

More Good News For Upper West Arts Center

At a press conference on Friday June 5, 2009 Assembly Member Sam Hoyt of the 144th Assembly District announced the awarding of a \$400,000 grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to help complete the restoration and adaptive reuse of the former Richmond Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church. This good news comes on the heels of the building being listed on the New York State and Federal Registers Of Historic Places.

Keen Competition

Nineteen million dollars of EPF grant funds were available for distribution this year. The need for this funding was demonstrated by an extremely keen competition wherein statewide, 300 applicants requested \$87.1 million. The successful Upper West Arts Center grant application was prepared by Clinton Brown Company Architecture, a Buffalo-based firm which specializes in historic preservation architecture across New York State.

Developing A Regional Asset

The historic building located on Richmond Avenue at West Ferry Street has been in development as a regional center for the arts since it was purchased by Alleyway Theatre Inc. in 1998. Since that time approximately \$1 million have been invested in the restoration and adaptive reuse of the property. Alleyway's Executive Director Neal Radice speaking at the Friday press conference said "This grant money will be used for exterior restorations including the replacement of the building's original slate roof." Mr. Radice also announced the kickoff of a "Make A Match Campaign" noting that, "Completing renovations to Upper West Arts Center perfectly match the needs of the region by saving an historic structure and creating an outstanding arts facility from which area arts organizations can build stable futures." He further pointed to the need for another kind of match by inviting the public to make donations to the project at this time since the \$400,000 EPF grant can only be secured by raising a one-to-one match in local dollars.

A Solid Investment

Past sources of funding include M&T Bank, The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, The Elster Foundation, The Spaulding Foundation, The Fatta Foundation, The Buffalo Renaissance Foundation, The Erwin H. Johnson Memorial Fund, Inc., County Of Erie, New York State Council On The Arts, New York State Community Enhancement Facilities Program, New York State Strategic Investment Program, and over \$135,000 has come in the form of smaller gifts from individuals.