



Speech by Rip Rapson:

Kresge Announces Recipients of Grants for Neighborhood Projects in Detroit

Kresge Innovation Projects: Detroit funds 18 community revitalization efforts.

April 1, 2015

Good morning. I'm Rip Rapson and on behalf of the entire Kresge organization, I'd like to thank you for being with us this morning. We want to move directly into the details of this very special announcement.

I'd also like to extend a special welcome to Mayor Duggan, our Detroit City Council and mayor's Cabinet members who are in the audience today. And thank you to Marygrove President Dr. David Fike for having us today and allowing us to visit your beautiful campus. And, last but not least, I'd like to welcome the grantees up here and their peers who are in the audience.

So, let me start with just a bit of context about Kresge.

Kresge is a private, national foundation with an office in Midtown Detroit and our headquarters in Troy. The foundation was founded in the city in 1924 by Sebastian Kresge, the businessman who co-founded the original five-and-dime stores. Kresge wanted his personal fortune to help promote human progress.

For its first 80 years, The Kresge Foundation funded capital campaigns to build hundreds of university halls and libraries, medical facilities and arts centers across Michigan and across the nation.

Today, we advance Sebastian's mission by expanding opportunities for vulnerable people living in America's cities. We believe all people should be able to lead self-determined lives and participate in the economic mainstream.

We do this through six programs: Arts & Culture, Education, Environment, Health, Human Services and Community Development in Detroit.

Each program area has specific objectives. For instance:

- We are addressing the upstream causes of poor health outcomes.
- We are promoting college access for low-income students and helping them succeed once they're there.
- And we are building the resilience of multiservice organizations to help low-income people join the economic mainstream.

In Detroit, we are contributing to city's renewal – in downtown, Midtown, the North End and, as you'll hear in a few minutes, throughout its neighborhoods.

Kresge was the lead investor for the Riverfront Conservancy, the Belle Isle Conservancy and Campus Martius Park. And for nearly a decade we have worked to create the first leg of an effective and equitable regional transit system by birthing the M-1 Rail project.

We have been a strong supporter of the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework, which is evolving as a tool to re-imagine how we can make more productive uses of our underutilized land.

We were proud to be among the local and national foundations who, through the “grand bargain,” helped make possible the successful resolution of Detroit's bankruptcy.

We promote the integration of arts and culture into community revitalization through support for arts organizations, individual artists and Art X, which will kick off its third installment on April 9 with three full weekends of programming throughout Midtown.

Our work is possible thanks to our nonprofit, public, private and philanthropic partners across the country – and right here in Detroit. And many of those individuals are in the room today.

So that's the story of Kresge. Let's turn to why we're here, which is the story of Detroit's neighborhoods.

The future of Detroit's neighborhoods is the future of the city as a whole. We know that to our bones. We need and deserve neighborhoods in which municipal services are effectively delivered; neighborhoods that

are safe and stable and healthful; neighborhoods that are vibrant with the activities of thriving commercial nodes, attractive and well maintained parks and open spaces, and high-performing schools; neighborhoods in which residents and businesses are engaged in creating the trajectory of their future; neighborhoods that crystallize and deliver on the hopes and dreams of Detroiters for a better life for themselves and their children.

And the very good news indeed is that Detroit neighborhoods are brimming with exactly those sorts of hopes and dreams, brimming with far reaching visions and tangible plans to achieve them, brimming with activities that translate the energies of everyday citizens into the architecture of a re-imagined city. It is because of this that Kresge launched the Kresge Innovation Projects: Detroit – or KIP:D.

We've committed \$5 million over the next three years to fund two types of Detroit-based projects: First, ones that are “shovel ready” – that are ready to go; and second, ones that aren't yet there but soon will be with a little seed money for planning.

We launched KIP:D last October with a few basic requirements. Projects had to take place within the city limits and be led by a Detroit-based nonprofit organization.

We asked applicants to pay particular attention to the elements of the Detroit Future City framework, including transformation of vacant land, the use of public and open space, the renewal of city systems and the stabilization of neighborhoods.

We sought projects that used inclusive, collaborative processes. And, we looked for projects that extended benefits to a broad set of stakeholders and community residents.

After launch, our Kresge Detroit Program team conducted outreach sessions so that prospective grantees could learn more about the program.

We knew great ideas were percolating all across the city, but the response to the call exceeded our expectations. By December, we received 107 grant applications.

It was terribly difficult to choose among them – they were all extraordinary. But we had to. We chose 18 and I'm excited to tell you about them.

The grantee representatives before you today, and their 40 colleagues in the audience, are some of Detroit's most active change-makers.

Each has mobilized his or her professional talent and personal passion to revitalize their community. Among us we have several community development corporation leaders, an architecture professor, a pastor, several landscape architects and housing specialists. Many wear multiple hats within their nonprofit organizations. Many have day jobs in addition to tackling these complex projects.

Some of the projects you'll learn about today will sound familiar because the organization has been chipping away at their master plan for years, permit by permit, inch by inch, dollar by dollar. And others were just getting underway last fall when this initiative launched.

Regardless of their maturity, these projects deserve their day in the sun – and after this winter, we all deserve that. So it is my honor to introduce each of the grantee organizations and their projects to you today. I'll start with the 11 implementation grants. Each implementation project has received a Kresge grant ranging from \$100,000 to \$150,000.

And for those of you in the audience – if you are so moved to share the grantee names and project details through your social media channels, please feel free to use our hashtag: **#Pride of Place**

So, let's get started.

1. Green parking and public space, represented by Tom Gedderis from the Grandmont Rosedale Development Corp.

GRDC is developing a green parking lot and outdoor public space on the Grand River Avenue commercial corridor in City Council District 1.

Building on its efforts to revitalize the Grand River commercial corridor, GRDC will transform two vacant lots adjacent to its recently opened Grand River WorkPlace.

This is an affordable co-working facility with access to small-business resources and a retail storefront to host pop-up businesses.

GRDC will develop the lots to retain stormwater on site and incorporate placemaking elements such as outdoor seating, temporary event space and public art.

The collaborative design studio, LivingLAB, based in the Green Garage, will also partner on the planning and design.

Established in 1989, GRDC serves more than 5,300 households and 400 businesses across its two neighborhoods – Grandmont and Rosedale – on the city’s west side.

2. LaSalle House, represented by Jerrell Harris from Focus: HOPE

This grant will support the renovation of the LaSalle House, a blighted two-family flat in City Council District 2, located on LaSalle Boulevard in Detroit’s upper West Side.

Focus: HOPE will establish the house as the first LEED platinum rehabilitated home in the city of Detroit, with the goal to take the house completely off the power grid.

The renovated house will be a demonstration site that provides citizens hands-on access to green technologies. It will also be offered as a meeting space for the community and serve as an art gallery.

The house is one block from Focus: HOPE’s main campus on a highly traveled route to the nearby LaSalle/Ford Playlot on Kendall Boulevard. So it is ideally situated to serve as a hub for community activity.

In addition to the renovation work on the home, Kresge’s grant will support an analysis to determine the feasibility of transitioning portions of the neighborhood off of the electric grid by transforming brownfield sites into solar-energy producing locations.

If successful, this could produce a model for vacant land reuse that enhances the environmental sustainability of the city’s neighborhoods.

I’d like to also mention that Jerrell, who is serving as the program manager on the project, is a Detroit Revitalization Fellow.

3. Penrose Market Garden and Nutrition Program, represented by Beth Hagenbuch from Growtown, on behalf of the Arab American and Chaldean Council.

The grant will support the development of a half-acre market garden facility, an education center and nutrition programs at Penrose Village in Chaldean Town, located near 7 Mile and Woodward also in City Council District 2.

The Penrose Market Garden will include garden beds, hoop houses and a community meeting space. It will be centrally located within the housing development and incorporated into a series of community nutrition and enrichment classes provided by the ACC that promote healthy food and physical activity choices.

The project will address access to affordable, nutritious food within the community, promote healthy eating and lifestyles and provide a vibrant civic space for community engagement.

The Arab American and Chaldean Council, a human-services provider with deep community connections and a campus adjacent to the project site, will lead the work in partnership with Penrose Village and GrowTown, a nonprofit that addresses food issues using a community-driven design approach.

4. Osborn Neighborhood Stabilization Initiative, represented by Alice Thompson from Black Family Development.

This grant will support a 13-month, community-based neighborhood-stabilization initiative in the Osborn neighborhood, located in City Council District 3 on the city's East Side.

Black Family Development has partnered with the Osborn Neighborhood Alliance and Life Remodeled to engage residents and community stakeholders to develop short- and long-term land-use plans.

Based on those plans, the groups will mobilize 5,000 volunteers for a six-day community cleanup in the Osborn neighborhood.

And this is quite an undertaking. The hordes of volunteers will not only mow lawns and pick up roadside debris. They will also remove illegally dumped waste, clear vacant lots, improve the safety of vacant buildings and spruce up landscaping.

The project is also intended to clear, prepare and secure side lots available for purchase through the Detroit Land Bank Authority side-lot program.

5. Afterhouse, represented by Steven Mankouche from the University of Michigan.

In Detroit's Banglatown neighborhood, in City Council District 3, there is a fire-damaged house at 3347 Burnside St.

The property sits next to the community garden, farmhouse and art gallery collectively called Burnside Farm, which is owned by 2013 Kresge Visual Artist Fellow Kate Daughdrill, who is also here today. The University of Michigan's Architecture Research Collaborative (also known as Archolab), including its founder, Steven, and artist and gardener Abigail Murray, began a collaboration with Kate and several other neighbors and partners to transform the burned structure into something that would be accretive for the block, building from a conceptual design for a new urban typology – Afterhouse.

Using the heat of the sun and the constant insulation of the Earth to create a new kind of greenhouse, Afterhouse is a pilot project to explore whether the growing season here can be extended deeper into the fall by replicating more moderate climates.

The pilot will also be used to explore alternative uses for concrete block foundations that are conventional among many of Detroit's single-family dwellings. By using readily available materials and techniques while maintaining the scale of the neighborhood, Afterhouse will empower communities to transform blighted homes into productive spaces for growing food year-round.

Kresge's grant will specifically support the construction of the Burnside Afterhouse pilot and interior and exterior landscaping, as well as volunteer recruitment efforts and monthly neighborhood gatherings.

6. Mack Avenue Green Thoroughfare, represented by Jackie Bejma from LAND Inc.

This grant to LAND Inc. will support the expansion of the Mack Avenue Green Thoroughfare – or as they call it, "Green T," in City Council District 4.

The work enabled through Kresge’s grant will target a three-quarter-mile blighted section of the Mack Avenue commercial corridor from Conner Street to Chalmers Avenue into a productive green byway.

Highlights of the work include:

- removal of a vacant, blighted building;
- planting of one acre of pennycress, a revenue-generating biodiesel crop that also remediates the soil;
- installation of solar lighting; and
- green façade improvements to a business on the corridor.

The project aligns with the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework plan. It also aligns with the Lower Eastside Action Plan, which is a community-driven project established by the Eastside Community Network to engage people in the transformation of vacant land to improve the quality of neighborhood life. LAND Inc. is a subsidiary of Eastside Community Network.

7. Fitness Parks for a Healthier Community, represented by Lisa Johanon from Central Detroit Christian Community Development Corp.

Over the next several months, seven vacant lots in the Middle Woodward Corridor, located in City Council District 5, will be transformed into neighborhood pocket parks, connected by a walking path.

The goal of the work by Central Detroit Christian CDC is to foster healthy, active living in the community, which longtime residents affectionately call “Piety Hill” for the massive stone churches that once lined Woodward – and many still stand today.

Each lot is less than 50 feet wide and unbuildable. But when Central Detroit Christian has completed its work, the parks will be renewed with outdoor fitness equipment and native plantings and trees. Visitors will also be encouraged to walk park to park for additional exercise.

Central Detroit Christian CDC provides a range of services to promote neighborhoods in its area, including housing, workforce training, neighborhood beautification and youth development programming.

8. Downtown Detroit Boxing Gym Youth Program Expansion, represented by the gym’s founder, Coach Khali

The Downtown Boxing Gym Youth Program has been operating out of a former car wash on St. Aubin in City Council District 5 for eight years.

As Coach told us, the sign on the door might say “boxing,” but what goes on inside is more about training minds than training bodies.

The program couples the sport of boxing with strong academic support and a commitment to community volunteerism.

One measure of its appeal is that it has 65 youth participants – and 400 on a wait list. Coach told us that no child deserves to be on a waiting list, especially in his tough near East Side neighborhood.

So the organization is expanding to a new location and renovating a nearby 12,000-square-foot facility that will allow the program to begin accepting youth from the list.

The move will also facilitate volunteer work at nearby nonprofits Forgotten Harvest and Gleaners Food Bank.

And the new facility will also become home to two other nonprofit organizations:

- Healthy Detroit, a public health organization dedicated to bringing a culture of healthy, active living to Detroit neighborhoods, and,
- Faces of the Future, an organization that works with and prepares youth for careers in health and wellness.

9. Center for Resident Engagement and Development, represented by Dan Pederson from Southwest Housing Solutions Corp.

The beautiful and historic, but long vacant, St. Anthony’s Lithuanian Church sits along Vernor Street in Southwest Detroit in City Council District 6.

Southwest Solutions, whose offices are directly across the street, has acquired the church and through its Vista Partnership and is redeveloping the facility into a Center for Resident Engagement and Development.

Vista Partnership is a resident-centered initiative that seeks to address long-term disinvestment and blight through an alliance of community members, organizations, foundations, financial institutions and public-sector representatives.

The new facility will provide a host of programs defined by area residents and serve as the nexus for the resident-led redevelopment of a 20-block commercial area.

10. Intersections Pocket Park, represented by Rhonda Green of Heritage Works.

This project will transform vacant lots at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks boulevards in City Council District 6 into a community-centered pocket park that commemorates these two important American figures.

Located in the North Corktown/Briggs neighborhood, the grant will support the implementation of the community-driven park design, including the installation of new hardscapes, greenscapes and benches. It also supports the fabrication of new public art informed by students from the neighboring Burton International School. And the grant will support the development of a plan for ongoing maintenance and programming.

Heritage Works incorporated input from hundreds of youth and community residents on the design of the park, working in partnership with the College for Creative Studies' Community Arts Partnership program, InsideOut Literary Arts Project, Southwest Detroit Business Association, local faith-based organizations and Jeff Klein from Classic Landscape Ltd., a community-oriented landscape design/build company.

And our final Implementation Grant project is:

11. Judge Stein Playfield, represented by Rodney Gasaway of Joy-Southfield Community Development Corp.

Improvements to the Judge Stein Playfield in the Cody-Rouge neighborhood in City Council District 7 in West Detroit are coming soon.

The work will include a new sidewalk, solar-powered lighting and green infrastructure features to improve park safety and make it more walkable – especially to the adjacent Cody High School.

The work will also enhance stormwater management through the incorporation of bioswales, which are special landscaping elements to remove silt and pollution from surface runoff water.

The project is led by Joy-Southfield CDC in collaboration with several partners, including the Greening of Detroit, the city of Detroit and Cody High School.

The project is part of a broader neighborhood revitalization plan developed through a community-engagement process with residents and other stakeholders.

The improvements will support one of the Joy-Southfield community goals: to become the greenest neighborhood in Detroit.

The organization is also driven to provide a model for green infrastructure improvements that may be replicated at other parks citywide.

Now if that creativity, enthusiasm and community prowess hasn't exhausted you, let me take a few more minutes to introduce the Kresge Innovation: Detroit Planning Grantees.

The following seven projects have been awarded planning grants ranging in size from \$20,000 to \$25,000. Their planning work is to be completed by August and our expectation is that these projects will be candidates for the next round of Kresge Innovative Projects: Detroit that will begin in the fall.

1. Vacant Land Adaptive Reuse, represented by Jill Ferrari from Michigan Community Resources.

Michigan Community Resources will use the Kresge grant to plan for the adaptive reuse of land in a high-vacancy neighborhood on the lower East Side of Detroit. The plan is intended to serve as a model for other communities across the city.

MCR plans to:

- identify sites appropriate for adaptive reuse,
- identify a coalition of community groups capable of implementing adaptive reuse projects,
- assess various ownership structures for the land,
- evaluate crowd-funding strategies to support reuse projects, and
- create a business model for the project.

MCR brings its deep knowledge of Detroit's lower East Side to the project. The group specializes in community engagement and participatory planning, and is a technical adviser for the Lower Eastside Action Plan.

LAND Inc., which I mentioned earlier as an implementation grantee for the Green T project, has also been selected for a planning grant.

2. Brightfields Solar Array, represented by Jackie Bejma from LAND Inc.

LAND Inc. will assess the feasibility of remediating a vacant four-acre brownfield site on the Mack Avenue Corridor in the lower East Side of Detroit. The goal of the remediation is to use the site for a renewable-energy solar panel array.

The project is intended to generate energy and replace blight with an attractive landscape. It could also create a training program to give area residents access to careers in solar site installation and maintenance. Beyond its immediate impact, this project has the potential to create a replicable model that embodies the Detroit Future City goal of creating productive landscapes along commercial corridors.

3. Denby Future Community, represented by Sandra Turner-Handy of the Michigan Environmental Council.

This grant will support the development of a three-year strategic plan for an ongoing program at Denby High School on Detroit's East Side.

The program, which began in fall 2013, integrates the Detroit Future City plan into the curriculum and uses it to guide students in their efforts to transform their neighborhood.

For their senior capstone projects, students engage with the community to develop potential solutions to neighborhood challenges.

Future program planning will include development of the curriculum for all grade levels and seek to replicate the program at other Detroit schools.

4. Beaufait Belt Line Greenway, represented by Alex Allen of Detroit Eastside Community Collaborative.

The Beaufait Belt Line Greenway is a 1.5-mile walk- and bike-friendly path that will connect Gleaners Community Food Bank to the RiverWalk at Mt. Elliott Park on the East Side of Detroit.

The project seeks to transform an overgrown, abandoned rail line and will also serve as a raised-garden “foodway” connecting Gleaners and Earthworks Farm, two important local sources of healthy food.

A planning process will engage residents, businesses and other stakeholders through a series of meetings and outreach activities.

Out of those meetings, DECG will complete a conceptual design, operations models, budgets and a fundraising plan. The project is part of a broader greenway vision for the East Side of Detroit.

5. Delores Bennett Park Expansion Project, represented by Delores Bennett on behalf of Vanguard Community Development Corp.

Vanguard CDC will use its grant to plan for the expansion and long-term stewardship of Dolores Bennett Park in Detroit’s North End neighborhood.

Dolores Bennett Park is the only city park named after a living resident. Ms. Bennett is a longtime community leader who led a 13-year effort to transform this informal dumping ground to a neighborhood playground and park in 1977. Ms. Bennett, we applaud your work and are honored to have you here today.

Vanguard’s project will engage residents in a collaborative process to design an expansion of the park from its current 2.7 acres to as much as 30 acres.

The project is key to the neighborhood’s plan for vacant land reutilization, housing stabilization, economic development and improved quality of life.

The expanded park will serve existing residents as well as residents of new, mixed-income housing envisioned in plans for the Woodward Corridor. Vanguard was established in 1994 and facilitates the revitalization of the physical, social and economic fabric of the North End.

6. Plaza Planning Project, represented by Estaban Castro with Young Nation.

This grant will allow Young Nation to complete a participatory design process, finalize architectural drawings and begin the permitting process to create an arts-infused public plaza and artists market in Southwest Detroit.

Young Nation has identified a vacant lot and empty 2,200-square-foot commercial building at the intersection of Avis and Elsmere streets for the development.

This would expand the footprint of Young Nation’s best-known initiative, the Alley Project, which uses an alley, adjacent garages and vacant lots as permanent and semipermanent outdoor exhibition spaces for local artists and community members.

The plaza and artists market are envisioned as gathering and performing spaces, including spaces for local artisans and entrepreneurs to sell their wares.

The University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture’s Detroit Collaborative Design Center will also partner on the project.

7. Southwest Detroit Green Buffers Planning Project, represented by Guy Williams from Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice.

This effort in the Delray neighborhood in Southwest Detroit will examine the use of vacant land to buffer residential areas from industrial facilities – as well as the planned new international trade crossing.

DWEJ will partner with the Southwest Detroit Community Benefits Coalition, a grassroots organization established seven years ago to raise awareness of and improve the quality of life for those facing impacts from the new crossing and other area industries.

The two groups will also identify where buffer zones can connect residents to the Detroit riverfront, Fort Wayne, parks, greenways and other neighborhood assets.

Collectively, the grantees here today were selected because their projects are really remarkable. They are taking charge. They are making change now in their communities.

Every nonprofit organization mentioned here today is collaborating. They are engaging their neighbors and partners. They are going deep. They are trying brilliantly creative new things.

They are owning their future.

And every single project exhibits an extreme sense of pride in its Detroit neighborhood and respect for its neighbors.

Detroiters do desire a shared prosperity, and are deeply rooted in creating transformational positive change together.

It has been my pleasure to introduce these projects to you today. Thank you all for coming, and have a great day in Detroit.