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Blueprints

INNER CITY CHRISTIAN FEDERATION

SUMMER / FALL 2017

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

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Dear ICCF friends and partners,

In July our community marked the 50 year anniversary of the 1967 uprising in Grand Rapids. Southeast side neighborhoods erupted as African American residents took to the streets in protest. Their emotions had reached a tipping point, boiling over in reaction to decades of race-based discrimination, disinvestment, and unjust real estate practices which led to segregation and endemic poverty.

Now, 50 years later, many leaders in our community point out that not much has improved. While our city seems to be on almost every “10 Best” list, when it comes to racial inequity, Grand Rapids is at the opposite extreme, particularly in terms of housing.

According to a nationwide report:

African Americans in Grand Rapids are 77 percent less likely to own a home with a mortgage than their white counterparts, a ratio that is fourth-worst among the nation's largest metropolitan areas. (Trulia, 4.12.16)

An Urban Institute national study, looking at 100 million mortgages from 2001-13 concluded that:

West Michigan is the nation's most 'racially uneven' housing market when it comes to helping African Americans and Hispanics recover from the housing bust. (mlive.com, 10.15.14)

Not all African American neighbors in Grand Rapids are experiencing the full benefits of the current economic revitalization. The tensions that led to the 1967 uprising are still evident. Something has to change.

The epicenter of the protest 50 years ago was where ICCF's Tapestry Square development is currently taking shape. Through our housing development and related programs, ICCF is working to change the next chapter of our community's story.

God desires, and in fact commands, us to strive to end racism and discrimination, working toward justice here in this place where history and our present circumstances converge. Our community can be a place marked by justice and equity...but it will take intentionality, courage, innovation, grace, and truth.

Shalom,



Ryan VerWys
President and CEO
rverwys@iccf.org



HOUSING PIPELINE

Heard about the 177 properties ICCF is exploring?
Stay up-to-date on our Facebook page.

435 LA GRAVE

Construction will be complete on our 435 La Grave development in October. This three-story mixed use building includes ground floor commercial space and 24 apartments—16 affordable units and eight market rate units. 435 La Grave will be Michigan's first permanent supportive housing development for youth who have aged out of foster care that is incorporated within a mixed income development. ICCF will partner with Bethany Christian Services to provide supportive services to these youth onsite.



501 EASTERN

ICCF is adding 65 mixed income housing units to the Baxter and Madison neighborhoods at 501 Eastern. Currently three dilapidated buildings and five empty lots occupy the space. This new development, which includes a community room, exercise room, and kids room, will add vibrancy and density to a community facing an affordable housing shortage and rising rents. Construction will begin in Spring 2018. 17 units are designated for formerly homeless youth. Bethany Christian Services will again offer supportive services to these residents.

STOCKBRIDGE APARTMENTS

ICCF will begin construction on new affordable housing on the west side in Spring 2018 to ensure low income households and families continue to have a place in this community. The five story development will have 64 units—51 affordable units and 13 market rate units. Commercial bays owned and operated by Rockford Development will occupy the ground floor. Stockbridge residents will have access to a community room, exercise room, and kids room on the first floor as well. Estimated completion date for this project is Summer 2019.



WHAT IS PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING?

Supportive housing, according to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, is an evidence-based housing intervention that combines non-time-limited affordable housing assistance with wrap-around supportive services for people experiencing homelessness, as well as other people with disabilities. ICCF believes the outcomes associated with permanent supportive housing include increased skills, increased income, greater self-determination, and obtaining and remaining in permanent housing.

SINGLE FAMILY HOMEOWNERSHIP

ICCF continues renovations on multiple single family homes throughout the Grand Rapids area, including:

- 841 Lafayette, which is wrapping up construction.
- 1126 Jefferson, which has undergone lead and asbestos abatement and is currently being painted. HVAC and plumbing rough-ins are also underway.
- 1014 Worden, which has also undergone lead and asbestos abatement. Stucco repairs are complete and HVAC and plumbing rough-ins are underway.
- 427 Prince, which is currently being painted.

THE HEARTBEAT OF 400 FRANKLIN

What makes a house into a home?

The same things that transform a neighborhood into a community – love, kindness, compassion. Goodwill and trust. Respect for others and a craving for shalom.

For Liz Chatman, Resident & Community Assistant at ICCF, it's those values that guide the operation of the community center at 400 Franklin. She knows that the end goal of this neighborhood, made up primarily of ICCF rental properties, is not just for families to survive - but to thrive.

That's the heartbeat of 400 Franklin: thriving community. And after just two years of operation, the impact of the community center is tangible. The building is overflowing with people attending programs, greeting one another, and sharing food, advice, and laughter.

On weeknights, 400 Franklin is home to a sewing class, exercise group, cooking sessions, and computer skills lessons. These programs, which Chatman affectionately calls “parties with a purpose,” provide opportunities for neighbors to form friendships while also growing in an area of personal development.

“In order to speak into peoples’ lives, you have to know them first,” says Chatman. So the community center is focused on forming relationships and then providing resources for people to grow.



RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships cannot be manufactured like houses – they have to be cultivated and cared for, like homes.

Chatman is passionate about creating spaces for relationships to form organically between neighbors. One recent instance of this was called Style & Shop. In partnership with local consignment store Audrey Lane, local ICCF ladies were treated to a special evening of fashion, food, and fun.

Rochella Robinson, who has lived in this neighborhood for nine years, was a runway model at Style & Shop and called the ladies’ night a blessing.

“It’s like a community sisterhood,” said Robinson. “We can share our troubles and help one another.” Robinson met many of her neighbors for the first time at the event and was able to reconnect with some women who had been part of an exercise class with her at 400 Franklin.

And how was her walk down the runway in thrifty, fashionable clothes? “Presenting it in front of the ladies, and they were oohing and aahing and clapping – that was my favorite time!” she remembers fondly.

Continuing the theme of fashion is a sewing class at 400 Franklin led by Reggie James. He and assistant leader Sue Ferrell have both loved getting to know their neighbors through the class. James says that nowadays, “people are wanting to make their own stuff,” and the sewing class enables them to take on do-it-yourself sewing projects. More than simply learning a valuable skill, the program is a space for relationships – making participants reluctant to leave at the end of the night because they are enjoying themselves so much.

“They are upset when the class is over,” says James, laughing. “I kind of have to push them out of there. I say, ‘Look, guys, the class is over.’ If you’re having fun, time flies.”

Ferrell, a longtime volunteer with ICCF, says the class brings joy to her life in addition to giving her a place to serve.

“I love going,” she says. “I have met the neatest people there. There’s all kinds of people – and it’s just fabulous.”

GROWTH

“You already have gifts on the inside,” says Chatman. “It’s just tapping into those and seeing how they can grow. We’re here to meet you where you are right now, and if you want to grow, we’ll help you get there.”



At one personal development event, the attendees were invited to construct “vision boards” to showcase where they would like to be one year from now. Three-year ICCF resident Giovanni Acosta’s vision was to pay off her hefty medical bills and work herself out of debt. Along the way, she realized that her weight was causing some of those medical problems and started making lifestyle changes to lose weight.

“With diet and exercise I became a new person,” says Acosta. “Now I think I’ve lost almost 70 pounds.”

With the help of her neighbors cheering her on, and Chatman’s encouragement, Acosta was able to create a healthier life for herself. “I didn’t think I was going to get through the stuff that I did. I committed to it, liked it, and got some awesome outcomes,” she says.

Another pair of residents were empowered by the computer instruction and laptop ownership program at ICCF, facilitated by a partnership with CompRenew. This particular class reaches a diverse crowd – both young and old, from every background imaginable. They all share the desire to learn more about technology and along the way have found a community of like-minded neighbors.

Christa Peterson, a two-year resident of ICCF housing, is going to school online and used the computer class as a refresher for her skills in Microsoft Office. After completing the course, she is interested in other programs at 400 Franklin like the upcoming home ownership class.

Besides brushing up on basic computer skills, the course was a time for Peterson to connect relationally.

One of the best parts of computer class? “Getting to know some of the different ICCF residents that you don’t know, besides your neighbors,” says Peterson.

Chris Smith, who started the class with very few computer skills, gained so much knowledge -- he even landed a part-time job through networking at the sessions. He’s thankful for the opportunity to learn new skills in a small-group setting with a kind instructor.

“To the people that help us have the classes and different activities that go on, I want to thank them,” Smith says. It’s this kind of openness and gratitude that keeps the programs running strong, and participants are excited for new ways to be involved and continue learning.

Between fashion shows, sewing, exercise, and computers, this small building on the corner of Franklin and Madison is home to something special. This young community center is becoming a place for relationships and growth, slowly transforming the area from a mere neighborhood to true community.

We invite you to get involved in the work of thriving communities by visiting iccf.org/get-involved.

TO THOSE WHO JOIN US IN *Making Places to Come Home To*, THANK YOU.



Vision Real Estate employees beautify the grounds at ICCF's townhomes



Plante Moran summer interns assist with landscaping at 427 Prince



First year students at Calvin College paint a Family Haven apartment

Farmers Insurance Black Professionals Alliance help with painting, cleaning and much more at 841 Lafayette



Volunteers provide demolition help at 841 Lafayette during Chemical Bank Cares Day



High School students from Friendship Christian Reformed Church serve breakfast and play games at Family Haven



Students volunteer at 1134 Prospect for GVSU's MLK Jr. Day of Service and Solidarity



Over 30 employees from Innotec spent the day volunteering with ICCF taking out lockers, cleaning apartments, building sheds, and landscaping

THE IMPACT OF YOU: *John Smith*

John Smith became involved at ICCF through his work with Legal Aid of Western Michigan, almost eight years ago. He regularly teaches a consumer law and housing class to neighbors, but is also available to other educators and housing counselors at ICCF for questions.

Below are a few of his thoughts on volunteering with ICCF:

Why ICCF?

I represent a lot of people in a variety of consumer cases, and one common denominator between virtually all of those cases is that the consumer would have been better off never getting involved in a deal in the first place. The idea of educating consumers to help them make better choices just makes sense to me.

What keeps you coming back?

I really enjoy working with the staff here. There have been changes over the years, but many of the dedicated non-profiters that I first met when I moved to Grand Rapids are still going strong at ICCF.

What impact have you seen?

I work with many of the same people ICCF serves, representing neighbors during foreclosures, evictions, and other difficult times. But I love to see these same people taking classes, working towards something. ICCF provides safe and affordable housing. And that's one of the most important resources in our community.

"John engages the class and provides an excellent presentation on Consumer Protection and Fair Housing. Our neighbors relate to the information he provides, and always comment on how helpful the class was. You can tell John truly cares about the participants at ICCF and is passionate about social justice."

Christina Luehrs, Housing Advocate



NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER HOURS IN FISCAL YEAR 2017: 4,433

VALUE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS: \$104,929.11

UPCOMING EVENTS:

ARTIST RECEPTION:

VALENTINA GRIGORIEVA

Wednesday, September 6 | 6:00-7:30PM

LUNCH AND TOUR

September 28, 2017

October 26, 2017

December 7, 2017

SAVE-THE-DATE | GALA 2018

Thursday, March 15, 2018

JW Marriott, Grand Rapids, Michigan

ICCF

Inner City Christian Federation
920 Cherry Street SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

OUR MISSION

Equitable Opportunity | Affordable Homes | Thriving Neighborhoods



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HEARTBEAT OF 400 FRANKLIN – *Read Inside*