experiential product and retail offerings within the corridor.

Recommendation #1: *While a longer-term business development strategy is needed, now is the time to start cultivating ideas that leverage and expand the value-added potential of the urban farms movement within the Broadway-Fillmore District.* There are a number of potential products and opportunities for a “retail” presence that reflects the urban farm culture and which can present business opportunities along the Fillmore Corridor.

Recommendation #2: *Expand urban farming into more non-traditional production.* For example -- branded compost; hops for beer to create a Broadway-Fillmore branded beer, grown and produced locally; or grape vines for wine production. This new production would go well with the Bison Distillery which is being established in the Broadway-Fillmore district.



Recommendation #3: *Utilize co-op business model for additional neighborhood retail and production opportunities, such as a Healthy Food Store; Hardware; Book Store/Café; Brewery.* Great potential exists within the co-op form of business ownership. Once again, this is a highly advanced concept and a strategy adopted by many long-term Main Street programs. However, based on the community assessment there were already a number of conversations relating to prospects for the Urban Farm movement that could utilize this concept to launch a co-op food store. In addition, this concept will encourage job training/hiring, etc. within the Corridor creating an equity position for the business and a multiplier effect as the dollar turns over more within the neighborhood.



Co-op Brewery in Austin, Texas

PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT - OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of vacancies and neglected/deteriorating properties in both the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts. As such, property development will be a critical facet of a new, emerging Main Street initiative. Fortunately, the assessment team observed strong interest in redevelopment projects, including the Eckhardt Building, the former K-Mart Building and the soon-to-be opened Bison Distillery located in the old Chudy Paper building. A Main Street Economic Restructuring Committee is typically involved in helping with the tenant mix and works with the Design Committee to ensure that the redeveloped properties will support new business that are needed and have the appropriate design elements.



Eckhardt Building



Chudy Paper Building

OBSERVATION #1: With the number of vacant properties and critical property development needs, there is always the potential to go for the “big fix” by focusing on one large project as the savior for the district. As an emerging Main Street program, it is important to celebrate and

encourage those initiatives already in the making, while focusing on opportunities with the most likelihood for early success to build momentum.

Recommendation #1: Support and promote good property development initiatives that are already in the works. For example, Dr. Dagher’s property development plans for the Eckhardt and K-Mart buildings and the on-going Bison Distillery project would be early wins for the Broadway-Fillmore district and ones that will likely bring in services that respond to a real need as well as increase foot traffic for the district.

Recommendation #2: The Broadway Market has the potential to spin off more wholesale-related business opportunities. With the Market serving as a retail center, future opportunities may exist in which food businesses will require more value-added production and wholesaling space that can be, or should be, accommodated within the Market. Seek to create “Mezzanine” space to assist with the growth and expansion in production and distribution operations for Broadway Market food businesses or utilize former manufacturing facilities for these uses.

Recommendation #3: While most likely not a short-term strategy, the Corpus Christi Church campus represents an excellent redevelopment opportunity with a supportive ownership and community structure. Potential uses could focus on large space users such as:

- community gym/physical fitness center
- shared commercial kitchen facilities for culinary entrepreneurs
- veteran and/or senior housing and/or market-rate housing
- artists’ live/work spaces
- office complex to accommodate non-profit organizations that would benefit from co-locating.

OBSERVATION #2: Both the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts will soon see improvement projects started in the two districts through grants awarded from the Better Buffalo Fund. The grants are multi-faceted and include façade improvements to commercial properties in the districts.

- A \$300,000 grant was awarded to the Broadway-Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Service (BFNHS) for façade improvements and mixed-use development assistance within the Broadway-Fillmore commercial district.
- The Community Action Organization of Erie County was awarded a \$300,000 grant for facade improvements to commercial corridor businesses in the MLK commercial district. Streetscape enhancements will also be funded with a portion of this grant award for banners.
- The Torn Space Theater at 612 Fillmore Avenue was awarded a \$175,000 grant that will go toward façade and interior renovation of the existing theater and toward the adaptive reuse of an adjacent cement block building into a workshop, video sound lab and office space. An adjacent abandoned lot will be transformed to an outdoor stage for community use.

The grants that will be awarded to business owners and property owners who are improving the facades of their buildings must be matched with a minimum of 25% of the cost of the improvements.



Buildings in the MLK commercial district that will be utilizing façade improvement grant awards

Recommendation #1: *The recent Better Buffalo Fund grant announcement represents an exciting opportunity to make a visible difference in the Corridor.* However, this also makes the projects even more critical from the perspective that, if not managed effectively, will establish a negative precedence for future development and revitalization projects. A new Fillmore Corridor Main Street program, through its Economic Restructuring and Design Committees, should become actively engaged in helping to facilitate the projects that will be undertaken and to bring the necessary expertise to ensure success.

Recommendation #2: *The four corners of the Broadway-Fillmore intersection represent what could be termed the “100 percent corners,” i.e. the primary retail and commercial center for the district.* As a result, any upcoming rehab-reuse projects that are in the offing for the three buildings and the one vacant lot on those four corners (the old Union Stockyard Bank; the Eckhardt Building; the Mitchell Square Apartments Building; and the vacant land parcel beside the Vibes clothing store) are critical for a revitalized commercial district. Specifically, the E.R. Committee should:

- a. Support efforts to renovate and re-use the Eckhardt Building. This project has the potential to serve as a large catalyst and anchor for the District.
- b. Once a business and entrepreneurship recruitment strategy has been developed, work with the Eckhardt building owner to create a business mix that leverages the strategic niche identified within the economic restructuring plans.
- c. Ensure that the Bank property maintains its integrity while the market grows to support a future project.
- d. Encourage rehab and reuse of retail spaces on the first level of the Mitchell Square Apartments building that are in keeping with Main Street work plan and strategies for revitalizing the Broadway-Fillmore district
- e. Work with the ownership of the vacant land (adjacent to the Vibes store) to place temporary uses on the land that engage the public. Examples could include Friday evening music; a Farmer’s Market in cooperation with the Urban Farm groups; pop-up retail and/or food trucks.



Views of three of the 100 Percent Corners at Broadway and Fillmore, taken from the Eckhardt Building



Historic photo of intersection at Broadway and Fillmore. Shown on two of the corners on the right - the Mitchell Square Apartments building and the old Stockyard Union Bank building

§ V. DESIGN

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBSERVATION #1: Over the past decade, both the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK districts have lost critical building inventory. Going forward, design standards and guidelines should be put in place that protect key properties and a framework of quality design practices created in order to ensure appropriate adaptive reuse, rehabilitation and new infill construction and suitable enhancements to the public spaces.

Recommendation #1: Develop Design Guidelines. The Fillmore Corridor Main Street program, through its Design Committee, should take the lead on developing design guidelines for each of the two districts – to help protect them from the type of development that is not in keeping with preservation principles. Leverage the relationship with Professor Harry Warren at the University of Buffalo’s School of Architecture and Planning, to “tweak” other design guideline examples so that they are consistent and appropriate for your respective districts.

Recommendation #2: Provide Design Oversight. See information above in the Property Development section on the three Better Buffalo grants for façade and property improvements that will be ongoing in two districts. Design oversight and assistance to business and property owners who are taking advantage of these grants and improving their buildings should be provided by the Design Committee. The Design Committee should particularly work closely with the Torn Space Theater redevelopment since that project is at a major gateway to the Broadway-Fillmore district.

Recommendation #3: Use design guidelines to support economic restructuring activities. Here are some examples:

- Clean up and improve vacant and/or underutilized parking lots with needed improvements (such as utilities) that would encourage and support Pop-Up Retail and Food Trucks.
- Work with management of the Broadway Market to open it up to the street with a retail presence. A first move could be to add graphics and displays to the front windows that showcase the fresh food offerings available within the Market. A second step would involve the physical relocation of retail food business to the storefront spaces of the Market.



Opportunities abound for window design improvements to showcase fresh food offerings available in the Market

OBSERVATION #2: Both districts lack a visible identity and presence. There is currently no signal to visitors that they have entered or left the Corridor’s two business districts.

Recommendation #1: Facilitate MLK Banner Project. The Design Committee should take responsibility for facilitating the banner project in the MLK district. Banners have already been designed by Buffalo State College’s Communication Design Program. \$25,000 has been set aside in the Better Buffalo grant for the MLK District and earmarked for implementation of the Banner Project.

The addition of banners within the MLK district will help to indicate entry gateways into the district, such as at the north entry-way at Fillmore and Ferry – where the banners can define and signal to drivers and pedestrians that they are entering a distinct business district on the corridor.



Proposed banners for MLK district



Approaching the north boundary of the MLK district at the intersection of Fillmore and Ferry

Recommendation #2: Facilitate Plan for Gateway Improvements in Broadway-Fillmore District. The four entry gateway intersections of the Broadway-Fillmore district need enhancements. These could include banners just at the entry intersections; or ground landscaping that is planted at entry intersections; or could involve a well-designed welcoming sign at each entry point. Another \$25,000 has been set aside from the Better Buffalo grant to be spent on streetscape improvements for the Broadway-Fillmore district. These monies can be dedicated to suggested intersection enhancements.



Approaching the B-F district at the southern entry (looking north) at Paderewski and Fillmore intersection

OBSERVATION #3: During the community assessment visit, a number of Corridor stakeholders commented on lighting and other security-related design issues. Some of these safety concerns stem from: a perception that there is a lack of visible policing; a proliferation of security roll-downs on buildings; loitering and resulting litter left in the district. As an overlay to traditional design guidelines, many urban neighborhood commercial programs have developed an “Environmental Design” plan. Environmental design reflects the need to create design improvements that can encourage or discourage undesirable behavior and criminal activity, as well as control human / criminal behavior and reduce the fear of crime. Some examples include:

- Improved visibility with lighting or transparent building materials
- Avoidance of lighting that creates glare or shadows
- Elimination of roll-downs and grates on retail buildings
- Keeping the sidewalks and streets clear of litter and debris
- Removing graffiti
- Installing flower planters/containers
- Creating murals along blank walls of buildings

Recommendation #1: Paint murals on exterior blank walls of buildings. Foster the continuing relationship with Buffalo State’s Communication/Design Program and seek out local artists to encourage the creation of murals in both districts. A primary target should be the sides of the Broadway Market. Currently the exterior of the Market does not portray to visitors what is inside of the building. Some of this is due to the lack of externally facing food-related retail on the building’s front façade (which is addressed in a design recommendation above); as well as a lack of windows along the building sides. The Design Committee should work with the City on developing a plan for enhancing the blank side walls through murals – starting with the Gibson Street side façade of the Market.



Gibson Street façade of Broadway Market



Example of a façade mural

Recommendation #2: Establish a plan for filling and maintaining planters in MLK District.

When the team was in the MLK commercial district during the assessment visit, planters that had been part of streetscape enhancements funded by the City were bare of plantings and weeds and litter were starting to accumulate. However, since the visit, the team understands that the MLK business association has decided to take on the project of planting and maintaining the planters. Also, one of the MLK business owners is already caring for some of the planters. Leslie Thomas, owner of One Man’s Junk is Another Man’s Treasure Boutique, on the corner of Fillmore and Woodlawn, has adopted three planters that she has filled with flowers and is tending.

While these measures are extremely heartening, in the future it will be necessary for the MLK merchants who are taking on the responsibility of caring for the planters to find funding to help support this major undertaking. The funding will be needed to purchase appropriate plant materials on an annual basis such as: mulch, planting soil, annual flowers, perennials, and/or small evergreen shrubs.

It is recommended that the Design Committee work with the MLK business association to develop a plan for determining what sort of planting materials will be needed annually and how a maintenance/ watering schedule can be facilitated. The plan should specify the project costs; determine a funding source to cover expenses; and identify how the City can provide some help in maintaining the planters.



Empty planter on left and those planted and tended by Leslie Thomas, owner of One Man’s Junk is Another Man’s Treasure Boutique

Recommendation #3: Encourage lighting on exterior of commercial buildings in the Broadway-Fillmore District. Use lighting as a deterrent for crime/drug dealing/loitering and to increase the perception of safety. While lighting the street and exterior building storefronts is extremely important, the Main Street program should also encourage a technique that may be more effective, which is making sure the storefront interior window displays are lighted at night. The example below showcases down lighting that washes the exterior but also a well-lighted interior that provides lighting for safety purposes but also highlights the product mix and, during evening hours, shows activity within the space.



Recommendation #4: Explore Mayor’s initiative for installing LED lighting on street lamps in neighborhood districts. Determine if the Broadway-Fillmore district can be chosen as the prototype example of the Mayor’s initiative. This would seem a possibility based on all of the commercial revitalization work that the Fillmore Corridor Main Street initiative has accomplished over the past two years and because of the private investment that is coming back into the district.

Recommendation #5: Coordinate Public Art Displays. Work with the public arts department of the Albright Knox Museum to establish a system for bringing regular public art displays into the two districts. Public art displays will bring more pedestrian traffic – local residents and visitors – into the district. More people on the sidewalks will, in turn, mean more customers for the businesses and help to dispel security and safety concerns.

§ VI. ORGANIZATION

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBSERVATION #1: The one standing committee that will need to get started on some early projects is the Organization Committee. This is because three of the Organization Committee's major responsibilities will come into play as soon as the Fillmore Corridor Main Street board is established. The Organization Committee will provide essential support by helping the board develop strategies for –

- A public relations/communications campaign for the organization
- Finding program volunteers
- Establishing a fundraising plan

The first two recommendations below are ones that should be undertaken as soon as all Fillmore Corridor Main Street program board members have been selected and board officers elected. Projects described in Recommendations 3 and 4 below should not be tackled until staff has been hired for the program.

Recommendation #1: Create the member composition for the Organization Committee. The four executive officers (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer) of the Fillmore Corridor Main Street Program will form the core membership of the Organization Committee. But it is important to add to the Organization Committee's roster individuals who are particularly skilled and knowledgeable in one of the areas of: fundraising, public relations/communications, or volunteer development. While some of the four board officers who will be serving on the Organization Committee may possess skills and a knowledge base in one of these areas, those executive officers may not have the time to assume the actual management of projects that are planned by the Organization Committee.

Thus, recruiting volunteers to act as "project leaders" may be a way to facilitate the various public relations/communications, volunteer development, and fundraising projects that are part of the Organization Committee's work plan. These "project leaders" would be considered members of the Organization Committee, but would not have to be at all of the Committee's meetings, and only attend when their particular project/activity is to be discussed.

Recommendation #2: As soon as the Organization Committee membership is in full complement with any needed "project leaders" in place, the committee should initiate an image development campaign that will:

- Educate the community on the organization's mission and goals. Both of the following public relations projects will provide support to the Board as it establishes a fundraising plan. And they will also act to create more volunteer assistance for the organization.
 - **Create an Organizational Brochure.** Public relations written materials, such as an organizational brochure, are extremely important in the early stages of the program's development. An organizational brochure for the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program

can be very simply and inexpensively produced. But the brochure's design and content should bespeak a quality organization. So the Organization Committee may need to bring on board for this project a volunteer or volunteers who have some marketing, communications, and graphic design capabilities. It may want to look to Buffalo State's Communications/ Design Department for assistance. The elements to include in the brochure are:

- A map of the Corridor's two commercial districts
 - A short description of the two commercial districts
 - A description of the Main Street Four Point Approach® to revitalization
 - A listing of all the services that the Main Street program provides, such as:
 - ✓ Design assistance for buildings
 - ✓ Financial incentive programs
 - ✓ Advocacy on issues affecting downtown
 - ✓ Preservation education
 - ✓ Technical assistance on real estate development process
 - ✓ Informational workshops to assist existing businesses
 - ✓ Specialist consultations for individual or group needs
 - ✓ Grant application preparation
 - ✓ Business retention/recruitment assistance
 - ✓ Marketing advice
 - ✓ Special promotional events
 - ✓ Planning and design of public improvements
 - Text that describes some of the Main Street program's future plans (taking those cues from each committee's work plan).
- **Establish an Internet Presence.** Communicate what the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program is doing through free social media such as Facebook; and then start planning the development of an organizational website. In the interim – before the Main Street program has the ability to establish its own website -- connect with the excellent Broadway-Fillmore Alive website. The Fillmore Corridor Main Street program can ask if its organization's activities can be promoted on that site.

BROADWAY FILLMORE ALIVE
THE ONLINE VOICE OF EAST BUFFALO'S HISTORIC POLONIA

Recommendation #3: Create a plan to establish a large, ground-mounted, graphically-interesting map that depicts the two commercial districts (Broadway-Fillmore and MLK).

- Add to the map display some text that indicates there is a Main Street program in place that it is overseeing the management of the two districts.
- The map would show how the two districts are connected along the Fillmore Corridor through the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park.
- The attractions within the districts and those close to the perimeters of the districts should also be depicted.
- This map could be placed in the front entranceway of the Broadway Market or located outside in a prominent location in the Broadway-Fillmore district.

- While the map would be a project of the Organization Committee, it is important to bring the Design Committee into the planning process and to ask that the Design Committee oversee the graphic and physical design elements for the project.
- Possible funding for this project can be found through a foundation grant.

This project could be accomplished in the form of an elaborate kiosk (example left), which would also give a history of the Broadway Market (if it is placed inside that facility); or in a more simplified form (example right), which relies more on mapping both the Broadway-Fillmore and MLK commercial districts.



Recommendation #4: Stress safety in B-F and MLK commercial districts by:

- Holding public forums that bring police into discussions with the community.
- Taking responsibility for changing negative perceptions by highlighting positive happenings in the districts. Control the message – through social media – website – quick and dirty newsletters that project a positive view of the districts. Include photos of people enjoying the districts.
- Creating stories about those who are reinvesting in the districts and quotes from those individuals that relate why they are reinvesting. Perhaps the Buffalo media could be engaged by telling some of those stories through press releases and establishing connections with those in the media who are interested in positive stories. Some individuals who are investing in the districts who might be featured: –
 - James Camarada (the Market Bar)



- Ray Kasprzyk (owner/developer of Bison Distillery)
- Dr. Fadi Dagher (owner/developer of Eckhardt Building and K-Mart Building)
- Duane Madyun (owner of cellular and fragrance businesses in the MLK district – and actively engaged in Muslim community)
- Mark Stevens – Wilson Street Urban Farm; and Terra Dumas – owner of Common Roots Urban Farm
- Perhaps feature those working on improvements to Corpus Christi Church’s campus (in the heart of the Broadway-Fillmore district). This Church has undergone extensive restoration and is an historic preservation landmark. The church’s campus buildings are ripe for re-development.
- Working with:
 - The Promotion Committee to market events that show the districts to be family-friendly; and
 - The Design and E.R. Committees to highlight the redevelopment that is going on in the districts – both private and public improvements. Publicize any business improvement activities that occur such as removal of grates and bars from storefronts.

§ VII. PROMOTION

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

OBSERVATION #1: As mentioned above, the Fillmore Corridor has represented the melting pot of new immigrant communities locating in Buffalo throughout the city’s history. The Broadway-Fillmore and MLK neighborhood districts are where old and new cultures and customs meet and mingle. In Broadway-Fillmore, new immigrant groups and their traditions are blending with the earlier German-Polish-Italian-Eastern European cultures. In the MLK district where African-Americans migrated up from the South – starting in the early 20th century – an influx of Arab and Native African groups are coming into the neighborhood.

This cultural diversity is something that should be celebrated, embraced, and reflected in the two districts’ business uses, products and services offered, and in promotional activities and events undertaken by the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program. The organization’s Promotion Committee will be responsible for:

- creating a positive image of the two business districts in order to rekindle community pride and to attract investors and new businesses;
- mounting special events that bring local residents and visitors into the two districts for fun and social interaction;
- marketing the two districts’ retail, entertainment and service businesses as unified entities.

Recommendation #1. Embrace the diversity of the two districts by developing a market branding campaign focused on the neighborhood’s key assets. Rebuild market density through promotions that encourage outside customer visitors to the district and bring local residents back into the districts’ commercial centers. Highlight the culture brought to the community by today’s immigrants, while also featuring the history of the past immigrants who built the districts. This can be done through special events or smaller activities that feature both the old and new cultures that are integral parts of the two districts. The following assets that are unique to the Fillmore Corridor neighborhood can be featured to promote historic/cultural tourism:

- a. Churches
- b. Jazz/Blues History
- c. Broadway Market
- d. Urban Farms
- e. International Food Culture



Recommendation #2: Promote the history and culture of Broadway-Fillmore by telling stories of businesses that were in the commercial district in the past and the recently-arrived businesses of new immigrants. These stories would reflect on the early wave of immigrants who opened businesses and also feature newcomers who have come to the neighborhood and opened businesses. A couple examples of potential stories that can be told:

- Chudy Paper Company was founded by Max Chudy, a first-generation immigrant from Poland who, in 1913, started a one-man paper-products operation in a building on Lombard Street to serve the bustling meat markets in the district. Today, that old Chudy Paper Company building is being rehabbed and adaptively re-used as the Bison Distillery by Ray and Glenn Kasprzyk, who will produce rye-based vodka. The new venture will also include a retail outlet that will serve as a key attraction for both the local and visitor market and also reinforce the Polish heritage of the Broadway-Fillmore district because the spirits the distillery will be producing is rye-based vodka.
- The Broadway Market has recently welcomed a new business that is owned and operated by a Bangladeshi immigrant. The shop showcases garments, clothing accessories and fabrics from South Asia.

Tales about the early immigrants who opened businesses in the district and stories about the more newly-arrived immigrants starting businesses can be:

- Described on the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program's website (once it is established);
- Highlighted on Fillmore Corridor Main Street program's Facebook page;
- Featured in newsletters/websites of other community organizations; and/or
- Distributed to Buffalo media in the form of press releases/stories, with photos, that depict early businesses previously located in the district or newly-arriving businesses to the district.

Recommendation #3: Promote the history and culture of the MLK neighborhood district.

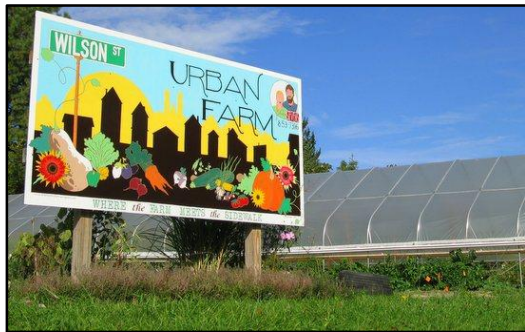
The MLK neighborhood has been a stable African-American community for years. From the mid-1900s to late in the 20th century, its commercial center was thriving -- with businesses owned and operated by African-American merchants. Those businesses genuinely served the district's surrounding local populace. In the 1990s, things began to change--

Factories that had employed a local work force were shuttered; a major downturn occurred in the real estate market; mom and pop businesses in the district were closed on retirement of their owners because there were no plans of succession; and other generally negative economic conditions that affected businesses throughout the city of Buffalo caused this once-flourishing African-American community to lose its way.

The Promotion Committee can do its part in bringing back customers and encouraging the development of new businesses by celebrating the historic, cultural and social aspects of the neighborhood's commercial district. The following are some examples of activities the Promotion Committee can assume:

- Help the Design Committee facilitate the banner project which highlights notable African-Americans in the nation and which, once completed, will improve the image of the district by showing pride in its African-American heritage.
- Mount a small event that celebrates the history of the African-American community and showcases the cultural aspects and customs of the growing Muslim community. Perhaps the Promotion Committee can collaborate with local mosque leaders to identify an activity that would bring non-Muslim local residents and visitors from throughout the Buffalo area into the district to celebrate the Muslim festivities that occur with “Breaking the Fast” at the end of Ramadan.

Recommendation #4. Work with the Farmer Pirates Cooperative to help it get a marketing piece together. Several urban farms in Buffalo’s East Side have joined forces as the Farmer Pirates Cooperative. These farms are located either within or close to the Broadway-Fillmore commercial district. The urban farms can represent a sizeable economic driver for the East Side. If this farming sector expands its reach, it will benefit the Broadway-Fillmore business district



because the urban farms, as a group, have the potential for greatly increasing tourism within the district.

One of the largest operations in the farming collaborative is the Wilson Street Urban Farm, a family-operated garden, located adjacent to the Broadway-Fillmore commercial district. The farm grows produce that is available for sale to East Side residents but has already become a major tourism

attraction as it lures visitors from throughout the region, the country, and some folks from international locales who are wide-eyed seeing the natural beauty of tended gardens in a diminished urban environment.

Apart from the East Side farms that belong to the Farmer Pirates Cooperative, a longstanding urban garden has occupied a site on the roof of the Broadway Market.

All of these farms and gardens can be promoted as part of a cultural and natural asset that is integral to business expansion in the Broadway-Fillmore district.



Broadway Market rooftop garden

Once the Promotion Committee is fully functional, it should communicate with the Farmer Pirates Cooperative its interest in helping the group put together a promotional piece that will market all of the urban farms located on the East Side of Buffalo.

Recommendation #5: Work with the Organization Committee to use existing special events in the district to fundraise for the Main Street organization. There are already three major special

events that occur in the Broadway Fillmore and Martin Luther King districts which bring in thousands of local residents and visitors from throughout the Western New York region. These are:

- Dyngus Day, an annual post-Lenten bash that attracts tens of thousands to Buffalo to celebrate spring and Polish pride. This event always falls on the Monday after Easter. However, activities in the Buffalo-Niagara region have expanded to one week of events. While Dyngus Day is celebrated throughout the country, Buffalo is the official Dyngus Day Capitol of America, hosting the largest concentration of festival locations, polka bands and Polish traditions in the nation.
- The Juneteenth Festival is held annually at the MLK Park to commemorate the ending of slavery in the United States. This two-day weekend festival includes Praise and Worship Services on each morning, with follow-up festivities that feature a parade, main stage and arts & culture stage entertainment, vendors selling ethnic food and wares, an antique car show, underground railroad tours, African dance and drum lessons, and a plethora of other festival venues.
- The Pine Grill Jazz Reunion (now in its 26th year) is promoted by the African American Cultural Center, and hosted at the MLK Park on two consecutive Sundays in August. The festival brings the best of contemporary musicians to play; and is a homage to Jazz which has a long historic connection to Buffalo's East Side – particularly in the Broadway-Fillmore district where many bars and clubs in the district featured Jazz and Blues music in the district's heyday.

Rather than trying to mount a new fundraising event for the Fillmore Corridor Main Street program, the Promotion Committee can connect with the sponsors of the three festivals listed above to see if there is an opportunity to add a booth that can raise money for the Main Street program. The Main Street organization could also sell food, products, provide entertainment, or add a special activity that will complement the festival occasion and raise additional funds for the Main Street program.



Dyngus Days



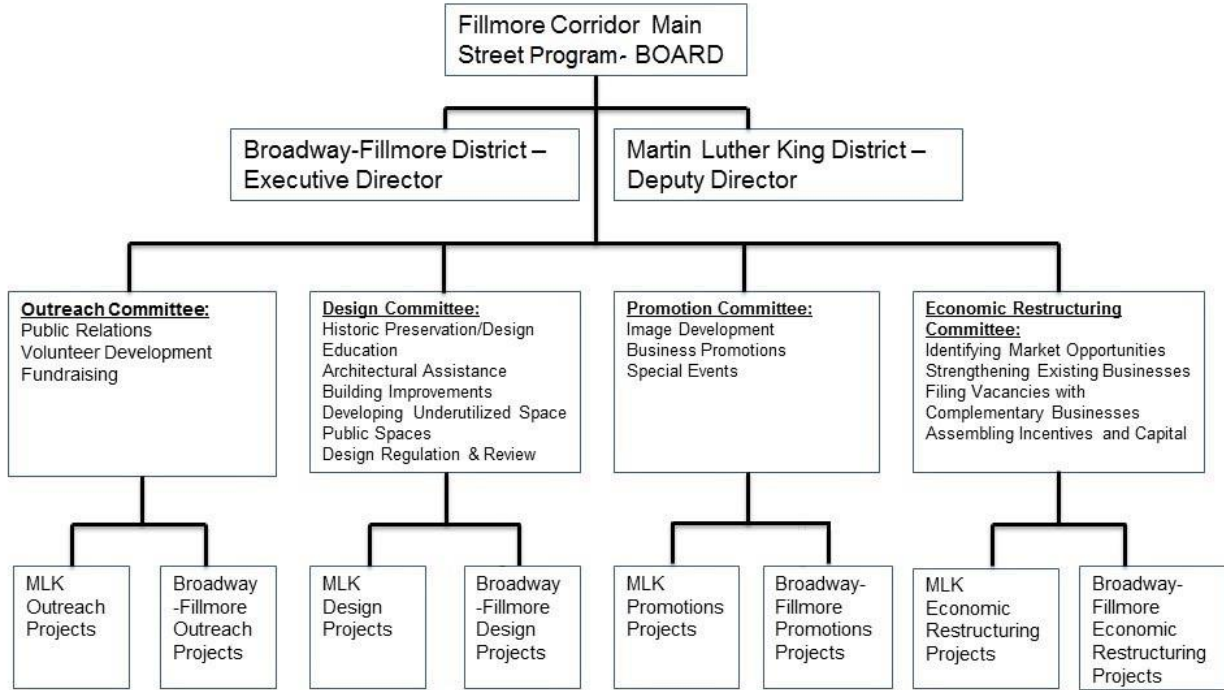
Pine Grill Jazz Reunion

§ VIII. APPENDIX DOCUMENTS

- 1. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**
- 2. MAP OF FILLMORE CORRIDOR BUSINESS DISTRICTS**
- 3. WORK PLAN FORM**
- 4. PROPOSED ANNUAL BUDGET FOR FILLMORE CORRIDOR MAIN STREET PROGRAM**

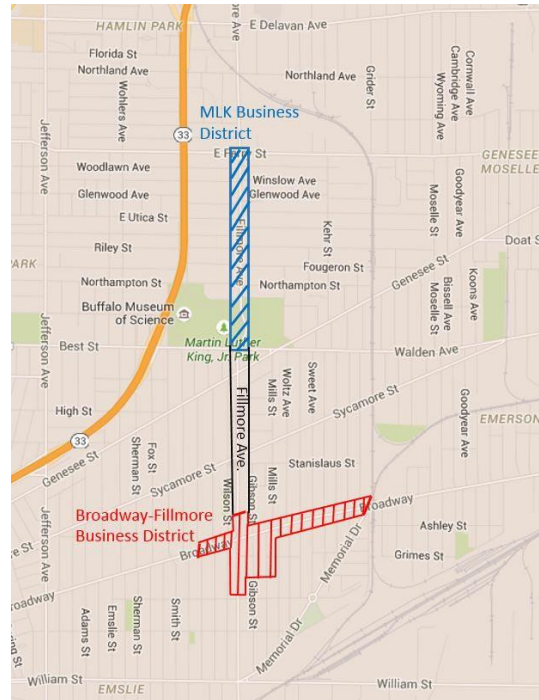
Appendix #1
Organizational Chart

Fillmore Corridor Main Street Program
A Revitalization Program for Broadway-Fillmore and MLK Districts
 (Organizational Chart)



Appendix #2 - Map of Business Districts

Map of Broadway-Fillmore and MLK Business Districts



Broadway-Fillmore District

- **North boundary** of Fillmore Ave:
Unia Polska building (east side) & BFNHS building (west side)
- **South boundary** of Fillmore Ave:
Intersection of Fillmore and Paderewski Drive
- **East boundary** of Broadway:
Intersection of Broadway and Memorial Drive
- **West boundary** of Broadway:
Intersection of Broadway and Reed Street

MLK District

- **North boundary** of Fillmore Ave:
Intersection of Fillmore and Ferry Street
- **South boundary** of Fillmore Ave:
Intersection of Fillmore and Best Street

Appendix # 3 – Work Plan Template

Committee:

Objective:

Project Title:

Task	Timetable	Responsibility	Budget
TOTAL:			

Appendix #4

Proposed Annual Operational Budget for Fillmore Corridor Main Street Program

INCOME

City	\$ 40,000
County	\$ 15,000
State (e.g. Empire Power Proceeds grant)	\$ 25,000
Corporate Contributions	\$ 15,000
Membership Contributions (neighborhood residents/other Buffalo area individuals/ district business-property owners)	\$ 10,000
Foundation grants	\$ 10,000
In-Kind Support (e.g. rent & utilities; payroll processing; accounting assistance; office equipment)	<u>\$ 12,000</u>
	\$142,000

EXPENSES

Salaries - including benefits (Exec. Director and Deputy Director)	\$100,000
Payroll processing and accounting	\$ 2,000
Staff/Volunteer travel and conference/training expenses	\$ 6,000
Rent & Utilities	\$ 10,000
Website set-up and maintenance	\$ 1,000
Telephone	\$ 1,200
Office equipment and repairs	\$ 2,000
Office supplies	\$ 1,000
Postage	\$ 1,000
Insurance	\$ 1,000
Prof. dues/membership	\$ 2,000
Printing/copying/photo supplies	\$ 5,000
Design Committee	\$ 2,000
Promotion Committee	\$ 2,000
Economic Restructuring Committee	\$ 2,000
Organization Committee	<u>\$ 3,800</u>
	\$142,000