

Housing and public amenity improvements coming to Detroit's Regent Park neighborhood

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LifeBUILDERS, a nonprofit organization working to reclaim, empower and build in Detroit's Regent Park neighborhood, has been awarded a \$50,000 Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP) grant for high-impact projects geared toward stabilizing and improving the area. LifeBUILDERS will use the funds this summer to focus on a variety of improvements to owner occupied homes and the creation of two landscaped pocket parks in the Regent Park community.

"We are honored to receive this NEP grant from MSHDA, which is for the Regent Park residents who truly are hands-on and the force driving our organization's revitalization efforts," says Executive Director Larry Johnson, who co-founded LifeBUILDERS along with his wife, Marilyn. "This is a testimony to our significant, ongoing investment and the transformational work we do to benefit the entire Regent Park community."

In 2018, LifeBUILDERS received its first MSHDA NEP grant in the amount of \$30,000 and was recognized as a "high performer" for its implementation efforts of that grant.

Over the past 13 years, LifeBUILDERS has been recognized for its efforts to stabilize and revitalize Regent Park, a neighborhood plagued in the past from decades of abandonment and disinvestment, which opened the door to criminal activity, despair and hopelessness. Located on the far northeast side of Detroit, Regent Park is bounded by Kelly Road, Gratiot Avenue and 7 and 8 Mile roads.



Since 2005, LifeBUILDERS has acquired and rehabbed more than 50 properties and aims to bring that total to 100 by year 2020.

The goal of NEP grants is to help and showcase model Michigan neighborhoods where residents are engaged and facilitating positive change for their communities. These grants require that the projects and activities align with one or more of five

core components: housing enhancements, affordable homeownership opportunity (HPR), homeowner emergency repairs, beautification and neighborhood public amenity enhancements.

"We are proud to support the innovative and community-driven initiatives and programs of LifeBUILDERS," says Acting Michigan State Housing Development Authority Gary Heidel. "The organization is a true standout. We can see and feel LifeBUILDERS' impact to improve the quality of life for people living in the Regent Park neighborhood, as can the residents in the community."

Since 2005, LifeBUILDERS has acquired and preserved more than 50 properties, two multi-family units, pocket parks and numerous vacant lots; provided landscaping and beautification on several of those lots; acquired an abandoned Detroit Public School and transformed it into a state of the art early childhood education center; repurposed a Chase Bank branch into a first-class community center; upgraded and maintained a formerly dilapidated city park; and has coordinated thousands of volunteer hours in cleaning up and removing blight that has plagued the Regent Park community.

The LifeBUILDERS' enhancements projects will be completed by the fall and will make a noticeable difference within the community.

► Detroit's Regent Park, Gary Heidel, LifeBUILDERS, Michigan State Housing Development Authority, MSHDA, Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP)



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