



BRINGING ART TO PEOPLE
AND PEOPLE TO ART.

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Arts nonprofit launches major placemaking effort on near southside Grants from City, Lilly Endowment, INHP kick start \$1.5 million in investment

Indianapolis — The Garfield Park neighborhood on the southern edge of downtown Indianapolis is the new, long-term home and key area of focus for Big Car Collaborative, an artist-led nonprofit placemaking and community arts organization. With more than \$600,000 raised so far to fund the work, Big Car and its neighborhood partners are confident this creative approach to community development will help boost momentum for this often-overlooked area of the city.

This fall, Big Car will open a 12,000-square-foot community space for creativity, culture and community called The Tube Factory art space. It will feature a gathering and education area, exhibition space for national and local artists, a tinkering lab for hands-on learning and workshop for Big Car artists and neighbors. The structure at 1125 Cruft St. is a formerly vacant manufacturing building first built in 1908 by Weber Dairy and last owned by Tube Processing Corporation, a locally based company still operating in nearby facilities. Big Car executive director Jim Walker noted that Tube Processing has been “generous and excellent to work with” on this project. At the nearby intersection of Cruft and Shelby streets, another community space, formerly vacant, is called Listen Hear and will include a small record store, public gathering space for education and cultural programming, and a home for Big Car’s soon-to-launch low-power FM community radio station.

Big Car is also teaming up with Riley Area Development Corporation to refurbish vacant and neglected houses on Cruft Street as affordable live-and-work homes for artists. Lastly, Big Car is working with the Garfield Neighbors Association and city leaders to help boost livability and reconnect parts of the neighborhood split from Garfield Park by vehicle-focused Shelby Street and nearby I-65.

“We’re excited to be partnering with Big Car and the Indianapolis Housing Partnership (INHP) to develop new affordable housing and home ownership opportunities for artists that will be a part of the new facilities,” said Eric Strickland, Executive Director of Riley Area Development Corporation. “The combination of Big Car’s creative placemaking efforts, Tube and Listen Hear’s programming will be a powerful impact to the greater southside of Indianapolis. The Project’s footprint goes beyond the approach of renovating an art gallery and a few homes on a few blocks. The Tube and Listen Hear facilities and Big Car’s artists are key cornerstones of building an inclusive community that engages all residents.”



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Total investment in the Garfield Park Creative Community project will be about \$1.5 million. Big Car is currently launching a campaign for donations and grants to cover about half that amount. So far, the City of Indianapolis has awarded Big Car a \$460,000 community development block grant for purchase and renovation of the two buildings as community spaces that will employ several people in full-time creative jobs. Riley Area Development Corporation supported Big Car in its block grant application.

"The City believes in the power of great places being transformed with creative and engaging arts communities and organizations such as Big Car. The planned improvements on Shelby Street will set the stage for future redevelopment and opportunity, including planned rapid transit improvements such as the Red Line," said Adam Thies, Director of the Department of Metropolitan Development for the City of Indianapolis, noting that, while CDBG funding is managed by the City, dollars come from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The proposed bus rapid transit Red Line, which could have its first section from Broad Ripple to the University of Indianapolis up in running in the next few years, is planned to pass through the Garfield Park neighborhood on Shelby Street.

In addition, Lilly Endowment Inc. has given Big Car a \$50,000 grant to help renovate The Tube as an arts-based driver for neighborhood revitalization on the south side.

"Garfield Park and the surrounding neighborhood have played an important role in Indianapolis history and are strategically located between Fountain Square and UIndy," said Ace Yakey, vice president of community development for Lilly Endowment. "At the Endowment we hope that Big Car's collaborative approach to community-building and nurturing creativity will help revitalize this valuable part of our city."

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) of Indianapolis also contributed a \$25,000 façade grant to The Tube. "We are confident that this project and Big Car will serve as a catalyst for the entire neighborhood, improving quality of life so that both existing residents and future residents will choose to call this home," said Tedd Grain, LISC Deputy Director.

Additionally, the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership (INHP) invested \$75,000 in Big Car and Riley Area Development's housing initiative to refurbish vacant and neglected properties on Cruft Street as affordable live and work homes for artists.

"INHP is pleased to support Big Car and Riley Area Development in this innovative place-making strategy which will contribute to the revitalization of the Garfield Park area," said Joe Hanson, INHP's executive vice president of capital development and strategic initiatives. "This project closely aligns with INHP's mission to support neighborhood development through affordable and sustainable housing. We are proud to be a partner in this important and creative model that has the potential to be replicated in other communities across the nation."





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Blackline, an Indianapolis-based architecture firm, is also donating time to co-lead efforts on renovation design and planning with locally based architect Lucas Brown and Big Car artists. Craig McCormick, one of Blackline's owners, is a long-time member of Big Car's board of directors.

"We appreciate the work that Big Car has done using art to connect people and build communities in Indianapolis. Providing time and expertise to help Big Car grow is something we're excited to do, and a reflection of our own values at Blackline," McCormick said.

"We're thrilled by the support so far," said Big Car founder and executive director Jim Walker. "This move just makes so much sense. We started our work on the southeast side of Indianapolis in 2004 in Fountain Square and we're proud to have been part of helping the neighborhood transition from neglected to vibrant. Now we're excited to take what we've learned during the last 11 years and apply it in a neighborhood where we can collaborate with neighbors and artists to boost livability and economic vitality for all."

Walker and his family moved from Fountain Square to Garfield Park three years ago. Most of Big Car's staff artists live on the near south side of Indianapolis. And Walker and Aryn Schounce, Big Car's director of neighborhood initiatives, are founding members of the Garfield Park Neighbors Association board.

About the buildings

Built in the 1930s, The Tube — named for its previous use by Tube Processing which "designs and manufactures complex metal fabrications and tube assemblies," and the great metaphors tubes offer: connectivity, linkage, movement, and progress — will function in much the same way as Big Car's past placemaking project in Lafayette Square from 2011 to 2014. Service Center for Culture and Community drew more than 12,000 visits per year. The Tube is situated in a neighborhood with residents living all around it. Big Car plans to reach 20,000 visitors each year through one-on-one interactions with neighbors, by offering classes, events, hands-on exhibitions, and community meetings. The Tube will be a transformational hub for the near south side and will also provide regional benefits as the base of operations and training center for Big Car's citywide creative placemaking work which includes a partnership with the Reconnecting to Our Waterways initiative that strives to turnaround areas near the city's streams and river.

"This is such a perfect fit for Big Car," said Big Car board president Ursula David of IndyMod Homes. "The buildings and location offer us our biggest opportunity to date to continue our mission of sparking creativity in lives to transform communities. Here, we'll have a much needed home for Big Car, homes for artists and a place where neighbors can feel at home. I look forward to seeing what a fabulous area this will be in the near future as we watch how creativity will indeed transform this community."





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After its initial use in 1908 as part of a dairy operation, the two-level Tube building also housed a pattern works, a sheet metal fabricator, and an edible nut roaster. Tube Processing last used the building for fabrication work, welding and storage.

“We’re happy to have the opportunity to work with Big Car in their efforts to bring art and culture to the neighborhood,” said Steven Dreyer, CFO at Tube Processing Corporation. “We have been long-term supporters of the Garfield Park area. This project will go a long way in providing not only a place to gather for art education and a place to create beauty, but we hope it will become a catalyst to help revitalize the neighborhood. We wish Big Car success in their efforts and look forward to seeing the exciting changes coming soon.”

For the past year, Big Car has been operating Listen Hear as a sound art space in the Lafayette Square/International Marketplace area. With the focus on Garfield Park, Big Car has closed its temporary pop-up art space on the west side, transferring the concept to the south side with the addition of more community programming and the record store. In a 2014 Better Block project designed to reimagine underutilized neighborhood corridors, Big Car artists collaborated with an appliance repair shop located in the same building on Shelby Street, showing art about appliances hung on stoves and refrigerators. When the repair business closed, Big Car and its partners saw the location as perfect for sparking business development in the corridor and offering the kind of retail amenity neighbors have long sought.

Big Car has been working in the Garfield Park area since bringing a collaborative gateway mural project to the neighborhood in 2012.

“Big Car’s work in Garfield Park, so far, has resulted in an accelerated growth path, both for our housing stock and plans to revive our commercial corridor. Their presence brings creativity, experience and placemaking projects that have proven to be invaluable in our drive to enhance the character and growth of our village,” said Jim Simmons, president of Garfield Park Neighbors Association. “Big Car quickly became our most effective partner in efforts to make this one of the city’s most livable neighborhoods.”

More about Garfield Park

The Garfield Park neighborhood is anchored by the city’s oldest park with multiple Indy Parks and Recreation amenities. And the area also enjoys other advantages such as an excellent public library branch and access to the Pleasant Run Trail, which connects to The Cultural Trail in Fountain Square. The neighborhood is also located halfway between the University of Indianapolis and Fountain Square with easy access to Downtown. Portions closest to the park feature stable housing stock with long-term residents — many involved in the area’s active neighborhood association. Still, the broader area — especially zones separated from the park by the Shelby and Raymond barrier streets — face key challenges related to economic opportunity, access to educational and cultural programming, and livability for the people who live in the neighborhood. Forty-two percent of households have incomes of less than \$25,000, with 13.5 percent having a household income of less than \$10,000. Low rates of





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educational attainment, with 22 percent of adults over age 25 having no high school diploma and 81 percent with no college degree, also pose a significant challenge.

Many of the neighborhood's struggling residents live in sections of the neighborhood blighted by abandoned buildings, with about 20 percent of homes and other structures currently vacant in the area — many near The Tube. Similarly, the commercial corridor on Shelby Street, which at one time had 33 businesses, 30 of those locally owned, is now plagued with empty storefronts. Lack of safe crosswalks and signage also make Shelby Street and its busy intersections a challenge for pedestrians and cyclists.

“Our work in the neighborhood is about finding creative ways to help address the challenges of blight and access,” Walker said. “We really want to show people on both sides of Shelby Street in Garfield Park that they count and they deserve a great neighborhood.”

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***About Big Car:** An Indianapolis-based 501c3 nonprofit formed in 2004, Big Car uses creative placemaking as a catalyst to a better city. By providing and supporting unique, educational, participatory, playful and personal experiences, Big Car engages people of all ages and backgrounds in art making and creative problem-solving — inspiring them to be creative thinkers and involved, connected citizens. Our mission: We bring art to people and people to art, sparking creativity in lives to transform communities. Learn more at www.bigcar.org and see examples of our projects at www.bigcar.org/work.*

IMAGES: A variety of high-res architectural renderings and other photos are available via email upon request.

Images can also be downloaded here (click on individual images and then “view all sizes”): <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bigcar/sets/72157654180074642>