



MEMORANDUM

To: CFGB Board
From: Nicole Standridge, Senior Program Officer
Date: 5/21/2026
Re: Competitive Grant Changes – GREC

Background

The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham (CFGB) Grant Review and Evaluation Committee (GREC) met on 4/28/26. At the meeting, CFGB staff presented three proposals from previous competitive cycle grantees requesting changes to their grants. After discussion, the GREC voted to accept the requested changes from East Lake Initiative, Highway 280 Cooperative District (grantee change), and Birmingham United Neighborhoods. Proposals from the grantees are attached.

Recommendation

We recommend that the CFGB Board approve the GREC's recommendation as presented.

Dear Gus & the Community Foundation Board,

I am writing this letter to request a change to the grant awarded to ELI Thrive by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham for our new construction project in 2024. We would like to reassign the money to be used for a housing renovation project, as our new construction is currently on hold. Please see all of the details below:

Over the past 16 years, ELI has successfully acquired and renovated 17 homes in the East Lake community. 12 of those homes were sold at an affordable price to community members and families in our program.

In 2023, ELI undertook a pilot program, ELI New Family Housing, and built three new homes in East Lake. The plan was to sell those homes, recover the capital, and repeat. However, rising construction costs and interest rates made selling those homes difficult. In short, they were too expensive for most of the parties interested in living in East Lake. Additionally, the gap between construction costs and affordable homeownership is too large for scalability at this time. The three new homes are currently rented to community members at market rate, with the ultimate goal still being purchase. The market value of these three homes is over \$200,000 each, but the majority of the demographic served by ELI needs housing priced under \$150,000. Community development and affordable housing are a primary focus of our mission; therefore, we have decided to return to the acquisition/rehab model that has worked well for us in the past.

Proposal

As a pivot from new housing to renovated homes, we would like to request permission to use the balance of the \$75,000 awarded toward home renovations.

If CFGB approves this reallocation of funds, ELI is prepared to provide additional capital of at least another \$160,000 (funded by Navigates- Housing Authority Trust fund) to be paired with construction debt from a bank or outside source. With an initial target of four homes done simultaneously, ELI intends to use the 2024 grant funding ASAP to purchase the homes and utilize a construction line of credit for the renovations. The homes would not exceed a sales price of \$150,000.

Please feel free to reach out with any further questions regarding this change request, and thank you for your continued partnership.

Dear Gus,

On behalf of the Highway 280 Cooperative District, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham for the \$50,000 grant awarded in 2022. This support is instrumental in the development of the pedestrian bridge connector over Highway 280, a vital project connecting the cities of Homewood and Mountain Brook.

I am writing to formally notify you that the Highway 280 Cooperative District has been dissolved as of April 6, 2026. Consequently, we request that the grant be officially transferred to the Jefferson County Commission. Jefferson County has agreed to accept this role and will be responsible for managing and overseeing the project to its completion.

Attached to this email, please find a copy of the dissolution resolution for your records. Cal Markert from Jefferson County is copied on this message to confirm their commitment to the project, which is now ready to commence.

As I served as the treasurer for the cooperative, please let me know if there are any further next steps or additional documentation required to facilitate this transfer.

Thank you again for your continued support of this long-awaited project.

Best regards,

Graham Smith
Treasurer, Highway 280 Cooperative District

Birmingham Cares 2.0

A Proposed Project of Birmingham United Neighborhoods

Birmingham Cares was proposed by Birmingham United Neighborhoods (BUN) as a demonstration project for extending the successes of Magic City Blight Busters (MCBB) for blight remediation for the original 8 BUN neighborhoods to an additional 10 neighborhoods. The original goals were to engage the leadership of 8-10 neighborhoods to identify residents willing to participate in an ongoing program to clean and maintain an 8-10 block common area working 2 hours twice a month during the growing season. With local leadership BUN planned to identify and map the common areas, provide training for the work crews using the Tool Kit developed by MCBB, and facilitate interactions with Magic City Tool Bank for the loan of all the needed tools and equipment.

During the lead-up to the planned launch of Birmingham Cares in September 2025, BUN attempted to contact leadership in the additional 10 neighborhoods to explore interest in participating in Birmingham Cares. It quickly became apparent that because of an on-going lawsuit against the City, neighborhood association leadership is unsettled and unstable and there was little interest among residents in a long-term blight remediation project. In a parallel effort BUN advised its 8 member neighborhoods that BUN and MCBB would support clean-up and blight remediation efforts in the neighborhoods but would not take the lead in organizing Saturday events. Over the course of the 2025 growing season several neighborhoods held one-off events, primarily trash pick-up, but did not extend those efforts to vacant lots and abandoned houses on a regular basis.

During the fall and winter of 2025-26 efforts to develop plans for the 2026 growing season were similarly stymied by leadership inertia and the unwillingness of the City to allow neighborhood associations to use their allocated funds for the purpose of borrowing tools from the Magic City Tool Bank (MCTB), despite entreaties from several neighborhood presidents and the local Community Resource Representative. However, a recent community meeting hosted for a presentation by MCTB and BUN highlighted the emerging interest from residents to organize clean-ups assuming funds were available to support the tool lending program. Also, from that meeting interest was expressed in receiving some support and guidance from MCBB and BUN.

Based on the events of the past year and recent community developments, BUN is submitting this modified proposal for Birmingham Cares as follows.

1. BUN will partner with Magic City Tool Bank to provide neighborhood educational events explaining how MCTB operates and the role BUN and MCBB can play in facilitating clean-up events that include trash pick-up and clearing and maintaining vacant lots. MCBB will assist with coordinating with the City the clean-up of illegal dump sites.
2. BUN will coordinate a program with MCTB to encourage neighborhoods and local charitable organizations to become members of MCTB (a free service), thereby increasing the leverage neighborhoods have to petition the City for policy changes that enhance the ability of neighborhood associations to directly participate in the tool lending programs of MCTB.
3. Birmingham Cares will support financially the tool lending program at MCTB for neighborhood associations planning a clean-up event during the 2026 and 2027 growing seasons while offering additional guidance and support from MCBB regarding clearing and maintaining vacant lots.
4. BUN and MCBB will document the events supported through Birmingham Cares with specific (number of participants, number of tools loaned, number of trash bags collected, number of vacant lots and abandoned houses remediated, and pictures).

For the 2026 and 2027 growing seasons (approximately May 1 through October 30) we project an average of 4 events in each of the 6 months. A proposed revised budget is attached.

Birmingham Cares 2.0
Proposed Budget

Revenue

1. Community Foundation GB (20%)	\$ 5,000
2. Birmingham United Neighborhoods	\$ 5,000
3. Magic City Tool Bank	\$ 5,000
4. Keeping Birmingham Beautiful (pending)	\$ 10,000

Total \$ 25,000

Expenses

1. Project manager (BUN)	\$ 3,750
2. Project manager (MCTB)	\$ 3,750
3. Printed materials	\$ 500
4. Disposable supplies	\$ 1,000
5. Door/window coverings	\$ 1,000
6. Magic City Tool Bank lending fees*	\$ 15,000

Total \$ 25,000

* \$1,500/neighborhood/2 growing seasons