

Building Relationships, Building Trust

Exploring resident-driven grantmaking in Slavic Village.

In June 2023, to celebrate the 85th anniversary of Third Federal Savings & Loan and honor the Cleveland neighborhood where it was founded, Third Federal Foundation formed a resident-driven Anniversary Grant Committee to give a special \$85,000 grant to a local nonprofit working to improve the quality of life in Slavic Village.

Though the Foundation has prioritized Slavic Village in its grantmaking since it was established in 2007, this was the first time it brought together neighborhood residents to participate.

This report captures the committee's process in the hopes that the Foundation can keep improving its methods of gathering feedback from and building relationships with the Slavic Village community.

"For 85 years, Third Federal has been guided by a core set of values, one of which is trust," said Third Federal Chairman and CEO Marc A. Stefanski. "What better way to celebrate this anniversary than to trust residents to direct resources where they feel it will have the most impact."

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"Having the opportunity to make a change within the community has no better feeling. I'm truly grateful to be able to involve not just the youth but everyone in the community for a positive impact."

HECTOR ABOYTES

The Process

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FORMING A COMMITTEE

Third Federal Foundation set out to form a small committee of engaged Slavic Village residents committed to making their community a better place. Through this effort, the Foundation hoped to inform an ongoing resident-driven process for its Slavic Village grantmaking, build a pathway for shared leadership, create a mechanism for resident feedback, and increase transparency, accountability and inclusivity among residents, nonprofits and foundations dedicated to a vibrant and prosperous Slavic Village.

To start, the Foundation identified two initial members of the committee. Those inaugural members assumed leadership of the committee and identified potential candidates for the remaining spots by sourcing ideas and suggestions from the community.

The members of the Anniversary Grant Committee ranged from a high school student to lifelong residents and included:

- **Hector Aboytes** - A resident and sophomore at Cleveland Central Catholic High School in Slavic Village
- **Victor Benton** - A teacher at Cleveland Central Catholic High School who grew up in the neighborhood and went to school there
- **Dasia Harris** - An active community volunteer and Reiki practitioner who is raising her children in the neighborhood after growing up there
- **Lynda Lewis** - A lifelong resident and leader of one of Cleveland's oldest block clubs (the more than 100-year-old Forest City Block Club)
- **Sharena Zayed** - A resident, parent, community activist, and the North Broadway Network Weaver at University Settlement

During their initial meeting, the committee discussed methods for sourcing and reviewing proposals, gathering resident input and selecting the grant award. Committee members felt strongly that they wanted to interview finalists in person before selecting the grant.

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SOURCING IDEAS

The committee put out a call for proposals in May. The group was hoping to attract organizations that could use the one-time grant to launch, grow or scale a program or project that had potential to impact the neighborhood.

In adherence to Third Federal Foundation's grantmaking guidelines, the committee sought proposals from 501c3 organizations for a program or project geographically focused in Slavic Village that directly impacted majority low-to-moderate income individuals and advanced one or more of the Foundation's focus areas:

- Affordable Housing
- Financial Stability
- Accessible Education
- Neighborhood Revitalization and Stabilization
- Community Health and Well-being

To get a pulse on what their fellow residents wanted to see more of in their neighborhood, committee members attended block club and other community meetings and distributed a survey. They heard a need for housing assistance and repairs, resources for teenagers, more recreation, and more support for small businesses.

By the deadline of June 1, the committee had received 12 proposals to review. Committee members met and discussed the merits of each proposal, considering which projects would bring the greatest positive impact to the neighborhood. The committee narrowed the pool down to four finalists.

"This experience has taught me that when residents are empowered to shape their communities, incredible things can happen."

SHARENA ZAYED



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SELECTING THE GRANT

On June 15, the committee hosted an evening of networking and conversations with the four finalists at Third Federal's headquarters. Each finalist had the opportunity to speak directly with the committee, answer questions and discuss their proposed projects in more detail.

The committee members used a score sheet to consistently evaluate each finalist. After much deliberation, the group selected **College Now Greater Cleveland** as the grant recipient. The proposal fulfilled the intention of the grant by expanding a program to Slavic Village that could otherwise not happen and addressing an unmet community need (i.e., more opportunities for teenagers).

All organizations walked away that evening with a grant as well as new connections and ideas of how to collaborate with each other in the neighborhood.

"Participating on the 85th Anniversary Grant Committee was one of the most meaningful things I've experienced to date. I am blessed to have been asked to be on the committee to decide who would receive such a beautiful gift."

VICTOR BENTON



The Results

COLLEGE NOW GREATER CLEVELAND

\$85,000

Funding will bring an innovative career exploration program called Xplore to 40 high school students who reside and/or attend school in Slavic Village.

SOUTHEAST CLEVELAND RESOURCE CENTER

\$10,000

Capacity-building grant will support new resident-founded and resident-led resource center located on Fleet Avenue.

DARL CENTER FOR THE ARTS AND COMMUNITY OF FAITH ASSEMBLY

\$5,000 EACH

Grants will support collaboration with neighborhood partners and enable the two organizations to build on ideas generated during the presentation event.

Additional Submissions

Thanks to all the organizations that submitted proposals for Third Federal Foundation's Anniversary Grant. In addition to the four finalists, the following eight organizations demonstrated a commitment to the neighborhood and shared ideas for new or ongoing projects and initiatives that excited the committee. Through this process, the Foundation learned more about who is driving change, what is working and where additional support is needed in Slavic Village.

"We essentially asked, who is showing up for this neighborhood and how can we support them in their work," said Third Federal Foundation Executive Director Emily Thome. "We have been working in Slavic Village for many years; it's our home. But if we aren't listening to the community and striving to continuously learn and improve, we aren't fulfilling our purpose."

The Foundation expects to continue to explore methods for resident-driven grantmaking and input.

Celebrate the Arts Performance Academy

Proposed project:
Play and Learn through the ARTS

City Year Cleveland

Proposed project:
Expanded Whole School Whole Child (WSWC) model at AB Hart and Mound elementary schools

Elizabeth Baptist Church

Proposed project:
The Well Summer and After School Enrichment Program

Haven Home

Proposed project:
Work from Home Office

Neighborhood Pets

Proposed project:
Healthy Food Healthy Person Initiative

Fleet Avenue - Project Rising Tide

Proposed project:
Fleet Forward Project

The Literacy Cooperative

Proposed project:
Dolly Parton Imagination Library

Slavic Village Development Corp.

Proposed project:
Community Stewards Program

"There are so many great ideas and programs that people do not know about and we realized how much opportunity there is for collaboration and connection."

LYNDA LEWIS

"Thank you to everyone for trusting the process and trusting us to make this grant. I am so excited to see how this program helps the young people in our neighborhood."

DASIA HARRIS



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ABOUT THIRD FEDERAL FOUNDATION

Following Third Federal's initial public offering in 2007, the bank established the Third Federal Foundation with \$55 million in assets to support conditions that make successful home ownership possible: available homes within the financial reach of low- and moderate-income households; thriving neighborhoods in which to live; tools and resources to support upward mobility and financial stability; and the educational building blocks to advance in life. Over the last 15 years, the Foundation has granted a total of \$60 million to community partners throughout Northeast Ohio and select markets in Florida.