

Community-Driven Revitalization of the Greater Hazelwood Business District

A commercial development project for the South side of the 4800 block of Second Avenue

Attn: Urban Redevelopment Authority

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Organization: GH-CARED, a part of P.O.O.R.L.A.W.

Subject: Letter of intent to develop the South side of the 4800 block of Second Ave. in Hazelwood – parcels 56- f-92, 56-f-91, 56-f-90, 56-f-88, 56-f-86, 56-f-85, 56-f-85A, 56-f-84, 56-f-83, 56-f-80, and 56-f-78

Executive Project Team:

Executive Director and Fiscal Agent: Saundra Cole-McKamey, Founder and CEO, [P.O.O.R.L.A.W.](#)

Senior Development Consultant: Pastor Lutual Love, of [Praise Temple Deliverance Church](#) and Co-Founder of GH-CARED

Project Manager: Joe Massaro III, President and CEO, [Massaro Construction Group](#)

Manager of Business Outreach and Development: Bill Bailey, Founder and President, [D. Well & Associates LLC](#)

Marketing and Communications Director: Georgetta Rue, Owner and CEO, [DeLoJe Consulting LLC](#)

Project Development and Community Outreach: Michael Wilson, Executive Director, [Glen Hazel Community Resident Management Corporation](#)

Who We Are

P.O.O.R.L.A.W. (People of Origin Rightfully Loved and Wanted) has been serving the Greater Hazelwood community through workforce development and youth leadership and athletics programs for 14 years. As an organization, we believe in community development for the people, by the people, and of the people – where everyone has a seat at the table. It is only by empowering the residents of Greater Hazelwood to speak with one voice that we can achieve this vision. With that in mind, we established the **Greater Hazelwood Coalition Against Racial and Ethnic Disparities (GH-CARED)**.

GH-CARED is a **coalition of local grassroots, community-based organizations, churches, agencies, businesses, and residents** dedicated to finding community-driven solutions that address the racial and ethnic disparities facing the Black and brown residents – especially women and children – of Greater Hazelwood. This includes a lack of basic neighborhood amenities, such as a full-service grocery store, laundromat, and financial services – requiring local families to spend precious time and limited economic resources to travel outside their community to access healthy food and other necessities.

Project History and Goals

Once a thriving community, the Hazelwood business district boasted a host of Black-owned businesses, including a butcher shop, bakery, restaurants, bars, hair salons, a furniture store, and more. But over the past 40 years, many of these businesses were displaced. Despite the promise of community redevelopment programs offered by the City and other organizations, much of our historic business district remains shuttered – made up of abandoned buildings and vacant lots. The 4800 block of Second Ave. is a glaring example of this neglect.

In recent years, there has been a push to revitalize the Hazelwood business district, as outlined in the [Greater Hazelwood Neighborhood Plan](#). Both in the creation of this plan and in multiple meetings

regarding development projects for the 4800 block, community input has been clear: **The people of Greater Hazelwood want their business district back – including a full-service grocery store.** Yet time and again, development groups from outside our community have proposed instead that the block be used to build affordable housing. We agree that affordable housing is critical in the midst of rapid regional development and gentrification of historically Black communities across Pittsburgh. We do not agree, however, that this large section of real estate on a busy commuter thoroughfare and at the entrance to the Hazelwood Green – the City’s largest new development project – is the place to build it. Instead, this block should be used to **rebuild Hazelwood’s economic core** – creating a space where community-owned businesses large and small can prosper by offering quality goods and services to Greater Hazelwood residents, commuters, and residents from surrounding areas.

Project Plan

Working with the project team listed above, GH-CARED will construct and lease a two-story commercial building with a parking lot on the South side of Second Avenue’s 4800 block – running between Hazelwood Ave. and Flowers Ave.

The building will offer approximately 40,000 sq. ft. of commercial space, including a space large enough to house a full-service grocery store and laundromat on the ground floor. The upper floor, which will be accessible via elevator, will house a credit union and other small businesses, such as a daycare center.

The grocery store, whether a franchise or independent business, will operate as a community-owned co-op, both to ensure that profits directly benefit the Greater Hazelwood community and to ensure a commitment to stay in the neighborhood long-term. Business owners from Greater Hazelwood and Black-owned businesses will be given priority in leasing the other commercial spaces.

How the URA Can Help

As the URA is aware, the North side of the 4800 block has already been awarded to larger, more-established development organizations and will be used to build housing. An RFP for the entire block was issued in July of 2019, but said organizations did not submit proposals for the South side of the block. While we would like to see both sides of the block used for commercial development aimed at revitalizing Greater Hazelwood’s historic business district, we understand that, in order to **realize our vision for our community**, we must take the initiative – and the risk – of doing it ourselves.

We ask, therefore, that the URA grant us **site control over parcels 56- f-92, 56-f-91, 56-f-90, 56-f-88, 56-f-86, 56-f-85, 56-f-85A, 56-f-84, 56-f-83, 56-f-80, and 56-f-78 of Second Ave.’s 4800 block** so that we may continue to develop our project plan – including conducting a feasibility study, establishing financing requirements and funding sources, drawing up architectural proposals and plans, and so on. In fact, pending the URA’s approval of site control, we already have a commitment from Rob Stephany, Senior Program Director of Community and Economic Development at The Heinz Endowments of \$30,000 to fund a feasibility study for this project. Naturally, we understand that site control would be granted on a temporary basis and extended periodically pending clear progress on our part.

There is no doubt that GH-CARED is a small community-based organization; that our volunteer project team is small; and that this is a hugely ambitious project for a development group of any size. The road ahead will not be easy. But, as the URA knows, the mission of **equitable community development** never is. In your own words, “The URA’s history is a story of projects, each one unique. It is a story of people. It is a story of partnership and leadership. Most of all, it is a story of building a better Pittsburgh.”

We at GH-CARED would be honored to be one of those stories. Together, with the help of the URA and the Grace of God, we will **build back a better Greater Hazelwood** for the people living here today and for future generations to come.

Thank you and God bless.