



**Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis
Investment Connection Proposal**

Proposal title	Lee Theater Renaissance Project
Contact	Deborah Bell
Title	Program Director
Email address	dbell@bcdinc.org
Phone	501-663-7223
Organization name/address	Better Community Development (BCD) 3802 West 12th Street Little Rock, Arkansas 72204
Mission statement	Better Community Development, Inc., formerly Black Community Developers, Inc. (BCD) is a non-profit, community-based organization formed to improve the quality of life for indigent persons and low-income families residing in Little Rock. BCD's mission is restoring lives and rebuilding communities.
Overview of organization	<p>BCD serves as a catalyst in low-income neighborhoods working to utilize human, economic, and educational resources to meet the community's urgent needs. We focus on long-term strategies through capacity-building and sustainability. To have an even greater positive influence on lives and communities, we seek opportunities that will help expand our goals through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Building capital resources for the future b) Building healthy communities c) Enhancing the quality of life for children, youth, families and communities <p>Since 1981, BCD has operated in the Midtown community at Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church (UMC). BCD offers programs and services that include: substance abuse treatment, homeless program, supportive housing program, housing programs, youth programs, parenting, job training, HIV/AIDS awareness, promotion of cultural events, as well as homebuyers counseling and affordable housing. Through its</p>

	<p>partnerships with various organizations from the public and private sectors, BCD has created sustainable and model initiatives to help those less fortunate by offering them a better chance at life. We are encouraged by our relationships with the various partners; and we embrace the efforts to work together to address the needs of families.</p> <p>In 1992, with initial funding from the Robert Wood Johnson foundation, Rev. Dr. Robinson forged an alliance with the City of Little Rock to form the Fighting Back Initiative. The program evolved into the Neighborhood Support Center, which was funded in part by a city half-cent tax and through state, federal and private support. As a result of a partnership with the City and with HUD, the BCD/Hoover Treatment Center was created in 1992 as a Neighborhood Support Center model program and the first licensed faith-based substance abuse center in the State of Arkansas.</p> <p>BCD offers intervention services to disadvantaged youth and their families as an alternative to substance use, gang violence and delinquent activities.</p>
Website	http://bcdinc.org
Social media link(s)	Facebook www.facebook.com/BCDINC/
Location of project/activity	Arkansas Pulaski
Geographic Impact	Neighborhood(s)
Support request	Grant
Requested dollar amount	\$150,000
Proposal description and structure	<p>We are seeking funds to revitalize The Lee Theater, located at 3800 West 13th Street in the Midtown community. The theater was purchased in 2002 by BCD and is a two-story, public facility built before World War II that remains standing in Little Rock. The Lee Theater Renaissance Project will include the stabilization of the theater for reuse to include selective demolition and clean-out and reconstruction of the collapsed and missing roof structure consisting of connecting electrical service, installing a permanent or temporary roof, eradicating pigeons, treatment of termites and other pests, abatement of asbestos and other health hazards, securing doors and window openings, installing a dehumidifier or other means of circulating air and removing detritus. The outcome of phase 1 of the Lee Theater Renaissance Project would qualify the Lee Theater to be eligible to be placed the National Historic Register and eligible for tax credits to complete the interior of the theater.</p>

Issues addressed	Neighborhood Revitalization and Stabilization
Target population/geography	Situated near the 12th Street Corridor in Little Rock, the Midtown community borders Hwy 630 on the north, Asher on the south, University on the western edge, and Woodrow on the east. Once a vibrant and thriving community, the area is now one of the poorest with a median income of \$20,720 and a population of 3,986. The area is predominantly black, with 83.2% of the residents being African-American. While the median age is 40; 34.6% are single moms, and 30.6% have children under 18. Urban planning segregated the area in the 1940s from the more affluent areas of the city. The community is multi-generational with a high prevalence of drugs, violence, unsightly abandoned buildings, unprofitable stores, extreme economic deprivation, and no cultural arts activities. The target population for this community would be residents from Central Arkansas; and particularly those who reside in the Midtown community.
Population served including income	Population served will be residents of the Midtown community which has a population of 2,355 residents of which 46.5% are male and 53.5% are female. U.S. Census Data-American Fact Finder [Selected Economic Characteristics] reports that 63% of the residents live 100% below poverty level. Median household income is \$24,885, and 98% of the youth are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The area is predominantly black, with 83.2% of the residents being African-American. While the median age is 40; 34.6% are single moms, and 30.6% have children under 18.
Anticipated outcomes/impact	The goal of the project is to use creative placemaking as a neighborhood revitalization strategy to transform an unsightly and abandoned theater into a community theater so that the theater can offer living and working spaces for aspiring artists; a venue to engage artists in visual, performing and creative arts, a place that will serve as an incubator for artistic entrepreneurs; a community theater that will expose community residents to the arts.
How will the program be evaluated	A local community that was once void of cultural opportunities and creativity will be transformed into a culturally-vibrant community by turning an unsightly abandoned theater building into creative spaces that preserve the cultural heritage of a small-town community and offer more shared usable spaces for residents and artists to actively participate and be engaged in the arts. The project will use a pre-post research design to examine the impact of the Lee Theater Renaissance Project on livability of the immediate Midtown neighborhood. The design will

	<p>assess the neighborhood-level changes that are attributable to the Renaissance Project as it relates to measures of livability dimensions using such indicators as increased arts-based employment in the community, decrease in community violence and crime, resident attachment to the Midtown community, quality of life, local economic conditions, and arts and cultural activity.</p>
Project time frame	<p>New Program Project Duration: Other, please describe Once building is rehabbed, programs will be ongoing</p>
Other significant partners in the proposal	<p>Brandon House Cultural & Performing Arts Center Program Management http://brandonhouseperformingartscenter.org</p> <p>City of Little Rock - Department of Community Programs Funding www.littlerock.gov/city-administration/city-departments/community-programs</p>
Time/Date Received	6/17/2018 7:20:49 PM