



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Kelly Clarke

kelly.clarke@kalamazoolandbank.org or (269) 216-9667

Pho on the Block Named 'Fare Games' Competition Winner

KALAMAZOO, Mich. [November 29, 2016]— Kalamazoo's Fare Games committee has selected Pho on the Block as the contest's winner. A panel of judges selected Pho on the Block after in-depth presentations by the top three finalists. The winning concept will receive a prize package consisting of material goods and services from local organizations to help facilitate opening a restaurant at 1301 Portage Street in the coming months.

Pho on the Block is a modern Vietnamese concept proposed by Reggie Kaur and Nancy Tien in partnership with Kaur's father, Balwinder Singh, who owns and operates Cumin Indian Restaurant on Stadium Drive. Their signature menu item is pho, a Vietnamese noodle soup that has increased in popularity in the United States as Vietnamese cuisine gains a more mainstream following.

"We were delighted with the community's positive response to the competition and the overall quality of the applications submitted. It was a hard decision, but the committee was unanimous in its praise for Pho on the Block's vision for the space, the strength of their business plan, and, of course, the deliciousness of the food we sampled," said Fare Games committee chair Becky Fulgoni.

Organized by the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, the Fare Games competition launched earlier this year to help revitalize space at 1301 Portage Street, on the corner of Washington Avenue and Portage Street in the Edison neighborhood. Food-based entrepreneurs were invited to compete for the opportunity to start or relocate their business to the space thanks to a three-year graduated lease and a prize package worth more than \$30,000.

As the Fare Games winner, Kaur and Tien will receive the following goods and services to help them launch their new venture: legal counsel from Warner, Norcross & Judd; interior design by SKP Design; public relations support from LKF Marketing; accounting services from Gould, Stinson, & Comer, P.C.; marketing and branding from Rocksteady Shops; a billboard campaign from Adams Outdoor; linen services from Continental Linen; cleaning supplies from KSS Enterprises; uniforms from Edwards; and flowers and decorations from VanderSalm's Flower Shop.

More than \$200,000 was invested in the renovation of the space, which was made possible through funding provided by the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, City of Kalamazoo, the Jim Gilmore Jr.

Foundation, the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, Michigan Municipal League, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation, and Fifth Third Bank Foundation.

The Kalamazoo County Land Bank and a variety of partners have spent the past three years revitalizing the historic commercial hub of Washington Square at the heart of Kalamazoo's Edison neighborhood. The one remaining vacant space is undergoing renovations in preparation for its next life as Pho on the Block restaurant.

The opening date for Pho on the Block will be announced as details are finalized and the build out of the space nears completion. The winners are currently working with developers to customize the space to fit their needs.

"I'm excited to see continued growth in Washington Square. A new ethnic restaurant so close to downtown Kalamazoo is a benefit for the Edison neighborhood and Kalamazoo County as a whole," said Carl Brown, DDA board member, Edison resident, and Fare Games panel participant.

Washington Square will be welcoming the public for a Holidays in the Square event on Friday, December 2nd. This event will feature art, music, holiday shopping from local vendors, Crepes by the Lakes pop-up café, and Wahmhoff Farms tree and wreath sales in the parking lot on the 1300 block of Portage Street. More details can be found at [Facebook.com/WashingtonSquare](https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonSquare).

###

The Kalamazoo County Land Bank was created in 2009 in response to the growing number of tax foreclosures in Kalamazoo County. It was developed in the context of a growing recognition throughout the Midwest and across the country that utilization of Land Bank tools could assist with community development, improving quality of life, and halting neighborhood decline. The mission of the Kalamazoo County Land Bank is to create vibrant communities through the elimination of blighted properties, the creation of affordable housing opportunities, and the stabilization of property values. The Land Bank fulfills this mission through a variety of programs including home rehabilitation and new construction, blight removal, and adaptive reuse of vacant parcels through side lot and adopt-a-lot programs, among others.