



July 2, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of Support for the 2021 RAISE Discretionary Grant: MidTown-Hough Connector Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing in support of the City of Cleveland's application for funding through the United States Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. RAISE funding would be used to realize the community's shared vision for transforming the East 66th Street corridor, a one-mile essential but crumbling infrastructure link, into a safe and accessible multimodal connector. The project will strengthen the connection between the MidTown and Hough neighborhoods, improve access to anchor institutions, and enable a two million square-foot development hub that will spur sustainable, inclusive, and equitable economic development and job creation opportunities.

In 2019, the Cleveland Foundation's Board of Directors unanimously voted to approve the relocation of its headquarters from downtown Cleveland to MidTown, locating and investing in a historically redlined neighborhood on the northeast corner of East 66th Street and Euclid Avenue. This move to MidTown helps to catalyze more than \$400 million in related projects and empowers the foundation to stay proximate to the residents and neighborhoods in which it serves in partnership with donors, nonprofit organizations, and the community. With partners, it is developing key amenities to enhance the quality of place for residents, workers, and visitors. The vision includes expanding greenspace in the neighborhood; the creation of an innovation district that builds on the community's strength and drives equitable economic growth that will benefit residents of all backgrounds and skill levels; and the reimagining of E. 66th Street that has been designed by Hough residents and youth alike to connect the city from the north to the south, from Superior to Euclid Avenues.

Stewardship of resource and place is a core value of the foundation and is the center of its origin story. Its strategy involves far more than just a new headquarters building – it seeks to create a shared sense of place with residents and community partners. With placekeeping as the driving force behind its move to MidTown, the foundation believes the resulting civic and innovation district will unite Cleveland into one contiguous city that benefits residents in every neighborhood, especially those that have been historically marginalized.

To date, the foundation has committed more than \$50 million to further advance the vision for more sustainable and equitable developments in the neighborhood, including:

- Providing funding to update the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency's Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) plan to reimagine and improve the East 66th corridor with a resident-driven approach to neighborhood street design. This inclusive approach tears down barriers to opportunity, advances racial equity, and addresses environmental injustice. The resulting TLCI plan is the basis for the proposed MidTown-Hough Connector Project.
- Welcoming the people of Greater Cleveland to come together, work together and celebrate together. Our new 55,000 square-foot headquarters is designed by one of the nation's leading Black, female architects, Pascale Sablan, to enhance community access. The entire first floor will be accessible to the community. Moving to MidTown Cleveland is the first step toward creating a catalytic heart at the center of the Health-Tech Corridor – a district built around a vision for a vibrant, innovative, and equitable community that benefits everyone.

- Acquiring eleven acres of land and ridding it of environmental contamination to build a two million square-foot new “Innovation Community” along the East 66th Street corridor is the next step. Racial equity and economic opportunity are core values of this Innovation Community, with educational training, and entrepreneurship programs to prepare residents for high-quality jobs close to home. The MidTown-Hough Connector Project will improve neighborhood safety and access to this collaborative and inclusive Innovation Community.
- Demonstrating an advanced stage of project readiness, the Cleveland Foundation and City of Cleveland are jointly funding the Preliminary Engineering Phase of the MidTown-Hough Connector Project. Led by Osborn Engineering, with the continued involvement of neighborhood residents, this phase will transfer the community-led streetscape design into engineering and construction.
- Establishing the Hough Community Land Trust, a nonprofit organization designed to buy and lease land to developers after negotiating community benefit agreements. A central component to the MidTown-Hough Connector Project’s economic competitiveness, the land trust builds wealth for community residents by ensuring long-term real-estate affordability and supporting racially and economically inclusive ownership in the neighborhoods of Hough and MidTown.
- Eliminating a food desert with the construction of the Dave’s Supermarket, a 55,000 square-foot, full-service grocery store housing a pharmacy and bank. This supermarket provides jobs, creates access to fresh foods, and teaches the community about the importance of healthy eating habits. The foundation provided a \$1.5 million loan to this project as part of the overall financing package.
- Investing in a federally designated medical/dental underserved area, the University Hospital Rainbow Center for Women & Children is a 40,000 square-foot urban health center with 46 exam rooms and co-locates social services for the community. The foundation provides grant support to the community programming in this facility.

The scope of the proposed RAISE project catalyzes long-term, multigenerational social and economic development to enhance underserved neighborhoods and transform the lives of people who deserve and need it so desperately. For all of these reasons, the MidTown-Hough Connector Project is the most sustainable, equitable, and transformational infrastructure project in the United States.

The Cleveland Foundation has already committed \$900,000 to the East 66th Street infrastructure project to complete the engineering work. Contingent upon the obligation of RAISE grant funding to the project, and pending Cleveland Foundation Board of Directors approval, the Cleveland Foundation and other local partners are committed to providing cash cost share contributions to cover twenty percent of the allowable project costs.

The Cleveland Foundation stands ready to work with you and serve as a resource to your department in our joint goals of rebuilding our community’s infrastructure with the values of sustainability and equity. If you have any questions about this project or my commitment to its success, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Ronald B. Richard
President and CEO