



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

After 25 Years, Grocery Store Returns To North Side

FRED AKSHAR January 4, 2021

| ISSUE: **GROCERY STORES, ACCESS TO FRESH FOOD, FOOD ACCESS**



(BINGHAMTON, N.Y.) — Mayor Richard C. David and Senator Fred Akshar on Monday joined Broome County Council of Churches Executive Director Dr. Joseph Sellepack for the opening of Greater Good Grocery at 435 State St., marking the end of 25 years without a grocery store on the North Side.

“One of the first promises I made to Binghamton residents was to bring a full-service grocery store back to the North Side, which has been without one since 1996,” said Mayor Richard C. David. “It’s been a long journey, but today, we deliver on that promise. The opening of

Greater Good Grocery ends a 25-year void that left thousands of North Side residents struggling to access healthy, affordable food for their families. Through strong partnerships with the Broome County Council of Churches, CHOW, Senator Fred Akshar and others, we are ensuring a better future for North Side families and the community as a whole.”

Greater Good Grocery opened Monday morning on the ground floor of the new \$20.5 million Canal Plaza mixed-use building. The 5,083-square-foot grocery store sells fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy products, frozen foods and a variety of non-perishable goods. Canal Plaza was made possible through a partnership between the City of Binghamton, Binghamton Housing Authority, 3D Development and New York State.

“The wait is finally over for North Side residents,” said Senator Fred Akshar. “Today is a much-needed and important step in our never-ending effort to create more opportunities for a better quality of life for the families of our community. Access to fresh groceries for North Side residents has been such a long time coming, but I’m proud to have worked on a team of community partners like Mayor David and the Broome County Council of Churches, who have been dedicated to meeting the needs of the community we serve from the start. It’s my hope that every level of government can share in a model that puts the needs of the people first and works together to meet them.”

Greater Good Grocery is operated by the Broome County Council of Churches. It is modeled after Bargain Grocery in Utica, a successful social purpose grocery store that opened more than a decade ago.

The Broome County Council of Churches and Bargain Grocery have a food sourcing and technical assistance agreement, which allows the Council to receive formal guidance from operators of the Utica store and tap directly into Bargain Grocery’s expansive supply chain. Access to that supply chain of growers, producers and major distributors will enable Greater

Good Grocery, like Bargain Grocery in Utica, to acquire and sell its product at lower cost than big-box grocers.

Profits from Greater Good Grocery will go to support other efforts by the Broome County Council of Churches to address food insecurity across the community and help those in need.

The Binghamton store employs one lead manager, two associate managers and eight store associates.

“For 25 years, the North Side of Binghamton has been without a grocery store,” said Dr. Joseph Sellepack, Executive Director of the Broome County Council of Churches. “The Broome County Council of Churches is blessed to be a part of this movement to address this gaping need in our community. We are extremely grateful to all our partners for coming together in this extraordinary way to improve the lives of the families who reside there.”

The City began working directly with CHOW in 2016 to expand food access for North Side residents, bringing a mobile market with fresh produce to different North Side locations multiple days a week while the City worked to site a permanent grocery store.

In 2017, the City and CHOW partnered again on a pilot program that offered North Side residents free shuttle rides to grocery stores. In recent years, the City also expanded the North Side’s Lee Barta Community Center, which provides a critical food pantry service, and has funded various efforts by partners like CHOW and VINES to address food insecurity across Binghamton.

“Years of work growing critical relationships with invaluable partners like CHOW and other stakeholders has led directly to Greater Good Grocery opening today,” said Mayor David. “I want to thank those partners and all who contributed to this project. There was no

straightforward or easy solution, but by working together and thinking creatively, Binghamton has found a sustainable way to bring a grocery store to the North Side.”

Buildout and equipment costs were funded by a coalition of community partners, including \$150,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the City of Binghamton and \$150,000 in Dormitory Authority of the State of New York funds through Senator Fred Akshar.

Congressmen Anthony Brindisi and Antonio Delgado also helped secure a \$150,000 grant for the project from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

Other project funders include the Community Foundation for South Central New York, the Hoyt Foundation, the Conrad and Virginia Klee Foundation, the Decker Foundation, the George A. and Margaret Mee Charitable Foundation, the Gannett Foundation, the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, United Way of Broome County, the Rotary Club of Binghamton Lunch, Rotary District 7170, Rotary Binghamton Breakfast Club and several local churches. Individuals and businesses also contributed, including an in-kind donation from STCR, Inc. for a portion of the store’s point-of-sales system.

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

About half the residents in Census Tract 5, where Greater Good Grocery is located, live in poverty, including approximately 65 percent of children, according to censusreporter.org.

Greater Good Grocery is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.