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**For immediate release**

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## **Artist and Public Life Residency on Cruft Street now accepting applications for 5 affordable houses**

*Indianapolis* — Big Car Collaborative and Riley Area Development Corporation, supported by funding from Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership (INHP) are now accepting applications for an innovative home ownership program providing practicing artists with affordable, rehabbed houses in the Garfield Park neighborhood.

Applications are being accepted via [www.bigcar.org/project/aplr](http://www.bigcar.org/project/aplr) until March 18 for five affordable homes for artists of all disciplines who will team up to boost this transitioning neighborhood just south of downtown. Artists will begin moving into these now-renovated houses on Cruft Street this spring. This is a reboot of the program launched two years ago before pausing to work out various aspects of the program and partnership.

An informational meeting and tour of the houses will take place on March 11 at 7 p.m. at Tube Factory, 1125 Cruft St. Indianapolis, IN 46203 and will be live on the Tube's Facebook page. Also, houses in the program will be open for visitors to tour at the First Friday celebration on the block on March 1.

The Artist and Public Life program works as sort of an exchange, with artists who qualify for the program both financially and in terms of their practice as artists co-owning the homes with the partnership — that way only paying a portion of the cost. The artist homeowner will purchase a 49% ownership interest in the home costing between \$49,000 and \$72,000. The artist home buyer must meet income qualifications. Qualified artist buyers are required to make less than 80% of the average Marion County income, or less than \$43,250 per year for single member household. As part of the exchange, the artist residents commit to working for six years in support of the community as part of their practice as artists. They also have access to nearby facilities and support from Big Car staff.

If the artist should move out in the future, the partnership will buy their 49% share of the house and put it back in the program at the same cost level, ensuring that affordable home ownership sustains. This way, increased property values caused — at least in part — by art-focused community development boosting demand in the neighborhood won't price out artists on this block currently transforming from mostly vacant to vibrant.

The program works as land trust for artist housing. The idea is to keep the houses outside of market forces and maintain an affordable place for artists to be able to be homeowners in the community.

The nonprofit art and placemaking organization Big Car Collaborative and Riley Area Development Corporation have worked with the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership, Garfield Park Neighbors Association, the South Indianapolis Quality of Life Plan as well as expert volunteer teams — like Indy Mod Homes and Axis Architecture — to renovate these formerly boarded up homes. These will now serve as a catalyst for positive activity on a short block that dead ends into an interstate highway that has caused challenges for the neighborhood now anticipating a booth from Indy Go’s Red Line bus rapid transit, opening this summer.

On this same block, Big Car — which formed in the nearby Fountain Square neighborhood in 2004 — operates Tube Factory artspace, a community art center that also serves as base of operations for Big Car’s citywide work to “bring art to people and people to art, sparking creativity in lives to support communities.” And Big Car also operates, at the end of the block, Listen Hear — a sound art gallery and home for its new community-and-art-focused FM radio station. Big Car owns the Tube and Listen Hear buildings, opening both in 2016.

In December of 2018, Big Car received \$3 million for Cruft Street Commons, a project that connects this artist housing program with renovating a second, larger industrial building on the block for studios and exhibition space, renovating five other formerly vacant houses for affordable artist rentals, and improving green space behind three of these houses as a public sculpture garden.

Artists living in the Artist and Public Life ownership homes will be able to access Big Car’s other facilities and be part of these programs and help further expand efforts in the neighborhood to promote monthly First Fridays as an art-filled mini-festival on the block. “This is an effort to support and attract artists who use their talents and skills to drive positive change in the community,” said Big Car Collaborative CEO and lead artist Jim Walker, who lives in the neighborhood with his family.

“Our goal is to allow artists enjoyable and equitable home ownership while they work with other neighbors and boost the livability, diversity, safety, health, and economy of the neighborhood,” Walker continued. “We’re also working with neighbors to weave culture and creativity into the fabric of the community.”

The houses used in this program previously sat vacant, some for many years. No existing residents were displaced as the partnership acquired the houses. And these efforts are happening in partnership with current residents as a way to work together to further strengthen the neighborhood and keep affordable housing for artists in place.

“Other entities are also working on strategies for affordable housing in general in the area,” Walker said of the neighborhood anchored by a 128-acre historic city park. “Our focus is with artists because we’re an arts organization determined to support the neighborhood where we’re based. And we want to help make sure the existing residents and artists who are filling the vacant houses are both able to stay on the block, long term. We want this to become a neighborhood known for art and artists — and stay that way.”

For this program, the partnership of Big Car and Riley views the label of artists broadly to include creatives, makers, designers — anyone who considers themselves an artist. Applicants — who will be

selected by a panel of out-of-town experts and neighborhood residents — may work in fields such as architecture, culinary art, curation, visual art, public art, furniture, fashion, craft, design, film, writing, performing arts, music, theater, placemaking, socially engaged art.

“Ultimately, we will be teaming up with resident artists who see their work with the public — and their work for the benefit of the community — as at the core of their practice and their production as artists. We’re looking for artists who want to make a difference as artists and neighborhood leaders, and see this work in support of the community as truly part of their art,” Walker said.

***About Big Car Collaborative:** An Indianapolis-based 501c3 nonprofit, Big Car uses creativity 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. Learn more at [www.bigcar.org](http://www.bigcar.org) and see examples of our projects at [www.bigcar.org/projects](http://www.bigcar.org/projects).*

***About Riley Area Development Corporation:** Serving businesses, residents, social service agencies, and public facilities in Indianapolis since 1978, Riley facilitates business growth, social and human services development and affordable housing — working in partnerships across several neighborhoods. Most recently Riley has engaged in two shared-equity models, the Artist and Public Life Residency in Garfield Park and the RUCKUS makerspace, to provide creatives and artists access to wealth building programs of homeownership and business ownership. Learn more at [www.ruckusindy.com](http://www.ruckusindy.com)*

#### **About INHP**

*The Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership (INHP) increases affordable and sustainable housing opportunities for individuals and families in Marion County, and serves as a catalyst for the development and revitalization of neighborhoods. INHP enables families to become and remain long-term, successful homeowners through homebuyer education, mortgage and credit advising and lending services. INHP also provides thought leadership, technical assistance, financial support and programming to community partners dedicated to neighborhood development and revitalization. For more information, visit [INHP.org](http://INHP.org).*

***About the neighborhood:** The Garfield Park neighborhood is anchored by the city’s oldest park (also called Garfield) with multiple 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 the booming Fountain Square area with easy access to Downtown. Portions closest to the park feature stable housing with long-term residents — many involved in the area’s active neighborhood association. The broader South Indianapolis Quality of Life Plan area, which includes the Bean Creek neighborhood, faces key challenges related to economic opportunity and liveability 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 educational attainment, with 22 percent of adults over age 25 having no high school diploma and 81 percent with no college degree, is also a significant challenge. Many of the neighborhood’s struggling residents live in sections of the neighborhood blighted by abandoned buildings — 20 percent of homes and other structures are currently vacant in the area. On the section of Cruft Street where Tube Factory is located, nearly half of the homes and what is now Big Car’s building all sat empty. 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.*