



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

1.17.19 - Grocery Store To Open In North Side's Canal Plaza

FRED AKSHAR January 18, 2019

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Mayor Richard C. David and Senator Fred Akshar on Thursday joined Dr. Joseph Sellepack and officials from the Broome County Council of Churches to announce plans for a grocery store on the ground floor of Canal Plaza, the mixed-use development under construction on the North Side.

“After more than 20 years without a grocery store, North Side residents will finally have a place in their neighborhood to shop for fresh produce, meats, dairy and other grocery needs

— all at an affordable price,” said Mayor Richard C. David. “As a social purpose grocery store, the business will reinvest profits to support programs and services provided by the Council of Churches and CHOW, which fights food insecurity across Broome County. Thanks to support from a broad coalition of partners, this store will expand access to healthy food and create new opportunity for the North Side.”

The North Side grocery store will occupy commercial space in Canal Plaza, the \$20.5 million mixed-use affordable housing development at 435 State St., set to open in 2020. The Council of Churches has signed lease agreements for the commercial space.

The 5,083-square-foot store will provide North Side residents and the broader community with affordable healthy foods, focusing primarily on access to fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and dairy products. The store will also offer frozen foods and dry goods.

“We are excited about the opportunity to open a grocery store on the North Side of Binghamton,” said Dr. Joseph Sellepack, Executive Director of the Broome County Council of Churches. “This is a game changer for residents who need access to affordable food and will assist Council of Churches’ programs in meeting human needs. It is yet another avenue to help us put a stop to hunger in our area.”

The Council of Churches will operate the store in cooperation with Your Bargain Grocer, a successful “social purpose” grocery store in Utica. Your Bargain Grocer opened 10 years ago in a 1,200-square-foot space and has since generated \$1 million in profit. Last month, the store moved to a new \$3.5 million facility 10 times the size of its original location.

The Council of Churches, which operates CHOW, has signed a food sourcing and technical assistance agreement with Your Bargain Grocer to replicate the Utica store model on Binghamton’s North Side. The agreement will allow the Council of Churches to receive

formal guidance from management at the Utica store and tap directly into the store's expansive supply chain of growers, producers and major distributors to stock the shelves of the North Side store. Access to that supply chain will enable the North Side grocery store, like the Utica one, to acquire and sell its product at lower cost than big box grocers.

As a not-for-profit social purpose grocery store, profits will be used to support other services provided by the Council of Churches, including programs aimed at addressing food insecurity, such as Broome Bounty to support local community meal programs. The store will have a zero-food-waste policy.

The Council of Churches plans to hire and train North Side residents to work in the store to build community buy-in and participation in the project. The store is expected to employ three managerial positions and eight part-time employees.

Buildout and equipment costs are funded by a coalition of community partners, including \$150,000 each from the City of Binghamton and Senator Fred Akshar.

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"Our community remains strong because we all work together to address the needs of our neighbors," said Senator Fred Akshar. "I'm proud to have been able to play a small part in this wide-ranging community partnership to bring accessible, affordable and nutritious groceries to the families of Binghamton's North Side community. I applaud Mayor David and our partners for working tirelessly for years to help this project come to fruition."

Other funding partners include the Stewart W. and Willma C. Hoyt Foundation, \$40,000, and Community Foundation of South Central New York, \$20,000. Additional funding partners will be announced in the coming months.

The Council of Churches plans to announce a name for the store at a later date. The store will be open six days per week.

Binghamton's North Side has been without a grocery store since 1996, when the Grand Union left the Binghamton Plaza.