



GAEDA Revitalization Corporation

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GAEDA REVITALIZATION CORPORATION (GRC)

2017-2022

*Submitted by: Mr. Willie Spears, Executive Director
June 29, 2022*

OUR MISSION

To work with nonprofit, government and private entities and organizations to make a sustainable impact in Central Louisiana through targeted, holistic, mixed-use, and mixed-income community revitalization initiatives.

OUR VISION

To be known as a community catalyst for regional collaboration initiatives designed to create sustainable and stable neighborhoods that improve the health, wealth, and safety of low to moderate income wage earners.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The GAEDA Revitalization Corporation (GRC) is a non-profit affordable housing organization domiciled in Alexandria with a service area that encompasses rural and urban communities in Rapides Parish. The purpose of GRC is to increase and improve affordable housing opportunities for low-moderate families living in Rapides Parish.

GRC became a legal entity on July 19, 2016, as certified by the Secretary of State for the State of Louisiana. GRC received its Internal Revenue designation as a 501 C-3 non-profit corporation on March 17, 2017.

It was the vision of Mr. Clifford Moller, Executive Director of the Greater Alexandria Economic Development Authority (GAEDA), to create an organization to fill a much-needed void in the City of Alexandria, Louisiana. This organization would become the catalyst for inner-city revitalization and commercial corridor redevelopment to provide affordable housing and retail services to neighborhood residents. GAEDA acted on Mr. Moller's recommendation to provide seed capital for operating expenses for the first three years of operations.

GRC was initially chartered to be governed by a seven-member board of directors which would be composed of seven well respected community and business leaders. In 2021, the Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC) suggested that the mix of board members needed to include more low-moderate income community representation. To that end, the board was expanded to nine members to achieve the proper community representation. This group of experienced, compassionate, and committed individuals are the driving force behind the success of the GRC.

A short visit to either of the five Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Targeted Neighborhoods as designated by the City of Alexandria will immediately reveal the need for a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plan. In 2009, the City of Alexandria commissioned J-QUAD and Associates from Dallas, Texas to complete a Revitalization Master Plan for the City. The plan revealed that the CDBG neighborhoods were experiencing significant decline and deterioration due to years of disinvestment and neglect.

There were 3,869 structures in need of minor repairs, 1249 in need of major repairs and 468 residential structures designated as dilapidated. You can only imagine the condition of those structures today. Interesting enough, the plan also recommended revitalization strategies and identified resources to improve living conditions in the inner-city neighborhoods. Unfortunately, they were not implemented.

Demolishing vacant, uninhabitable and blighted structures is only a starting point. A comprehensive revitalization strategy cannot be successively implemented without a collaborative engagement between the public, private and non-profit community stakeholders. You do not have to reinvent the wheel. There are many success stories experienced by large and

small communities throughout the State of Louisiana. It must start with leadership from our elected officials.

I was recruited to serve in the capacity of GRC's first executive director. As a retired banking executive with a background in both finance and community development, the GAEDA board and GRC board felt that I would be a good fit to spearhead the organization. I continue to serve in that capacity today. GRC shared office space with GAEDA during the first two years of operation to control operating expenses.

In November 2019, GRC received a \$349,000 affordable housing grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas (FHLB Dallas) to help senior homeowners repair their homes. The implementation and administration of the grant required more office space and staff support. Accordingly, GRC moved into its own office and hired a new administrative assistant. The staff still includes only an administrative assistant and executive director.

The success of GRC could not only rely on the initial start-up capital for GAEDA. It would need more community support as well. Below is a list of previous as well as current supporters:

- GAEDA
- Red River Bank
- FHLB Dallas
- LHC
- Capital One Bank
- City of Pineville
- City of LeCompte
- Town of Boyce

We continue to explore opportunities to add to our list of supporters.

In 2020, GRC received its Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) certification from the LHC. The CHDO certification enables GRC to participate in various affordable housing development programs. There are approximately 20 certified CHDOs in the State of Louisiana. They must abide by strict Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rules and regulations to maintain their certifications, which must be renewed on an annual basis. GRC continues to maintain its certification. Some of LHC's affordable housing programs include funding for new construction, homeownership, rental, and rehabilitation. A pool of funds is created annually and set-aside exclusively for CHFO projects. LHC also provide funds to assist with operating expenses.

The majority of the local housing stock is over 60 years old, and a considerable number of homes are owned by seniors on fixed incomes. It is no surprise that many of the homes are in serious need of distinct types of repairs including roof replacements, plumbing and electrical upgrades, heating and air conditioning repairs and others. Senior homeowners on fixed incomes just do not have the resources to pay for the repairs. The average age of our clients is 70 and their average income is \$12,000.

GRC enjoys an extremely healthy relationship with the FHLB Dallas. We have been awarded two grants through their affordable housing grant program. The first grant for \$349,000 to repair 50 homes owned and occupied by seniors was completed in 2021; the second grant for \$495,000 was approved in 2020 to repair another 50 homes for seniors. We have completed repairs on 30 of those homes. We have also participated in the FHLB Dallas annual grant programs for homeowners with special needs and most recently their disaster repair grant program. Through the various FHLB Dallas grant programs GRC has received over \$1,000,000 to repair approximately 100 homes for senior homeowners.

While owner/occupied rehabilitation has been GRC's flagship program, we have also launched a new residential construction strategy. LHC approved our request for a \$253,000 grant through its NOAH Program to build a new three bedroom, two bath, 1,400 sq. ft. home. Its approximately 95% complete and will be sold to a low/moderate income homebuyer. A generous subsidy for a first-time home buyer is part of the grant program.

We have submitted a new Nonprofit Open Cycle Affordable Housing Program (NOAH) application to build another home on the lot adjacent to the home under construction. We also have an option to purchase an undeveloped tract of land to develop a mini subdivision. An engineer rendering suggests that the land can be sub-divided into 7-9 lots. Funding to build the homes will be provided by LHC. We are currently exploring opportunities to find funding to cover infrastructure development expenses.

GRC has sponsored several empowerment seminars for homeowners and potential homebuyers. The topics focus on homebuyer education, home maintenance, energy conservation, cybercrime, and fraud avoidance. Over 100 people have participated in these seminars.

GRC has been true to its mission and will continue to do so.

Respectfully,

Willie Spears
Executive Director

PROGRAMS

HOME REPAIR PROGRAM

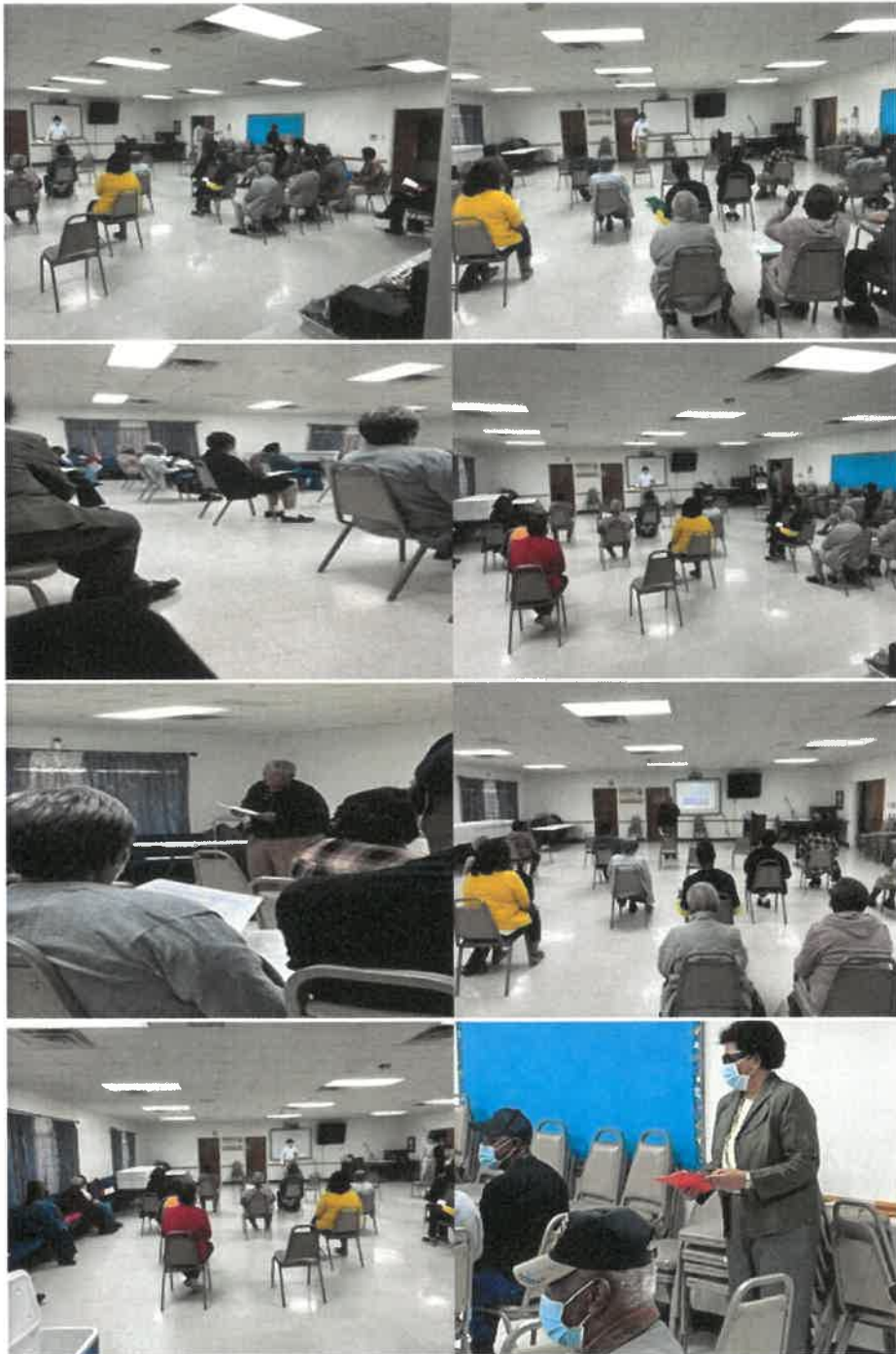
General Requirements

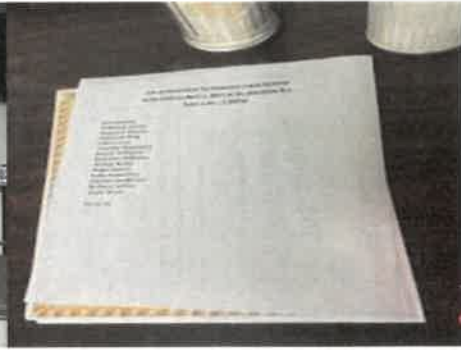
- Currently resides in Rapides Parish
- 55 years of age or older
- Must own the home and be able to show proof of ownership
- Must occupy the home and be able to show proof of occupancy
- Must meet federal home loan income requirement
- Must attend a Homeowner Empowerment Seminar
- Must provide a Louisiana Driver's License or a valid form of identification

Types of Dwellings:

- Single Family Homeownership
- Single Family Rental
- Multi-Family Rental
- Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation
- Commercial Corridor Revitalization

EMPOWERMENT SEMINAR FOR SENIORS

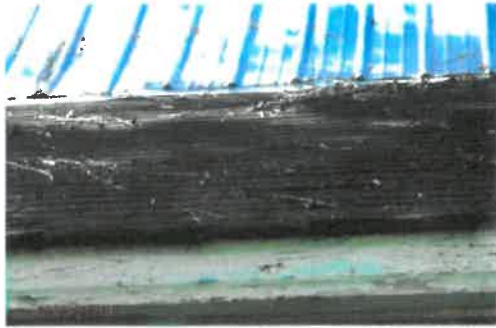




PROJECTS

Client: Ms. Carolyn Adams

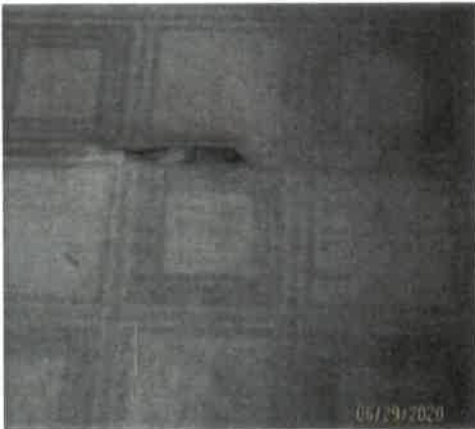
Before



After



**Client: Ms. Bessie Esters
Before**



After



Mt. Zion Senior Citizen Apartments

GRC in conjunction with a slew of community volunteers came together to perform necessary updates and fixes to the Mt. Zion Senior Citizen Apartments.



CLIENT'S CORNER

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“With COVID-19 and the downturn of the economy, I was trying to figure out if I could afford to have my roof replaced. While I was trying to figure it out, God has already worked it out through Mr. Willie Spears. Praise God! Thank you so much!”

- Ms. Holmes

“I am a senior citizen, 81 years of age on a fixed income and it is not way I could have done this without the help of your organization. I am so grateful and cannot thank you enough!”

- Ms. Esters

“We’ve been without air for seven years and without your help it is no way I could afford to do the work. We thank you and share our appreciation for all you do. Please continue to help our under-privileged community.”

- Ms. Boswell

“I was afraid that I would fall through my old handicap ramp each time I went down. God answered my prayer when Mr. Spears included me in his program. No way I could have afforded to have one built. My old ramp was an accident waiting to happen.

Thank you, Mr. Spears! I do know I deeply appreciate what you’re doing.”

- Ms. Long

“Mr. Spear’s program is a very good program and I really appreciate the beautiful job they did in my home. Everything looks beautiful. Thanks to all of you and may God continue to bless you.”

- Ms. Gaston

"Mr. Spears, I want to say 'Thanks' from the bottom of my heart for all the work you did to save my life. Nothing but God! I told everyone the same. I'm so grateful. I needed it more, but I hope if you hear of any program that will help me to get more work in the inside I will appreciate. Thanks so much! Mr. Roger told me to tell you "Hi and you're a good man" I'm sorry I'm so blessed from God. My house could have burned. Thanks. They finished and I signed the papers today!"

BOARD MEMBERS

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Ms. Jannease Seastrunk

Chair

Vice President, Community Relations/CRA Officer
Red River Bank

Mr. Byron Lavalais

Co-Chairman

Chief Marketing Officer
Rapides Primary Healthcare

Mr. James Woodley

Secretary/Treasurer

Accountant
CLECO/Retired

Mr. Jonathan Bolen

Program Manager/Special Project Planner
Rapides Area Planning Commission

Mr. Stephan Fontenot

Manager

Alexandria Housing Authority

Rev. Joseph Lewis

Pastor

Good Hope Baptist Church

Ms. Michelle Purl

Chief Operation Officer

United Way of Central Louisiana

Ms. Clarice Holmes

Communications Specialist/Retired

AT&T

STAFF

~

Mr. Willie Spears
Executive Director

Ms. Debra Jackson
Administrative Assistant