



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 22, 2022

ONE|NB Launches \$1M, Community -led Participatory Budgeting Initiative

PROVIDENCE, RI - ONE Neighborhood Builders, one of the state's leading community development corporations, officially kicked off the idea collection phase of a \$1 million, community-led participatory budgeting initiative last week. As part of this phase, ONE|NB is accelerating efforts to solicit ideas from neighbors about how to invest \$1 million in the community. In the coming weeks, ONE|NB and the Nine Neighborhood Fund Steering Committee will host idea collection town halls and meetings with community partners. The steering committee is made up of individuals who live, work or learn here.

At a community town hall last Wednesday open to all central Providence neighbors, ONE|NB promoted a new website - www.DecideRI.org - as an added tool to capture community ideas and input.

"No one knows what a community needs more than the people who live and work in that community. The Nine Neighborhood Fund is an ambitious initiative designed to shift power to local community members. Through a public and transparent process, local residents will have a direct and democratic opportunity to invest \$1 million in local community projects," said **ONE|NB Executive Director Jennifer Hawkins**. "Thanks to support from EOHHS and a generous philanthropic partner, we have created the largest known participatory budgeting initiative in Rhode Island. I look forward to seeing the ideas the community puts forward and cannot wait to open the polls next Spring."

Participatory budgeting provides a democratic process for individuals who live in the community to make direct decisions about how to spend components of a budget. The Nine Neighborhoods Fund is the largest known participatory budget allocation in Rhode Island and is focused on improving community health outcomes and strengthening quality of life throughout Central Providence.

The state Executive Office of Health & Human Services and Department of Health invested \$450,000 through the Central Providence Opportunities: A Health Equity Zone. ONE|NB secured an additional \$550,000 in private grant funding to bring the total Nine Neighborhood Fund budget to \$1 million. Community members can steer Nine Neighborhood Fund

investments toward community development needs in the Elmhurst, Federal Hill, Hartford, Olneyville, Manton, Mount Pleasant, Valley, Silver Lake, and Smith Hill neighborhoods. The Pawtucket Central Falls HEZ also received \$450,000 from EOHHS for their own participatory budgeting project.

“This is a way for residents to come together as a community, decide what they need, and invest funds in a way that benefits them the most,” said **Wole Akinbi, a member of the Nine Neighborhood Fund Steering Committee**. “It’s empowering to watch the community define its own needs.”

During the Town Hall meeting last week, community members discussed everything from the development of new ball fields to improvements to public transportation. The next Nine Neighborhood Fund town hall meeting is scheduled for Saturday, December 10 at 10:00am. It will be held at Casa de Adoracion Juda (381 Manton Avenue, Providence). Food, children’s activities, and Spanish translation services will be provided.

Earlier this year, a 17-member steering committee of residents drafted the rules to guide the entire participatory budgeting process. Based on this rulebook, individuals have until December 9, 2022 to submit ideas via dropboxes, town hall meetings, and website submissions. In early 2023, volunteer Project Budget Delegates will work with the Steering Committee to turn the ideas into fully fledged proposals. From May 27 to June 10, polls will open to allow every 02908 and 02909 resident over the age of 13 the opportunity to vote on their preferred proposals. Poll locations will be announced in May. Winning projects will be made public by early summer.

Funds cannot be used to supplement existing programs, services, or projects that normally would be funded by state or local government. In addition, there are program cost limitations to ensure that smaller projects can be achieved. More information is available at www.DecideRI.org.

ABOUT ONE NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDERS:

ONE Neighborhood Builders (ONE|NB) is a nonprofit community development leader in Rhode Island that is expanding its work to the broader Greater Providence area while maintaining its deep roots in its historic home of Olneyville. ONE|NB’s mission is to develop affordable housing and engage neighbors to cultivate healthy, vibrant, and safe communities. Since its founding in 1988, then as Olneyville Housing Corporation, ONE|NB has developed 466 affordable apartments; 130 for-sale homes for low- to moderate-income homebuyers; and nearly 34,000 square feet of commercial and community space —totaling more than \$135 million of investments. ONE|NB is the convening entity of [Central Providence Opportunities: A Health Equity Zone](#), which brings together residents, more than five dozen community-based organizations, health professionals, local businesses, elected officials, and others to address root causes of health disparities and to improve neighborhood conditions. As the convener, ONE|NB is the backbone organization of this collective-impact initiative to increase economic mobility for residents in Central Providence. ONE|NB also created [the first free community wireless network](#) in Rhode Island, providing high-speed broadband to more than 2,583 unique users in the Olneyville neighborhood.

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