



## **Battle Creek Unlimited and New Level Sports Ministries announce \$2 million Washington Heights Entrepreneurial Fund**

March 8, 2021

**BATTLE CREEK, Mich.** – Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU), in partnership with New Level Sports Ministries (NLSM), has established the Washington Heights Entrepreneurial Fund, a \$2 million program for entrepreneurial and real estate development projects in the historic Battle Creek neighborhood. The fund is supported by a \$2 million grant from the Battle Creek-based W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The program prioritizes those who are Black, Hispanic and Burmese – groups with traditionally limited access to capital. Projects may fall under the real estate or business categories. Applicants may be eligible for grants up to \$300,000 for real estate-only improvements. They may also be eligible to receive low-interest loans up to \$150,000 for viable startups and existing businesses.

Program recipients will be provided business services, too, like accounting, marketing, or legal guidance. A suite of related services and mentors will help ensure long-term program success in Washington Heights. Business-service professionals interested in program participation are encouraged to contact BCU or NLSM.

“NLSM, BCU, and the 846 Movement have together become the catalyst for entrepreneurship, land ownership, and economic development in the Washington Heights business district,” said Pastor Christopher McCoy, executive director of NLSM. “That’s been expanded here into an economic strategic plan that includes the entire Washington Heights community.”

“Land and business ownership provide two of the main wealth accumulation tools,” McCoy said. “But, above all, ownership provides the opportunity for self-determination – the process by which people control their own lives.”

Increased capital will revitalize vacant commercial properties in Washington Heights. The program will help spur job creation, wage increases, and generational opportunities.

“This program is designed to meet the needs of Washington Heights’ land and businesses owners, both current and prospective,” said Joe Sobieralski, president and CEO of BCU. “We are excited to partner with NLSM and the Washington Heights community and begin a new chapter of our economic development role in Battle Creek. BCU is excited to accelerate these diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in Battle Creek.”

More information on the Washington Heights Entrepreneurial Program can be found at [bcunlimited.org/whef](https://bcunlimited.org/whef) or [newlevelsports.org](https://newlevelsports.org). There will be a Q&A session at NLSM’s 2021 Leadership Summit on March 20. For more event details, please call (269) 964-4172. Program applications will be accepted beginning May 1.



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### **ABOUT NEW LEVEL SPORTS MINISTRIES**

*Established in 2001, New Level Sports Ministries is a nonprofit, youth support-service committed to developing purpose-driven individuals who will be highly effective in all aspects of life. Our success is achieved by utilizing five foundational pillars: education, personal growth, arts, industry, and sports. Over the past 20 years, New Level Sports Ministries has served over 17,000 urban youths and their families. We believe every young person, despite his or her background, has the ability to develop and achieve their goals and dreams.*

### **ABOUT BATTLE CREEK UNLIMITED**

*Established in 1972, Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU) is a private, nonprofit corporation that serves as the economic development arm for the City of Battle Creek and manages the Fort Custer Industrial Park. The Fort Custer Industrial Park is home to over 80 businesses, including 25 international companies, and employs over 13,000 people. BCU's mission is to build a strong community by driving strategic investment and job creation.*

### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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