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# West Side Bazaar plans February opening at shuttered Expo space downtown

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Joed Viera

Expo Market downtown will see new life as the (maybe) temporary West Side Bazaar.

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Expo closed at 617 Main St. during the pandemic and never reopened. Created in early 2016 by developer Sinatra & Co., the 7,600-square-foot food hall housed a bar and a variety of restaurants at the time it shut down.

That layout was just right for the vendors from the West Side Bazaar, said Erin Kelly, director of external relations for the West Side Economic Development Initiative.

"In some ways it's turnkey," she said. "It's definitely the best fit of the many, many offers we've been vetting since Sept. 20. And we can keep multiple small businesses together."

Matt Connors, vice president for development with Sinatra, said it was a perfect match.

"We're definitely aligned with their concept," he said.

The new space - to be called Downtown Bazaar - won't affect a 16,000-square-foot expansion project at 1432 Niagara St., where WEDI is building the new home for the West Side Bazaar, which serves as a small business incubator for retail and restaurant businesses, serving women, minorities, refugees, immigrants and other nontraditional business owners.

The Downtown Bazaar, with a soft opening planned for mid-February, is intended as temporary space until the new site opens on Niagara Street in late summer 2024, but there's a chance the Main Street site could remain as well, Kelly said.

"We're not clear on that yet," she said. "Plans could change and we could decide to lease both places or maybe they could run it on their own."

WEDI will run the on-site bar, joined by four food vendors who will operate 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. They include two vendors from former West Side site, and two new vendors:

**JiuJiu Blue's Bakery**, a Hispanic bakery run by Jesenaida "Jesse" Collazo, will be a new vendor specializing in pies as well as Puerto Rican pastries such

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(puff pastry filled with guava paste) and tempieque, a coconut custard dessert topped with cinnamon.

**Pinoy Boi**, a new vendor moving to the space from the Broadway Market, is owned by Lloyd Ligao, a Filipino native. His menu includes dinuguan, a pork stew, as well as pancit noodle stir fry.

**Nile River**, a South Sudanese eatery owned by father-son duo Akec Aguer and Garang Doar, offers such items as sukuma wiki with collard greens, tomato, onions and rice; and chicken tawook, served with lemon juice, tomato paste, garlic, oregano and paprika.

**Abyssinia Ethiopian Cuisine**, owned by Zelalem Gemmeda, offers items such as injera, a sourdough flatbread topped with cabbage, spicy lentils, potatoes and beets.

The space will also house a few retail tenants, including Asian Boutique, which formerly operated as Gadget Bazaar by a Sri Lankan immigrant, and Flavia's Business, a Rwandan-owned shop offering African clothing and accessories.



**Tracey Drury**

Reporter - *Buffalo Business First*

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