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UB to help Buffalo's troubled East Side with grant

HAROLD DUMKE - Staff Writer

With a \$359,090 grant through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, UB will be among several groups taking aim over the next three years at developing and revitalizing Buffalo's poverty-stricken East Side.

UB was awarded the grant in late December to fund programs with HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Centers, which help colleges work with community groups to redevelop struggling neighborhoods and aid them in tackling deep-seated issues such as poverty and poor health.

"The center for urban studies will be leading the initiative. We'll be working closely with the Baldy Center on campus," said Henry Louis Taylor Jr., director of urban studies at UB. "Six thousand dollars each year will be granted to encourage individual faculty members across campus to get involved by writing proposals for both theoretical and applied research projects."

Taylor said UB would also be working with the School of Education and the College of Arts and Sciences to set up various projects. The target areas in the Buffalo region are the Fruit Belt, near the Roswell Cancer Institute, and the East Side neighborhood surrounding Martin Luther King Jr. Park. UB's grant application notes that household incomes, median housing values and home ownership rates are lower in those target neighborhoods than in the city as a whole.

Taylor said he has high hopes for the neighborhood's grand makeover.

"This community outreach program (is) a model of University Assisted Community Development that would lead to a fundamental transformation of these distressed neighborhoods into desirable places to live, work and play," he said. "These communities coming together will create a synergy to develop these areas. We'll be launching university internship programs for students to get involved in those areas as well."

Three of the 13 universities that received grant funding are in Western New York. Niagara University and Fredonia State also received grant money to develop areas in Niagara Falls and Dunkirk, respectively. Niagara received \$399,891 and Fredonia was granted \$399,868. Each school will be focusing on areas in which average household incomes and standards of living are noticeably lower than the rest of the region.

Other programs that Taylor mentioned would be involved are a housing redevelopment project in conjunction with the Urban Community Corporation, and COP will be working with Futures Academy, a K-8 school in the Fruit Belt.

"We want to improve academic achievement by showing elementary students how to use the things they learn in school to make their neighborhoods better places," Taylor said.

The COP will also tackle community economic development issues specifically on Fillmore Avenue.

"We want to make that commercial district a good, attractive, safe place to shop," Taylor said. "Our first goal will be to organize that commercial area so that the business owners and residents will be actively involved in the

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change."

"A main goal of COP is to organize communities and to help build a capacity for sustainable change," he added. "It will be COP scholars coming in to partner with communities and help them develop their areas."

The revitalization projects are slated to begin on Feb. 1.

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