

July 1, 2008

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Dear Community Supporter,

Neighborhood Ventures Celebrates the Completion of our Second Year of Operations! Neighborhood Ventures (NV), a 501(c)(3) non-profit community and economic development corporation, is excited to enter into our third year of operation. As we continue to expand our programs and projects, we are seeking partners who value our mission and are soliciting your support. We have a vision of a city full of vibrant neighborhood business districts and our mission is to “interject vitality into the heart of each neighborhood by revitalizing its business district.”

We are proud of the progress we have made in improving historic business districts and building neighborhood business collaborations in Grand Rapids. Some of our many accomplishments in the last two years include:

- Improved 30 storefronts through our Face Forward Façade Program, which awards owners up to \$4000 in reimbursement grants for storefront improvements and provides free design training with an architect through our Design First Clinic. Together these programs leveraged eight times the investment, approximately 1 million dollars in private resources, and increased storefront occupancy by almost 30%. These façade improvements give further return on investment to the community by attracting new businesses, creating jobs, increasing public safety, increasing customer traffic, and attracting additional investment to neighborhood business districts.
- Assisted Southtown and Uptown community collaboratives on various projects such as streetscape improvements, district maintenance, district branding, special events, micro-business training, façade improvements, and economic growth initiatives. Evidence of this work is apparent on many commercial corridors in Uptown and Southtown. Positive change is especially visible by visiting Cherry Street and Lake Drive, in the East Hills Business District, where once largely boarded-up corridors have emerged as one of the cities most vibrant districts with 96% of storefronts filled by local businesses.
- Expanded our programs and assistance from serving 3 business districts to now serving 9. This is a result of the demand for our expertise and the generous support of our financial partners, such as the Steelcase Foundation, Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Secchia Family Foundation, Community Development Block Grant, Macatawa Bank, Mercantile Bank, Fifth Third Bank, Huntington Bank, Meijer, and others.

NV’s tagline “bolstering business, creating community” reflects our organization’s commitment to creating neighborhood business districts that not only are great places to do business, but also are wonderful places for the community to connect. We all have a stake in building a city of economic vitality and community vibrancy. We all benefit from having business districts where jobs are created, entrepreneurs are supported, visitors are attracted, and neighbors are proud. We request your financial support today to forge ahead with the mission of NV, creating vibrant neighborhoods. Your contribution today will go a long way in helping us achieve a successful community for all in West Michigan to enjoy. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact a member of the board of directors or Kimberly Van Dyk at (616) 301-3929 or vandykk@neighborhoodventures.org. We gratefully appreciate your consideration of support and trust that you will choose to become a partner with our organization.

Respectfully,

Mark C. Lewis
Board President

Kimberly Van Dyk
Executive Director