



## **Buffalo Niagara Community Reinvestment Coalition Partnership Summary**

### **Joining together to make a difference**

Northwest Bank and the Buffalo Niagara Community Reinvestment Coalition (BNCRC) have joined forces to help improve credit accessibility and raise the level of financial awareness and responsibility throughout Erie and Niagara counties.

Together, they've mapped a plan for success--

### **Committed teams building relationships**

A community bank, Northwest is fully dedicated to the people and businesses throughout Western New York. To build ground-level connections with local residents, businesses and nonprofits, Northwest will hire two experienced community development officers (CDOs) who understand the inherent characteristics of each population and how bank resources can help achieve community goals.

Northwest CDOs will work with other Northwest representatives and nonprofits to deliver financial literacy education, connect businesses and residents to specialty bank programs and provide the guidance they need to invest for future success.

### **Improving local access to bank products and services**

With BNCRC, Northwest will create an affirmative action marketing and outreach plan to connect low- and moderate-income borrowers, borrowers of color and borrowers with limited English proficiency to mortgage, home equity and small business loans to promote home ownership, address blight and encourage small business growth within these communities.

Working with BNCRC, local housing counseling agencies and a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), Northwest will continuously assess and refine loan products so they're accessible to low-to-moderate income borrowers.

If prospective mortgage customers don't qualify, Northwest will work with local nonprofit organizations to help improve their financial situation and prepare them for homeownership.

**Removing cultural barriers**

As part of this partnership, Northwest will remove cultural barriers by hiring and promoting representatives who are fluent in languages spoken throughout Erie and Niagara counties. The bank will also commission a language service to help fill the void when it comes to less-commonly-spoken languages.

In addition, Northwest will work with BNCRC to develop a cultural competency training program for new employees, as well as an annual seminar for all local Northwest representatives.

**Workforce development**

Northwest and BNCRC will work together to create a local workforce development program that provides refugees and refugee communities with the skills they need to work in the financial services industry.

**Communication is key**

Stakeholders of Northwest Bank and the BNCRC will meet quarterly to monitor progress and develop strategies to leverage their partnership and meet community and economic development goals.