



All About the People

Nonprofit developer partners with organizations with fewer resources to transform communities

As the development arm of 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization Cinnaire, Cinnaire Solutions brings to the table a wealth of experience, real estate connections and financial resources to help less-experienced partners bring their visions to life.

Cinnnaire Solutions largely partners with smaller organizations, particularly BIPOC-led developers and community development corporations, that might not otherwise have the resources to develop affordable housing on their own. Rather than merely provide technical assistance or take over an at-risk development project, Cinnaire Solutions employs a strategy that's more of a "thought process"—to work with its partners to expand their knowledge base, making commercial real estate more accessible and equitable in the process.

"We have a concentrated system, I think, of meeting our partners where they are. Some of our groups are pretty sophisticated, and we are able to work very collaboratively based on our collective levels of experience. Other groups are just starting out, so there's a huge educational piece," says Christopher Laurent, President of Cinnaire Solutions. "We've been called from some folks in the community to do technical assistance, but we focus much more on capacity building. We think that a true partnership aligns interests,



Cinnnaire Solutions

President :: Christopher Laurent | Location :: Lansing, Michigan



makes sure that everybody's up to speed on the same bits of information and, collectively, we can hold ourselves accountable much better than a one-way teaching relationship or technical advisory services firm could."

TRANSFORMING THE INDUSTRY

Cinnaire as an organization is deeply committed to prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion, both within the nonprofit and in the larger real estate sector. Cinnaire Solutions' efforts to combat racial inequity include working with Black and Brown developer partners that lack resources. However, the organization is also ensuring that its team reflects the partners it works with and the communities it works in.

"We've focused on having a team that is very diverse and [reflects] the nature of the communities that we serve. So, with a lot of intention, we've recruited people outside

[the real estate industry] who've indicated an interest in really having an impact. We're training and developing some very talented people that I have high hopes for tremendous success into the future on our team itself."

Cinnaire is tied to two programs—Jumpstart Wilmington and Associates in Commercial Real Estate (ACRE) that aim to introduce new faces to commercial real estate and give them the education necessary to enter the industry.

Laurent also says that, while it's important for BIPOC developers to create properties in their own neighborhoods, it's also important for them to develop throughout their states and have even more opportunities—and Cinnaire Solutions is helping them do this.

"I think the other reason we're really focused on [partnerships] as our business practice is, I saw some of the relationships





ETHOS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Ethos Development Partners is proud to work with Cinnaire Solutions to bring quality affordable housing to those who need it most. Ethos Development Partners is a team of experienced developers and consultants that assists nonprofit and for-profit organizations seeking to engage in transformative housing, as well as commercial and community development initiatives. We carefully evaluate the needs of each client and bring together the expertise necessary to select and manage development teams, develop project budgets, secure government and private financing, and provide project management from the predevelopment stage through project completion. Our values and expertise ensure that our clients achieve their development goals.

that have come out of the ACRE program not being as full as they could have been," he says. "So, Black and Brown developers who may have worked with a senior developer in the past got a sliver of the developer fee, didn't really get to see the process at work, weren't involved at council meetings. So, their experience wasn't as fulfilling or full as it could be. With a lot of intention, we're bringing our partners to the table and making sure that the experience is good."

ALL FORMS OF COMMUNITY

Both Cinnaire Solutions and its parent company operate with a community-first culture that's focused on people, not product. On the development side, the team focuses on rebuilding trust within communities and learning about their visions through a thorough process well before attempting to break ground.

"[One] dynamic we really focus on is creating a sense of culture among our team members... that we're not doing things for communities—we're doing things with communities. And that's an important dynamic," Laurent says. "This isn't our vision that we're putting on a community. We are trying to become specialized at skills that draw out from the communities their best reflections of what they'd like to be, and then trying to find resources to make that happen."

One of Cinnaire Solutions' recent developments is La Joya Gardens in Detroit, Michigan, in partnership with the Southwest Detroit Business Association. The four-story, mixed-use property will hold 53 mixed-income apartments on top of 7,000 square feet of commercial space. Two public plazas, event space, a community room, an outdoor terrace and a fitness center will be accessible to residents.

The \$19 million property is located adjacent to public transportation and near an area traditionally known as Mexicantown, with a large population of Latin American residents. La Joya Gardens will activate the site's vacant block along Vernor Highway to help fill in missing retail activity and offer more affordable housing options to the growing community.

Also in Detroit, Cinnaire Solutions is working with Ethos Development Partners to build

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Transfiguration Place Apartments, a 19-unit affordable housing development.

Laurent says that Cinnaire Solutions has many opportunities ahead. However, the organization wants to remain intentional about its partners and development efforts to have a real impact on its communities, partners and the larger industry.

“We have no shortage of opportunities,” he says. “We’re being called both from within our own organization and the communities that we serve to do more. We’re trying to do that in a meaningful, but broader way.”



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