



BestSelf Behavioral Health and Uniland Development partner in \$20 million project

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Buffalo, NY BestSelf Behavioral Health unveiled a \$20 million project with Uniland Development Co. to transform 899 Main St. in the city's downtown area into a new corporate headquarters and home for the Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf.

The former Lifetime Health building will undergo extensive renovations, including the addition of a 3rd floor and the complete redesign of the interior. BestSelf will continue their capital campaign for the Child Advocacy Center portion of the project, but will be able to reduce the campaign goal from \$15 million to \$10.5 million with this new site. Tax credits and financing will fund the remainder of the project cost.

"In recent years, the City of Buffalo and the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus have built a reputation

as leaders in medical care and research,” said Michael Montante, CEO, Uniland Development Co. “Uniland is proud to partner with BestSelf to realize their important mission here at 899 Main St.”

BestSelf has more than doubled in size over the past four years and now has an annual budget of \$81 million, a workforce of 1,200+ employees and serves more than 35,000 children and adults in 70+ locations in Western New York. This rapid growth has resulted in the need for additional administrative infrastructure, and the new headquarters will allow BestSelf to consolidate all administration functions into one building.

“We are thrilled to have secured a location in downtown Buffalo to serve as our corporate headquarters and new location for our expanded Child Advocacy Center,” said Elizabeth Woike-Ganga, LCSW-R, president and CEO of BestSelf Behavioral Health. “We are committed to maintaining our administrative offices in the City of Buffalo, and proximity to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and Allentown makes this site very attractive for both our 200+ administration employees and the CAC staff, partners and clients.”

The Child Advocacy Center at BestSelf (CAC) is an innovative, comprehensive center offering safety, support, and healing for children and families affected by trauma and abuse in Erie County. The current CAC location only serves approximately 1/3 of the children in Erie County due to capacity constraints. An expanded CAC at 899 Main St. will provide a convenient location for all the partner organizations of the multidisciplinary team including law enforcement, child protective service, medical care, counseling and legal counsel. In addition, it is easily accessible for the children and families in need of the services provided.

“The BestSelf Board of Directors is very pleased to select 899 Main St. as the new corporate headquarters for our growing organization and the home for our CAC,” said Ellen Bieler, chair of BestSelf. “We have been planning the expansion of the CAC for a while and by choosing to combine it with the corporate headquarters, we are able to ensure the sustainability of the CAC for years to come.”

BestSelf had originally targeted their 768 Delaware building (behind the Red Cross mansion) as a potential site for a relocated CAC. Escalating renovation costs and the need for additional administration space caused BestSelf to reconsider their plans. They used 2020 to search for a new downtown location that would serve as both their corporate headquarters and new home for the CAC.

Representatives from BestSelf were joined at the May 6, 2021 announcement by City of Buffalo mayor Bryon Brown, Erie County Department of Mental Health commissioner Mark O’Brien, Uniland Development Co. executives, and other community leaders.

“The decision by BestSelf Behavioral Health to locate its corporate headquarters and Child Advocacy Clinic at 899 Main St. is another example of a fast-growing company choosing to make their home in downtown Buffalo,” said mayor Brown said. “Not only is BestSelf investing \$20 million to bring a vacant building back to life, it will also be bringing staffers from multiple locations under

one roof, including more than 30 employees who will move from Cheektowaga to downtown Buffalo.”

“This is exciting news for our region because it is just the latest example of the commitment BestSelf Behavioral Health has in our community,” said Erie County executive Mark Poloncarz. Locating the new corporate offices here in downtown Buffalo is a logistical decision that will allow for easy access for clients and the over 200 employees who provide top-notch care to those in need. I thank all involved with this relocation project and look forward to many years of continued collaboration between Erie County government and BestSelf, especially in their newly expanded Child Advocacy Center.”

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