

The Smoketown Wheelhouse



Repurposing two-acres for the community's benefit through the Community Foundation of Louisville

In 2015, two families joined together to support the proud, vibrant, and historic Smoketown community. One family donated two-acres of land where the family had once made Louisville Slugger baseball bats while the second family contributed financially. Their goal was to work with Smoketown residents and other partners to build something on the land to make the neighborhood even better.

Reaching out to the Community Foundation of Louisville (CFL), the families asked for support to help them do something big in Smoketown. While CFL had never led an initiative like this before, we were willing to try and eagerly launched the Smoketown Wheelhouse.

The Gift & Community Voice

- The Hillerich family gave two-acres at Preston and Finzer St. The land gift was placed in the Finzer St. LLC, a CFL entity, until the land could be used. This was CFL's way of protecting and safeguarding charitable assets.
- Since CFL is a charitable foundation, the land can be used to help another charity or to create a fund to make grants to nonprofits providing a community need.
- CFL can grant the donated land to another nonprofit. The nonprofit must then use and take care of the land on its own.
- CFL also has the option to sell the land and put the earnings in a charitable fund that can only be used to make grants to nonprofits.
- Several thousand dollars were given by multiple donors to cover the costs of maintaining the property and looking at ways the land could be used by the community. The money was put in the Wheelhouse Fund and managed by CFL.

Partners, Plans & Dollars

- Starting in 2016, CFL met and talked with the Smoketown Community to find out what the community needed. A safe place for children, greenspace, and economic development were the needs shared by the Smoketown residents who CFL met.
- A partnership was formed with Boys and Girls Club of Kentuckiana and Bernheim Arboretum and Research Forest in hope of providing a safe place for children and greenspace.
- Youth Build Louisville was hired to keep the land clean and safe while plans were made.
- Architects were hired to work with the community to create design plans that were shared at the 2018 Smoketown Get Down.
- In 2018, A Wheelhouse Advisory Team was made up of people who live, work, worship, or learn in Smoketown and neighboring communities to give advice about the future plans.
- Estimated construction costs were \$10 - \$12 million and the estimated annual operating costs were \$500,000.

Current Reality

The Smoketown Wheelhouse was a bold experiment for the Community Foundation, our donors, and partners. We attempted something big with good intentions. Unfortunately the ideas and plans were bigger than CFL's expertise and our partners' resources. CFL, donors, and partners are deeply disappointed that we were unable to fulfill the Smoketown Wheelhouse vision, but we remain committed to using the land gift to provide a different type of benefit for the Smoketown community. Boys and Girls Clubs of Kentuckiana and Bernheim Arboretum and Forest will continue to look for opportunities to work with Smoketown organizations to provide programming and activities for Smoketown. These factors led us to this place:

- Boys and Girls Clubs of Kentuckiana had deep budget cuts making it impossible to raise money for a new club and keep all existing clubs open for young people.
- A fundraising consultant was hired and our efforts to raise the estimated construction and operating costs fell short of our goal.
- Creating a simple greenspace is easier but keeping it safe and maintained for years to come requires staff, equipment, and money which are not available.
- Smoketown has waited nearly five years for the two-acres to be used in a meaningful way, and Smoketown deserves a next step option that can be acted on swiftly.

Next Steps

CFL will continue to dedicate staff to work with Smoketown residents and stakeholders to identify an achievable, sustainable, and meaningful purpose supported by the Smoketown community. After thinking about CFL's expertise and things we heard over the last six months at various Smoketown community meetings, CFL wants to know how Smoketown feels about two options for the two-acres at Preston and Finzer Streets:

- A. Sell the land and use 100% of the net proceeds to start a Smoketown Community Fund advised by Smoketown residents and stakeholders to make grants to help nonprofits supporting Smoketown. The Smoketown community will recommend how to set-up the fund to earn the largest grantmaking power for as long as possible. CFL will manage the fund.**
- B. Conduct a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify a nonprofit organization with leadership capacity and financial resources to accept a grant of the Finzer Street Property and develop it for a community benefit. The nonprofit will become totally responsible for the land.**



The Community Foundation of Louisville is a community leader in philanthropy. We serve by stewarding and fulfilling donors' charitable legacies by connecting them with nonprofits and civic partners to make a lasting impact in our community. Thanks to the contributions of generous donors over 35 years, the Foundation proudly distributed \$64 million in 2019 from over 10,000 charitable fundholder grants. www.cflouisville.org