



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senator Sean Ryan Announces \$500,000 In State Funding For Coles House Project

SEAN M. RYAN February 28, 2025

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State Grant Will Fund Local Nonprofit's Acquisition and Stabilization of Robert T. Coles House and Studio on Buffalo's East Side – First Step in Plan to Turn Historic Studio into Community Resource

BUFFALO – Today, February 28, 2025, New York State Senator Sean Ryan announced he has secured \$500,000 in State Senate funding for Coles House Project, an initiative to preserve

and steward the historic Robert T. Coles House and Studio on Humboldt Parkway in Buffalo's Hamlin Park neighborhood.

Robert Traynham Coles was an award-winning architect, an educator, and a celebrated advocate for racial equality. He was a trailblazer in a field that was not yet welcoming to African Americans, establishing the northeast's oldest African-American owned architecture firm in his hometown of Buffalo. In 1961, Coles designed and built his historic mid-century modern house consisting of two prefabricated units within an L-shape plan. In 2011, the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Coles House Project is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to uplifting and nurturing Coles' legacy of advocacy and architecture through public programming, community driven design, and architecture and planning. The Project has plans to thoughtfully restore and transform the Coles House and Studio into a place where intergenerational designers, architects, planners, and advocates find inspiration and community.

The \$500,000 State Senate grant will fund the purchase and stabilization of the house. Coles House Project has also received technical support from Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House, who acted as the fiscal sponsor for grants secured through the Mellon Foundation's Humanities in Place project and Conserving Black Modernism, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Heritage Fund. These funds, administered on behalf of the Coles House by the Martin House, will fund restoration and programming work.

Senator Sean Ryan said, "Buffalo has sadly seen disinvestment in predominantly Black neighborhoods throughout our history, and it is important that government officials acknowledge these wrongs and work diligently to rectify them. I am proud to support Coles House Project's work to restore the Coles House and Studio. Robert T. Coles was a trailblazer

and an activist who worked to create a better Buffalo. This project will preserve a historic Hamlin Park landmark and create a true community asset for current and future generations of Buffalonians.”

Senator April N.M. Baskin said, “This \$500,000 investment into the Coles House project will not only bring value to the Hamlin Park community but it will bring an equitable investment recognizing Coles House as a regional cultural asset. Just as county and state government pour millions into the Frank Lloyd Wright House, it’s right that this investment should benefit the Coles House. County and state government invested millions into the Botanical Gardens; I was pleased to stand with Senator Ryan when he also secured \$1.5 million for the MLK Olmsted Park Greenhouse last week. There has never been a more important time in recent history for local leaders to make bold investments in East Buffalo.”

Buffalo Common Council Woman Zeneta B. Everhart said, “I want to thank Senator Ryan for his advocacy and support of the Coles House. The preservation of Robert Traynham Coles’ architectural legacy in Buffalo is long overdue. His work, from the JFK Recreation Center to the Coles House and Studio located in the Masten District, reflects not only the creativity and vision of a trailblazing Black architect but also the resilience of our communities. This is about preserving the history of Coles’ contributions while also educating future generations and preparing them to carry the torch. I want to thank all involved in ensuring that we keep this rich history alive.”

Albert Chao, Co-Lead of Coles House Project, said “This amazing support will further help Coles House Project preserve and transform the unique Coles House and Studio into a place of gathering and inspiration. Our vision is centered on how design and architecture can positively impact the surrounding community and the people, and we are going to start right here with the thoughtful restoration of the house.”