

West Side Bazaar sets October opening for 18 new businesses



The new West Side Bazaar is set to open in mid-October at 1432 Niagara St., Buffalo.

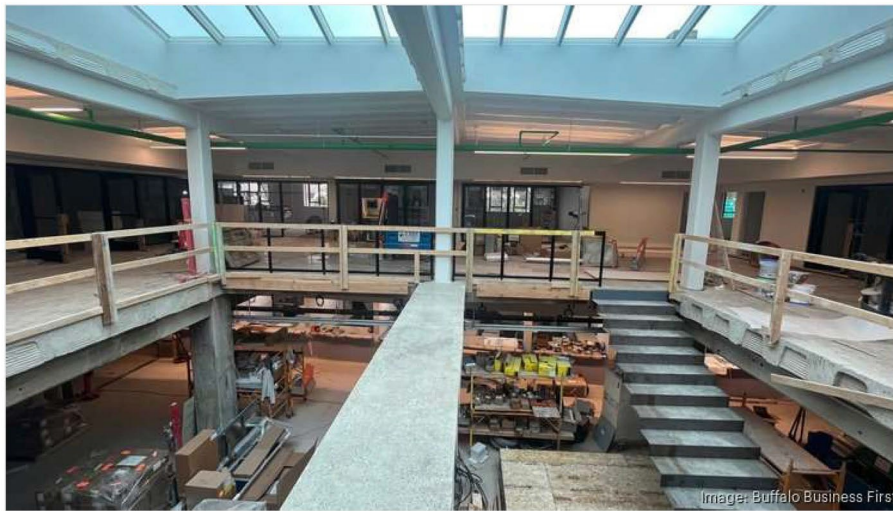
Image: Buffalo Business First

The new West Side Bazaar will open on Oct. 17 with 18 new businesses, but the Downtown Bazaar isn't going anywhere.

Together, the two sites include more than two dozen small businesses, most of them operated by refugee and immigrant owners.

The West Side Bazaar will open at 1432 Niagara St., in a former gin mill during Prohibition. The Westminster Economic Development Initiative has poured millions of dollars into developing an incubator space to replace the former bazaar on Grant Street, which closed prematurely after a fire last fall.

The new 16,000-square-foot building includes four shared kitchen spaces for eight food businesses and a sit-down dining area downstairs, plus space for another two small businesses split between the lower and upper levels. That's double the number of tenants at the old site.



The new West Side Bazaar will house 18 new businesses, including eight food businesses in the lower rear level.
JORDAN SOLDACZEWSKI

All 18 businesses will launch at once, said Erin St. John Kelly, WEDI director of external relations.

"It's kind of epic - we're not sure it's ever been done before, certainly not in Buffalo," she said.

The building will also include an office for WEDI support staff, learning labs, classrooms and commercial test kitchen space plus a stage and bar for events. It also has critical storage space for tenants, so they can build capacity by not having to shop daily for ingredients, Kelly said.

The downtown site at 617 Main St., which opened in February at the former Expo food hall, had initially been eyed as a temporary space while WEDI continued fundraising toward a \$7.2 million goal to open the new site.

WEDI leased the 7,600-square-foot site from developer Sinatra & Co., making space for more experienced but still young business owners who have graduated from WEDI's programs. Current operators include Pinoy Boi, Oralia, Nile River Restaurant, Pattaya Street Food, Abyssinia Ethiopian Cuisine as well as retail tenants Flavia's and the Asian Boutique. Lulu's Pub opened this summer as well.

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If there's a downside to the new building, it's the lack of a parking lot, though there is some street parking out front and across the street. Additionally, the historic tax credits limit the ability to beautify the front of the building and paint or change the interior walls and ceiling downstairs.

Kelly said the organization hopes the public appreciates the industrial aesthetic and its ties back to Buffalo's past, and its early entrepreneurs.

Both sites offer an incubator experience, with below-market rent and business relationship advisers and supports from WEDI, which focuses on supporting low-income borrowers, most of them women and people of color.

"There's a real dearth of affordable rental space in the city," Kelly said.