



Monday, February 17, 2025

Senate Legacy Committee
Minnesota Senate
St. Paul, MN

RE: Support for SF 907 - Moorhead Cultural Mall Funding

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Shannon Schweigert, and I am the owner/managing partner of PACE Fundraising, a project catalyst firm specializing in securing capital funding for projects that demonstrate community impact. With offices in Fargo, ND and Shakopee, MN, we work collaboratively with project owners across a wide spectrum of community industries: healthcare, education, interpretive, visual and performing arts, youth athletics, and culture. Our impact is felt throughout North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota; our primary service area. In 2024, PACE with the assistance of the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) of North Dakota, conducted a feasibility and market study for the Immigrant Development Center's Cultural Mall.

Though our study centered on a location/building that is different from IDC's current plans, the community's enthusiasm for the project and confidence in its leadership remains relevant. In fact, the pro-forma built by SBDC proved a profitable business model in what would have been a much larger capital investment by IDC and its supporters. The project location we evaluated included a \$16.4M "all-in" budget for acquisition, renovation, parking lot improvements, furniture and fixtures, and operating capital. The current iteration of the Cultural Mall is projected at an all in cost of \$6.89M or 42% of the investment of the project we studied. As such, I am quite confident in the ability of IDC to operate the Cultural Mall at a sustainable profit.

The project location has changed, but what remains the same is the community's support of the Cultural Mall's development and the impact it will have. Confidence in the operations of the Immigrant Development Center and its leadership is remarkably high. In our study, 80% of interview subjects rated IDC as seven (7) or higher (out of 10) in their commitment to following its mission. Leadership's ability to design, build, and successfully operate the Cultural Mall was assessed positively as 68% of interview subjects reflected a "very confident" to "confident" in leadership's abilities. In terms of the sheer capacity to raise the necessary capital (gifts), interview subjects reflected a \$5.4M aggregate capacity. From our roster of completed studies, we have found this statistic to consistently be quite conservative versus what is realized in our actual implementation of respective campaigns. Most often this figure factors as about 60% of what can be raised. Our feasibility study reflected the community's high confidence in leadership, its ability to fund, build and operate the facility for the benefit of Moorhead and the surrounding communities.

Immigrant Development Center's proposed Cultural Mall in Moorhead represents a transformative opportunity to address critical needs across multiple sectors of our community including workforce development, entrepreneurial training within the New American Community, and neighborhood revitalization. PACE Fundraising has been honored to be selected as IDC's fundraising counsel to support this impactful initiative.

Primarily, the new center will add much-needed access to the products and services seldom found in traditional retail settings in Clay County, MN. Self-care and food products unique to our New American residents will be readily available. Though its services are not exclusively intended for only the New American Community, the Cultural Mall's offerings will become the standard for multi-cultural inclusion, immersion, and acceptance. Its products and services will be available for introduction to more all-ethnic communities. IDC's Cultural Mall will become a destination in downtown Moorhead.

Located in Moorhead's redeveloping downtown district, IDC's Cultural Mall will play a key role in community redevelopment, driving investment and growth in a historically underserved area. By partnering with the City of Moorhead, IDC is not only creating a destination commerce center but also laying the foundation for lasting neighborhood transformation. New American entrepreneurs will benefit from the business immersion services offered.

Other constituencies benefitting from the Cultural Mall project impacts are many and varied: children, parents, employers, the neighborhood, higher education, the New American Community, Clay County, and the greater Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo Communities. As such, we have many avenues in seeking financial support for this cause. Public, corporate, foundation, and individual benefactors all have a stake in the success of IDC's capital effort.

We are honored to partner with Immigrant Development Center in this essential endeavor and are confident that, together, we will realize a brighter future for our community.

I urge you to support SF 907 and help make the Moorhead Cultural Mall a reality for our community.

Sincerely,

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