

Business



{for local} Updated photos from the Larkin district. , Friday, June 8, 2012. {Photo by Robert Kirkham / Buffalo News}

Larkin District wins EPA award for smart growth

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The redevelopment of Buffalo's Larkin District has been recognized for its smart growth attributes by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The redevelopment, which began with the revamped Larkin at Exchange Building and has spawned a series of other rehabilitation projects in the neighborhood, was one of seven projects from across the country cited by the EPA. The Larkin District project won an honorable mention award for Smart Growth Achievement, finishing second to a Brattleboro, Vt., project that converted the Brattleboro Food Co-op from a strip mall surrounded by parking lots into a street-facing, mixed-use development.

The Larkin District redevelopment began a decade ago with the rehabilitation of the former Larkin Soap Co. warehouse by developer Howard Zemsky and has spurred subsequent projects to revamp nearby buildings, from the Schaefer Building and the Larkin U Building, into mixed-use developments.

"It has demonstrated the market for living and working in a downtown neighborhood, preserved historic character and brought new local and national businesses," the EPA said.

In addition to Zemsky's Larkin Development Group, the award recognized a handful of local firms that were involved in the initiative, including the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning's Urban Design Project, which began working with Zemsky in 2004 and developed a master plan for the urban neighborhood. The award also cited a number of other local groups and agencies, from Empire State Development and the Local Initiatives Support Corp. to the City of Buffalo and Neighborhood Housing Services of South Buffalo. It also noted the involvement of the Old First Ward Community Association; First Niagara Bank, which became the Larkin at Exchange Building's anchor tenant; and architectural firm Kevin Connors and Associates.