



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senator Sean Ryan Announces Kerns Avenue Bowling Center As Buffalo's First Recipient Of State Rental Improvement Grant

SEAN M. RYAN June 13, 2025

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SENATOR SEAN RYAN, NYS SENATE DISTRICT 61



Senator Ryan announces nearly \$150,000 in state funding for Kerns Avenue Bowling Center, June 13, 2025

Vacant Rental Program is One of Three Ryan-Led Housing Programs that Have Received a Combined \$170 Million in State Funding

BUFFALO – Today, June 13, 2025, New York State Senator Sean Ryan announced that Daniel Adams, owner of Kerns Avenue Bowling Center, has become the first recipient of a Vacant

Rental Program grant in Western New York. The Vacant Rental Program is a New York State housing program that funds renovations to uninhabitable rental units across Upstate New York. The program was devised by Senator Ryan, and he has secured a total of \$80 million in the last two state budgets to create and fund it.

After applying for a grant through Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Services, Adams was selected to receive grants totaling \$144,200 to renovate two apartments above his bowling alley in Schiller Park on Buffalo's East Side. The apartments have been uninhabitable for nearly a decade after sustaining damage resulting from a roof leak and other issues that Adams did not have the funds to address. When the work is complete, the newly renovated two- and three-bedroom apartments will be rented at a rate that is affordable to tenants at or below 60% of the area median income for the next 10 years.

The grants will also unlock additional state investment for Kerns Avenue Bowling Center. The bowling alley was previously deemed eligible for a business grant from Empire State Development to fund larger repairs to the building, but that grant required Adams to contribute 10% of the cost of the project. The repairs covered by the Vacant Rental Program grant will satisfy that requirement, allowing Adams to take advantage of the Empire State Development grant as well.

The **Vacant Rental Program** offers grants of up to \$75,000 per unit to responsible, local landlords who own buildings with five or fewer rental units. The grants, which are being administered by not-for-profit organizations and local governments, may be used to renovate vacant units in exchange for a 10-year commitment to rent the units at affordable rates corresponding to the grant amounts. More details are available at hcr.ny.gov/vrp.

Five entities are distributing grants in Western New York: The City of Buffalo (via the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency), Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services, and

the East Buffalo Development Corporation are distributing grants in the City of Buffalo. Belmont Housing Resources of WNY is distributing grants throughout Erie and Niagara Counties. Preservation Buffalo Niagara is distributing grants in Niagara Falls. A full list of Vacant Rental Program administrators is available [here](#). While Adams is the first local applicant to receive a grant, several other properties have already been approved by local administrators and will receive grants soon.

Senator Ryan proposed the Vacant Rental Program in January 2024 as part of *The City of Good Neighborhoods*, his comprehensive plan to address the shortage of high-quality, affordable housing in Buffalo and across Upstate New York. Since announcing the plan, he has successfully pushed to create three new state programs and secured \$170 million to fund them, including the \$80 million for the Vacant Rental Program, \$70 million for his Block by Block infill housing program, and \$20 million for the Shelter Arrears Eviction Forestallment program, a program he proposed to protect families from being evicted.

Senator Sean Ryan said, “I couldn’t be happier that Kerns Avenue Bowling Center has been selected to receive Western New York’s first Vacant Rental Program grant. This state grant isn’t just putting two high-quality apartments on the market; it’s helping make sure a beloved East Side small business can keep its doors open for years to come. Getting units like these back on the market at affordable rates is the quickest and more cost-effective way for New York State to meaningfully address rising housing costs, and today’s announcement is just the first of many success stories to come.”

Dan Adams, Owner of Kerns Avenue Bowling Company, said, “My vision from day one was for Kerns Bowling Alley to be a place for our community. A place to learn how to bowl, host leagues, celebrate and be a community anchor for all! Last year, I was a week away from selling the building as I had lost hope for being able to afford the repairs and operations of the bowling alley. The residential units upstairs had been uninhabitable for years. The same

week, I had a meeting scheduled with Brandi Barrett and Steve Karnath at Broadway Fillmore NHS, and they asked if I could give them two weeks to come up with a plan to save my building. I was cautiously optimistic, but I canceled the sale. I want to thank Senator Sean Ryan, Broadway Fillmore NHS, and my community for allowing me to keep the doors open and retaining generational wealth in our community.”

Stephen Karnath, Executive Director of Broadway Fillmore Neighborhood Housing Services, said, “Dan Adams has been operating the Kerns Bowling Center for 18 years. As a graduate of the Community Based Real Estate Development Training (CBREDT) Program, and the owner and operator of the only Black-owned bowling alley in New York State, we were saddened to hear from him last year that he was only a few days from selling the property because he could not afford the extensive renovations that were needed. We are grateful that we can creatively combine commercial grant funds that Dan earned as a graduate of the CBREDT program with housing repair funds through Senator Ryan’s VRP program. In addition to providing much needed affordable housing, the rental income will help Dan with the operating expenses of the bowling alley.”

Essence Sweat, Director of East Buffalo Development Corporation, said, “East Buffalo Development is incredibly excited to be a part of the Vacant Rental Program. Our organization alone received nearly 400 applications representing close to 700 vacant units. This is an undeniable demonstration of the urgent need for this initiative in our community. Furthermore, we commend Senator Ryan’s commitment to building the capacity of minority-founded and led community-based development organizations, a promise he made and continues to keep. We are filled with hope and a sense of momentum as we embark on this crucial work. VRP is reinvigorating affordable housing in Buffalo!”

Aretha King, pending recipient of Vacant Rental Program grant, said, “I’m looking forward to participating in the grant program because it will allow me to take care of the many

deficiencies of the apartment. With the grant, I will be able to repair ceilings, walls, and floors, and make a bathroom operable, which will help provide a nice, clean, safe, and updated apartment to the new renter. My mother would be proud that I have managed to provide housing to someone in need, as that was one of her final wishes for her home. I am grateful that the State of New York has thought of how best to provide more housing in the City of Buffalo and I'm just one part of it."