



Background

The former Illinois Alcohol Company Building at 1432 Niagara Street in Buffalo was constructed in 1920 to serve as the Bison City Storage Company warehouse. However, the building's design proved well suited for an illegal bootlegging ring led by the Illinois Alcohol Company during the Prohibition Era from 1925 to 1929. Taking advantage of the privacy provided by the building's non-descript appearance, the Illinois Alcohol Company conducted an extensive bootlegging operation in the building for several years.

Once authorities discovered this illegal operation, the building was taken over and occupied by the Niagara Filter Corporation, continuing its affiliation with the brewing industry. This company initially produced non-alcoholic beer but switched to the production of brewing equipment when Prohibition laws were lifted in 1933. It remained in operation through the 1950s and was used for various purposes over the years before eventually falling into underutilization and disrepair.

THE PROJECT

The West Side Bazaar is an in-demand food and retail business incubator created by the Westminster Economic Development Initiative (WEDI) in 2011. The Bazaar provides technical assistance, financial resources, and community gathering space for entrepreneurs who would not qualify for traditional bank loans - particularly women, foreign-born, and people of color - looking to create or scale up their small businesses. Since its establishment, the Bazaar has helped launch over 70 businesses, 28 of which have graduated and expanded to other locations.

However, the Bazaar has outgrown its current location and has a waiting list of over 120 entrepreneurs in various states of readiness. The West Side Bazaar will relocate from its existing 3,200 square foot space to the revitalized Illinois Alcohol Company Building, creating a food and retail hall, classrooms, meeting spaces, and test kitchen, becoming a vital community hub, and significantly expanding its suite of services and functions.



Total Development Cost:
\$8.5 Million



NTCIC Financing:
\$1.75 Million NMTC Allocation -
Irvin Henderson Main Street
Revitalization Fund



Project Partner:
Westminster Economic
Development Initiative, Inc.
(WEDI)



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The new location will provide entrepreneurs with greater capacity for growth - more customers and more storage space giving them the ability to buy food and supplies in bulk (the current Bazaar has little to no storage). The Bazaar will have over 16,000 square feet of physical space for entrepreneur tenants, a five-fold increase in size from the Bazaar's current location. It will also greatly expand the number of guests and customers served, from 35 seats to over 84 seats on the first floor. When both floors are used, more than 200 people can be served. This multi-cultural hub will allow families and neighbors from across town or around the world to come together, learn and share their food, cultures, and lives. The flexible seating arrangement will create opportunities for group meals, concerts, lectures, and special events. Conference and event space will allow for a wide assortment of community events, nonprofit functions, and family receptions.

The second floor will feature a "Learning Lab" and a "Hopes and Dreams Training Kitchen," where WEDI staff and partners will offer entrepreneurs finance, marketing, food safety, and cooking classes.

Niagara Street itself is undergoing a multi-million-dollar infrastructure revitalization with sheltered bike paths, street plantings, and traffic calming improvements for 3.3 miles. It will enhance accessibility for cars, cyclists, and pedestrians, all of whom are potential customers for the Bazaar.

Economic and Community Impact

The historic Illinois Alcohol Company Building revitalization will support an estimated **190 construction jobs**, nearly all of which will pay a living wage or higher. Once complete, the expanded West Side Bazaar will create and retain **42 accessible jobs** and support **60% more businesses annually**, growing from **12 tenant spaces to 23 tenant spaces annually**. The larger community spaces will provide access to hard-to-find food and other items important to immigrant cultures to an estimated **120,000 customers annually**. Over a five-year period, the Bazaar can be expected to add nearly **\$34 million to the regional economy**, with less than 30% attributed to one-time construction expenditures.

NTCIC's **\$1.75 million New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC)** allocation helped make the relocation and expansion of the Bazaar financially feasible and will allow the Bazaar to provide equitable incubation space for low-income and minority business owners through subsidized and scaled rental rates and will create affordable and accessible event and community space for the community. Additional financing was made possible through equity investments from [**Monarch Private Capital**](#).

This project represents the eleventh and final investment supported by NTCIC's current Irvin Henderson Main Street Revitalization Fund. This fund provides \$2 - 4 million in innovative NMTCs for smaller-scale historic rehabilitation projects, maximizing the benefits of both credits within the transaction and helping offset the transaction costs by connecting projects to an experienced team of real estate professionals that understand the needs of small deal financing and provides the NMTC financing in a structure that has no origination or sponsor fees.