



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senator Sean Ryan, Councilmembers David Rivera And Mitch Nowakowski, Preservation Buffalo Niagara Join Community Stakeholders To Announce Report Addressing Demolitions And Historic Preservation In The City Of Buffalo

SEAN M. RYAN July 9, 2021

| ISSUE: NYS SENATE DISTRICT 60, NYS SENATOR SEAN RYAN, HISTORIC PRESERVATION



**SENATOR SEAN RYAN, COUNCILMEMBERS
DAVID RIVERA AND MITCH
NOWAKOWSKI, PRESERVATION BUFFALO
NIAGARA JOIN COMMUNITY**

STAKEHOLDERS TO ANNOUNCE REPORT ADDRESSING DEMOLITIONS AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO

State And City Legislators Joined Community Stakeholders To Form A Panel To Lay Groundwork To Prevent Demolitions And Address Preservation Of Buffalo's Historic Architecture

BUFFALO – Today, July 9, 2021, New York State Senator Sean Ryan joined Buffalo Common Councilmembers David Rivera and Mitch Nowakowski, Jessie Fisher of Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN), and other community stakeholders to announce recommendations to prevent demolitions in the City of Buffalo as part of a larger endeavor to help identify, protect, and restore Buffalo's historic architecture. The recommendations come from a report produced by a panel that was formed last year to outline a path toward creating a community preservation plan for the City of Buffalo.

In addition to the legislators and PBN, the panel comprises an array of community stakeholders with expertise in neighborhood leadership, real estate development, and the law, including Catherine Faust, Gretchen Cercone, Jason Yots, Rocco Termini, Terry Alford, Gail Wells, and Stephanie “Cole” Adams.

The panel's primary recommendation is to immediately implement a city-wide moratorium on unnecessary demolitions until a formal preservation plan is adopted. Such a moratorium was initially recommended by the City of Buffalo's Office of Strategic Planning as part of its most recent Comprehensive Plan in 2006. The suggested moratorium would ensure that all demolitions except those necessary for public safety are avoided while a preservation plan is created.

The report makes a host of recommendations that would apply to existing local landmarks and historic districts. This includes several suggestions regarding the City of Buffalo's preservation ordinance, which currently covers about four percent of Buffalo's buildings. Included in the panel's recommendations are a call to update the ordinance to bring it in line with state guidelines and several suggestions to improve the process by which buildings are protected by it.

The panel's recommendations also include suggestions for protecting the 95 percent of properties in Buffalo that are not located within historic districts. The report asserts that redevelopment of these properties often results in changes to the character of the neighborhoods in which they reside. With that fact in mind, the report includes recommendations to update other codes and policies that impact existing and future land use and development to ensure they're meeting the Comprehensive Plan's stated goals of maintaining a strong “web of urbanism” that protects and builds upon existing community character.

Senator Sean Ryan said, “The City of Buffalo has faced a demolition crisis for far too long. Our community does not have a plan to address the problem, and put safeguards in place to ensure historic preservation of our neighborhoods. With every structure that is demolished or crumbles to the ground, we

lose an important part of our history, and the character of our community is forever altered. With this in mind, I was proud to work with Preservation Buffalo Niagara, Councilmembers Rivera and Nowakowski, and community stakeholders to put together a blueprint for the future. The document we are releasing today is a statement of values that charts out a path forward to prevent demolitions, and preserve and enhance the architectural assets of the City of Buffalo. Historic preservation is key to Buffalo's future. As we progress, I look forward to assessing these recommendations and working with my partners in government and the community to fix our demolition crisis and move Buffalo forward in a way that strengthens our city for the future.”

Buffalo Common Councilmember David Rivera said, “None of us are strangers to the historic and older buildings that help shape Buffalo; nor are we strangers to the dilapidated buildings and vacant lots that plague our City. This report presents suggestions for attainable solutions to the matter of preservation in the City of Buffalo.”

Buffalo Common Councilmember Mitch Nowakowski said, “This report is the culmination of frank discussions about the state of preservation in Buffalo. As a group, we had many viewpoints, but I think it’s safe to say we all agreed that there was so much more needed to be done to preserve our existing built environment without compromising progress. On the Common Council, I will continue to be a strong advocate for the protection of our historic districts and buildings.”

Jessie Fisher, Executive Director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara, said, “Buffalo's legacy building stock is one of its strongest assets, and one of the things that makes it a special place that people want to live and visit. Before we lose any more of the places that matter to people, we need put these best practices and policy solutions in place and ensure that we have equitable preservation policies in place across our city. We were proud to work on putting this report together and are looking forward to working with these wonderful community leaders and elected officials to implement these recommendations.”

Jason Yots, Founder of Common Bond Real Estate, said, “For years, we’ve watched the current demolition-first policy result in the loss of thousands of Buffalo’s historic structures, while yielding few long-term economic, social, or environmental benefits to its citizens. There is another way: First, let’s stop demolishing Buffalo’s buildings until we can catalogue what is left. Second, let’s create public policies and programs that encourage and enable the reuse of Buffalo’s valuable built environment by all of its citizens, not just those of us who work in the development community.”

Stephanie “Cole” Adams, West Side business owner, attorney, and block club member, said, “I have been angry about the city's treatment of its legacy neighborhoods and architectural gems for many years, but the work of this committee brings hope. There is no magic bullet here – it starts with listening to people, connecting the work of different agencies, and declaring preservation- and resident-focused development to be genuine top priorities. I am grateful to the officials and PBN, who gathered this group to pinpoint and elevate the very real, implementable solutions seen in the document being released today.”

###