

Presentation Event



21st Century Fund

*A fund of the Community Foundation
for Greater Buffalo*

Semi-Finalist Project Descriptions

BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY BOTANICAL GARDENS SOCIETY, INC.



Project Name: Growing Beyond the Glass: An Expansion and Renovation Project

Project Description: The Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens is undertaking a transformational expansion to increase access, sustainability, and educational opportunities across Western New York. The project will add 16,000 square feet of new construction and renovate 10,000 square feet, creating climate-controlled classrooms, a Welcome Center, event spaces, a central courtyard, and revitalized gardens. A grant from the 21st Century Fund will fund construction costs relating to sustainability efforts, informational signage, educational programs, and public tours that showcase the project's sustainability features, expanding awareness of green design across the region. The expansion is projected to double annual visitation to 162,000 by 2027, increase educational programming by up to 75%, and increase staffing by nearly 25%. Long-term, the project will stimulate tourism, deepen environmental literacy for tens of thousands of learners, and generate lasting economic and ecological benefits for Western New York.

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM



Project Name: The Reinstein Center: Restoring History for Community Access

Project Description: Restoring the Reinstein Center will create a vibrant hub for education, programs, and community events, strengthening the Buffalo History Museum as a regional cultural destination. Built in 1920 as Leonard Adams' home and music studio, the Reinstein Center has long stood beside our National Historic Landmark building. Formerly used as the History Museum's office space, it will become hands-on studios for learners of all ages, directly serving more than 6,000 guests annually. The first floor will accommodate gatherings for approximately 50 guests, while the ground floor will provide a catering kitchen, support space, and accessible restrooms. A new connecting structure will triple program space for up to 100 guests, supporting summer camps, programs, festivals, and event rentals. These upgrades will double catering income and significantly increase program revenue, generating sustainable revenue and ensuring lasting regional impact.

ERIE CATTARAUGUS RAIL TRAIL



Project Name: Depot to Depot with an Accessible Multi-Use Trail in the Southtowns

Project Description: The mission of Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail (ECRT) is to preserve the 27-mile Buffalo-Pittsburgh rail corridor and transform it into a universally accessible, multi-use recreational trail between Orchard Park and Ashford, New York, enhancing the quality of life in the Western New York community. This project is focused on a 2.2 mile section of trail that will link two existing, finished trail sections of the ECRT, enabling users to travel from the historic railroad depot in the village of Orchard Park to the depot in West Falls, NY. Southern Erie County is completely lacking in multi-use trails. This trail will be open to the public free of charge, and will benefit the 60,000 residents of the towns along the ECRT corridor and more than 1 million residents of WNY. Economic impacts include direct trail-user spending, reduced health care costs, and increased property values, as have been demonstrated with other trail systems.

EVERGREEN HEALTH



Project Name: Enhancing Access to Pharmacy Services for East Buffalo & Other Underserved Communities

Project Description: Evergreen Health is developing a new service site at 3070 Bailey Avenue, opening in mid-2026, to expand supportive, pharmaceutical, and clinical services in the Kensington-Bailey neighborhood of East Buffalo. A central feature of the site is a community pharmacy serving an area identified as a pharmacy desert. A grant from the 21st Century Fund will support an electric pharmacy delivery vehicle to provide medications to Medicaid recipients, older adults, and medically underserved residents. The electric vehicle will further Evergreen Health's support for cleaner and healthier communities by helping to limit air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. With nearly 30% of Buffalo households lacking a car and recent Rite Aid closures, many lower-income residents have limited access to essential medications. The delivery vehicle is expected to serve roughly 6,000 patients, averaging 70 deliveries per day. The pharmacy and delivery service will be open to the community, reducing barriers to medication access, improving adherence, and supporting patients facing transportation, mobility, and socioeconomic challenges.

FEEDMORE WNY, INC.



Project Name: Setting the Table – A Permanent Home for FeedMore WNY

Project Description: FeedMore WNY is the regional food bank and leading provider of hunger relief services in Western New York (WNY). In 2024, working with over 4,100 volunteers, it served 165,722 community members by delivering 1,478,197 meals to over 4,700 vulnerable neighbors and delivering 15,818,295 pounds of food to nearly 400 community partners. These numbers represent a 16% increase over 2023 and a 46% increase over 2021. FeedMore WNY will soon be serving more neighbors than at the peak of the COVID pandemic. However, it faces significant challenges as WNY's needs have exceeded the capacity of its outdated, failing facilities. Construction is underway for a new campus that will double its warehouse space (as it turned away over 6.9 million pounds of food over the past 5 years, worth ~\$13.5 million), triple its commissary (so it can serve more vulnerable community members), and future-proof FeedMore due to the campus's modular design principles.

FRIENDS OF LITTLE PORTION FRIARY



Project Name: Strategic Shelter Expansion

Project Description: Little Portion Friary, an emergency shelter for men and women experiencing homelessness in Buffalo, seeks a strategic capital investment to complete its 3-phase capital campaign and expand shelter capacity through renovating and repurposing third floor space. This is in response to the crisis of homelessness in the City of Buffalo, as well as the increasingly complex cases we have been seeing. Little Portion Friary continues to expand its shelter capacity to respond to these regional needs, seeking to increase to 34-bed daily service capacity. It is making major interior improvements, in compliance with NYS Emergency Shelter Quality Standards. Once funded and renovations are completed, Little Portion Friary will have 4 additional rooms with 6 beds added through operationalizing its third floor, contributing toward long-lasting safety and stability for an increasing number of guests. This will allow LPF to provide an additional 2,190 nights of shelter annually, for years to come.

HEART, LOVE & SOUL



Project Name: Expanding Heart Love & Soul's Food Pantry to Address Hunger and Connect Residents to Supports

Project Description: Over the last 5 years, Heart, Love & Soul has seen a 136% increase in food distribution through its food pantry. The current pantry needs to be expanded to better accommodate the increased demand. The lobby in which pantry guests wait for their opportunity to select food from the pantry is also small and congested, impacting flow in and out of the building and creating safety concerns. Its goal is to improve the space to better accommodate the surging number of families needing assistance, while providing services in the most dignified manner possible. HLS' nutrition program is often the first exposure people have to its services. To provide services more efficiently, it needs a larger and better-designed pantry and lobby, along with dedicated space to screen community members for additional services. This renovation will impact more than 1,000 guests annually and will contribute to a more welcoming environment for everyone.

NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES, INC.



Project Name: NLS Justice Bus

Project Description: Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. (NLS) provides access to legal advice, representation, and education to those in the community and is seeking funding for a Sprinter-style commercial van outfitted as a mobile legal office. This vehicle will transport NLS staff, volunteer attorneys, and law students to underserved communities across Western New York. The Justice Bus program expands access to civil legal services for residents facing barriers due to transportation, disability, or isolation. A larger, fully equipped unit will enable partnerships with social service providers, private volunteer attorneys, and UB School of Law to deliver legal screening, advice, education, and referrals in housing, family, disability, and public benefits law. Unlike its current vehicle, the new van will allow private attorney-client conversations. Annually, the Justice Bus will serve over 3,000 individuals in five counties, generating an estimated \$1.5 million in taxpayer savings while preserving housing and stabilizing income and benefits.

THE SALVATION ARMY OF BUFFALO, NY

Project Name: The Salvation Army Hope on Main Phase I: Emergency Family Shelter

Project Description: The Salvation Army proposes to address the critical need for families in the City of Buffalo and Erie County who are experiencing the trauma of homelessness through the construction of a new, 80-bed Emergency Family Shelter to replace its current 76-bed facility that, due to age, is beyond repair. The Salvation Army has seen the impact of increased levels of homelessness. Its current shelter is frequently at or near capacity and provided 22,913 safe nights of stay last year. While the main goal is to help families establish stable, permanent housing, they provide internal services including food pantry, rapid rehousing, employment services, youth services, and more. A new shelter will make a long-term community impact for years to come. The Salvation Army predicts that it will serve 350 men, women and children annually. Coupled with a safe, home-like environment, the shelter's comprehensive services give families the resources they need on their journey to self-sufficiency.



WESTERN NEW YORK PUBLIC BROADCASTING ASSOCIATION

Project Name: Keeping WNY In The Loop: BTPM Radio Broadcast System Upgrade

Project Description: Buffalo Toronto Public Media (BTPM) uses traditional and electronic media, including digital technology, to broaden arts appreciation and awareness, and to provide cultural and civic resources to benefit residents of WNY. BTPM's ability to provide free, reliable access to its services is tied directly to the equipment that creates and disseminates that content. The infrastructure at the core of BTPM's radio broadcast capability is reaching the end of useful life and is increasingly vulnerable to signal interference and service disruptions. A new studio-to-transmitter link (STL) system is needed to ensure the continuation of the news, music, cultural programming and emergency alert services on which WNY residents have relied for over 60 years. A state-of-the-art STL will improve radio signal quality and reliability, ensuring that BTPM services continue uninterrupted. This project will benefit 66,000+ BTPM NPR listeners and nearly 39,000 BTPM Classical radio listeners as well as countless WNY residents who rely on BTPM's emergency alert capabilities.

Buffalo • Toronto Public Media

