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## **Construction begins on mixed-use property at 417 Massachusetts Ave.**

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Buffalo, NY According to governor Andrew Cuomo, construction has commenced at 417 Massachusetts Ave., a vacant, fire-damaged building that will be transformed into nine affordable apartments with ground floor commercial space. The ground level will also feature WASH Project Laundromat—a laundry facility that doubles as an arts and cultural center. The project is part of PUSH Buffalo’s expansive Green Development Zone (GDZ) revitalization plan to focus significant community reinvestment and redevelopment activity on a 30-block area on the city’s West Side.

“Access to affordable, stable housing is a basic human right for all New Yorkers and through development projects like this one we are a step closer to reaching the goals of our comprehensive housing plan,” governor Cuomo said. “This significant investment will deliver affordable homes and essential community services to Buffalo’s West Side, assisting those who need it most while helping the entire neighborhood grow and thrive.”

The GDZ Homes redevelopment project will completely renovate and reconfigure the vacant, fire-damaged structure at 417 Massachusetts Ave. into nine new two-bedroom apartments on the upper two floors with commercial space below. Rents for GDZ Homes’ apartments will range from \$600 to \$900 a month and are affordable to households with incomes at or below 80% of the Area Median Income.

The ground floor commercial space will house the WASH Project Laundromat and Cultural Arts Center. More than a place to do laundry, WASH incorporates cultural and arts programming, with art, music and literacy programs, and will serve as an access point for information regarding a wide range of community services and other cultural opportunities. Many of the programs the WASH Project provides are targeted to members of the neighborhood’s diverse refugee populations.

HCR financing for the GDZ Homes redevelopment includes \$1.7 million in New York State HOME Program funds and \$309,210 from the Community Investment Fund. Additional financing is being provided by the Federal Home Loan Bank and the NYS Energy Research Development Authority.

Governor Cuomo’s commitment to creating and preserving safe, affordable housing is reflected in the state’s \$20 billion, five-year Housing Plan to make housing accessible and combat homelessness by building or preserving more than 100,000 affordable homes and 6,000 with supportive services. The plan is a comprehensive approach to statewide housing issues and includes multifamily and single-family housing and community development.

HCR has worked with PUSH Buffalo and the Buffalo Neighborhood Stabilization Company on other West Buffalo developments, including the \$14.7 million effort to transform the vacant former City of Buffalo Public School 77 into a community hub with 30 affordable apartments for seniors. The renovated building, which opened in 2017, is the first community solar project in New York State to offer discounted energy entirely to low-income subscribers; maximize living wage solar installation and maintenance job opportunities for disadvantaged workers; and provide residents with a say in the allocation of revenue generated by the sale of solar subscriptions.

Homes and Community Renewal Commissioner RuthAnne Visnauskas said, “Rebuilding neighborhoods and reclaiming community pride is central to the Governor’s affordable housing plan. On Buffalo’s West Side, we’ve worked with PUSH Buffalo and our other partners to identify and invest in large and small projects that not only promote these goals but set the stage for continued growth and future prosperity. GDZ Homes is part of this larger effort: transforming vacant properties into healthy homes and a safe gathering place where neighbors can come together as a community.”

Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown said, “My administration is pleased to take a leadership role in creating affordable housing opportunities across the City of Buffalo. We are pleased to work with New York State Homes and Community Renewal, PUSH Buffalo and the WASH Project on the innovative GDZ Homes project, which is benefiting from a PILOT agreement with the City. This project will bring new affordable apartments on Buffalo’s West Side, adding to the more than 2,000 affordable units which my administration has helped bring to the market since 2006.”

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