

Pitch for the Parcel

Final Call for Development Proposals:

The Hart Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) is extending a final invitation to all interested parties to submit an application outlining their development vision for the property located at 408 S. State Street in Hart, Michigan. This site includes a church, residential home, and former nursery building, offering a unique opportunity for revitalization.

Following a review of all submissions, three applicants will be selected to present their proposals before the TIFA Board. One proposal will be chosen, and the selected applicant will be granted the opportunity to acquire the full property for \$1, contingent upon a commitment to meaningful redevelopment.

This is a rare opportunity to contribute to the next chapter of a historic property in the heart of Hart. Interested individuals or organizations are encouraged to **apply by April 10, 2025**.

BASIC INFO

Full Name

Krystal VanderGraaf

Phone

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Email *

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Business or Organization Name (if applicable)

Website or Social Media Links

VISION & PROPOSAL

Describe your idea or project in 1–2 paragraphs. (What would you do with the property if you win?) *

I would transform the church into an indoor children's play place, "The Palace". The church will be split into several different sections; art, construction, grocery store, puppet show, dramatic play areas like a house and doctor office, large motor skills, music play, building, car garage, a science area (that changes the exhibit monthly), loose parts play, s.t.e.a.m, large classic games and several others. Utilizing vertical space for things such as a chalk wall, sensory panels, busy boards as well as both floors I have already mapped and planned out over 50 interactive experiences with plenty of room for more. In addition to an engaging fun space for our youth to enjoy I will host field trips, birthday parties, story time, crafts, sensory friendly hours for special needs, and special guests speakers. I will charge admission for this, sell prepackaged snacks, toys and apparel.

The nursery will be transformed to a teen community space. I understand the space isn't massive but the community's desire for a teen space is. This will be funded by the indoor play palace. My goal is to have a relaxed casual space for teens to gather. I will host game nights, movie "nights" and many other activities. As we become established I want to provide simple meals for lunch and dinner prioritizing weekends. In the meantime I will offer packaged snacks.

Which of the three buildings do you plan to use, and how? (Home, Church, Third Structure) *

The church would become an indoor childrens play place. The nursery (middle building) will be a teen community space.

What is the potential community impact of your idea? (Who benefits? Does it provide a service, meet a need, or build a connection?) *

Overall this is a need and benefit to children, parents and grandparents in our community. The local businesses and schools will benefit. We need somewhere that our children can go indoors. This also helps boost children's communication skills, turn taking and sharing (social emotional) as well as large/small motor skills several factors in a child's development.

Oceana county brings in a large amount of tourists however a question we hear a lot is "what things are there indoors for children to do" the community is left to refer them to Ludington and the business that should go to our local stores and restaurants goes north.

With The Palace closing in the early evening (6ish) my thoughts are many parents will choose take out rather than drive home and cook. This will boost the local restaurants and stores. I will connect with local businesses to have their advertisements posted by entry and exit doors and possibly other spots in a building along with a large calendar of community events. The Palace will sell t-shirts, water bottles, stickers advertising our business as well as Hart in general, I will seek to partner with our local craft store A New Era of Crafting for this.

An indoor play space for children is a huge need in every season. I will also provide free tickets to students of the month through Spitler. With field trips this will help save on busing and gas as well as lower ticket prices. During the holidays I will host egg hunts, a food drive for the Bread of Life pantry, clothing drives and a giving tree. I will offer out of town discount tickets once a month to draw in people from the surrounding areas.

The nursery building - we need somewhere our teens can congregate, can be warm, safe, fed and surrounded by positive influences. This has been a huge request in our community for many years as well as a need. This also helps build connections between peers.

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

How would your project create jobs or support local employment? *

The Palace will need a handful of people to open with but as we increase business that number will increase. Overall I will have year round employees with additional seasonal workers during the summers.

The teen community space my goal is to encourage volunteers that will turn into paid supervisors. The teens who use the space should have a sense of ownership and help with basic keep up. These simple skills will be useful when they go into the work field and potentially provide them with a positive recommendation.

Would your project generate local tax revenue? If so, how? (E.g., as a business, rental property, venue, etc.) *

Yes

How much will you need to invest to get the building(s) ready for your intended use? *

Church (amount & explanation), House (amount & explanation), 3rd Building (amount & explanation)

The church is up and functioning at the moment there are very little repairs or accommodations that will need to be made before I could open; rehoming the current furniture, the kitchen would be sealed off for future exhibits (rainforest water play and a pretend restaurant). The supplies and building structures cost roughly \$8,000. The unknowns right now are insurance cost, licensing and security system. I could open and operate as it is and make adjustments as I go.

The one area I might improve before opening is the entry making a "window" into the room to the right as you enter the front door as a check in area.

For the teen center I want this to look like something teens would put together so I will be rallying the community for furniture donations. I would replace the toilet in the bathroom and security cameras will need to be installed before it can be opened but those are not time consuming or costly items

Do you have a financial plan or source of funding to support this idea? (If yes, briefly explain) *

I plan to take out a small business loan for the play "palace" however I am able to fund this from savings if necessary. For the teen building I will seek donations for furniture.

(Optional) would you like to offer the TIFA an additional amount to acquire the property? If so, how much?

FEASIBILITY & READINESS

What is your timeline for starting and completing the project? *

This project can be up and running in 3-6 months.

What experience, skills, or team members do you have to bring this idea to life?

I have a degree in early childhood education as well as 7 years experience working in education. I am a mother of 4 children ages teen to adult and am currently a kindergarten teacher, I spend my days finding fun and engaging learning activities that are developmentally appropriate. I am surrounded by creative minds willing to share their ideas on new and exciting activities. Every year I attend several training classes to be a successful educator. My husband works in the I.T field and will be handling the security system. My brother in law has experience with starting two successful brick and mortar businesses from the ground up. He also has a degree in finances. He is my go to expert for anything business related. I plan to use a local constructor for building the play structures, I do have a few in mind.

PITCH READINESS

Are you available to present a live, 5-minute pitch on April 15, 2025 at 1:00 PM? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

Do you have any presentation needs (AV, props, accessibility accommodations)? *

No

FINAL QUESTION

Why do you want to be part of this competition, and why does this property matter to you? *

I am extremely passionate about this project, it's been a dream of mine for years, something I wish I had when my children were younger. An indoor children's place is a beautiful opportunity to make memories and to nurture young minds and bring joy to our community. The Palace will be a place for family bonding while building important skills children need. Working in the school system I see that there is a massive need for socialization with young children and this is an opportunity to give that to our families.

I have kept an eye out on properties for a while now and there's nothing I have found that doesn't require a lot of renovation and large loan.

The teen center has been a desire in our community. We've had a few in the past my children absolutely enjoyed them. For some like my household who do not have family in the area the people in community centers become a second family. Everyone needs that sense of family and a place to feel safe and wanted.

I believe both of these buildings will be welcomed and successful. This doesn't feel like a job or work for me it's a way to give back to a community that does so much for each other.

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