



Purchase option for *Samuel Hanaford's Historic North Avondale Mansion awarded to Rosemary's Babies Co. but not without opposition from Neighbors.*

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If building an “inclusive” community is a North Avondale priority, why is the NANA/NABA Joint Strategic Development Committee (JSDC) drawing a hard line for business opportunities that will help to expand their business district? This question comes daily for our organization, Rosemary's Babies Co. (RBC), as we launch an aggressive 6-month campaign to meet the terms of our purchase option with The Port of Greater Cincinnati.

[The fate of North Avondale's vacant Rubel House](#), a Samuel Hannaford-designed structure at 3864 Reading Road, had been in limbo for almost a decade when in May 2021 The Port of Greater Cincinnati offered a purchase option to [Rosemary's Babies Co.](#) (RBC), our five-year-old non-profit that has been recognized as Cincy Magazine's Non-profit of the Year for our efforts aimed at providing pregnancy/childbirth education to teen parents. Our plan is to convert the commercial property into The Holloway House & Resource Center, a safe space for teen parents and the community (and administrative offices for RBC).

RBC's year-long vetting process to pursue a purchase option for [The Rubel House](#) was no small feat. It included establishing community support for the project and evaluating the Rosemary's Babies organization overall: our financial health, our ability to complete the revitalization and rehab of the property, and the compatibility of our proposed project with its surroundings. In fact, Rosemary's Babies Co. has partnered with top-tier businesses to ensure the success of this \$1M+ renovation: Triversity Construction, KLH Engineers, Moody Nolan Architecture (the top minority led architect company in the country), and DSD Advisors.

Throughout the process, we received support from [descendants of the Rubel family](#), dozens of neighborhood organizations, South Avondale Community associations and leaders, several North Avondale residents, and the City of Cincinnati itself (RBC is particularly well aligned with the city's goal of addressing social injustices that leave marginalized citizens exposed, especially black mothers. We support those actions through poverty prevention, workforce development, and ensuring babies are head start and kindergarten ready). We estimate Holloway House will add more than \$1M back to the **local** economy for every 100 teen parents served and will reduce overall healthcare costs when teen parents in our program birth healthier babies. In fact, we will bring (10) ten new jobs plus contract opportunities, pre- and post-renovation.

We at RBC listened to the voices of the North Avondale Community and created a plan for a holistic space that will provide wellness, education, and supportive housing for Cincinnati's most at-risk population, teen parents. The space will include a state-of-the art tech lab, three offices for lease, a library and a community garden. Our goal is to revitalize this vacant building and make it into a model for joint services, community collaboration and internal neighborhood growth. Despite all of this, the NANA/NABA Joint Strategic Development Committee (JSDC) seems intent on destroying the project.

Initially, this group publicly posted their opposition and rejection of the project in their [December 2020 Newsletter](#) and again in their [June 2021 Newsletter](#). As time passed, they began working extensively to intimidate supporters, neighbors and allies of RBC's Holloway House. In addition to holding meetings to oppose Holloway House and writing disparaging articles about us in their monthly newsletter, they encouraged their allies to inundate City Officials and leaders with letters, as stated in their July Board meeting – similar tactics they used to disparage [The Legionaries of Christ](#), a group of ministers who were looking to rezone a property to turn into a monastery. When those same tactics did not manage to destroy RBC's Holloway House project, the JSDC sought legal counsel to halt negotiations to keep “*our children from improving their lives in their community.*”



One opponent to our project wrote: “This decision would have a long-term adverse impact for years to come.” But how? There has been *no evidence that correlates teen parents and violence*. Further, there is no relative evidence that [group homes adversely affect neighborhood property values](#), especially when that home is currently an abandoned building. Contrary to our opponents’ opinions, the long-term impact will weigh heavier on the 13,000 teen parents of all nationalities who live in Hamilton County and Greater Cincinnati if places like Holloway House are not welcome in *their neighborhood*.

[Re-established in February 2021](#), the JSDC is not a decision-making body, but a liaison and advisory committee whose purpose is facilitating communication between business and residential organizations and outside organizations. Their website states the group was established to preserve and improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. In our experience, their goal does not align with their mission, which is “To welcome all good neighbors, without prejudice, to strive to maintain a diverse neighborhood, AND To actively promote neighborhood solidarity and harmony.” In recent months this groups “good neighbor and inclusive” actions have proven to be questionable and disheartening for our organization as their public scrutiny and media ploys to stop our expansion *in their neighborhood* has plagued the hearts of our team, our clients, and their babies. We fear this group will oppose any organization or opportunity that does not fit into their idea of acceptable inclusivity and diversity... even when faced with a real-life opportunity to welcome both into the neighborhood. We are also concerned that these opponents opinions are not based on personal experiences but are driven by stereotypes of black fathers, as well as unfounded fears, [misperceptions](#), archaic attitudes and simple prejudice about teens with children; both fears are unjust and not indicative of a *good neighbor*.

The obvious socioeconomic disparities in the [Avondale Neighborhood](#) are no secret - the dividing line of poverty being Clinton Springs. But RBC, an organization well known for building collaborations through inclusive programming and partnerships, is prepared to leverage its relationships, network, and resources to erase the lines of crimson red to forge a bridge between the two communities to support NABA’s plan for economic development and Avondale’s Quality of Life Plan. Our efforts to be a good neighbor have fallen on deaf ears, even as we have continually invited NANA / NABA to be a partner in our collective efforts to lift the community and alleviate social injustices for its residents, business owners and neighbors. We are now asking NANA / NABA to stand behind its mission and allow our organization to continue the work at hand, which will change lives and keep our babies safe.

Holloway House & Resource Center will be a life-changing space for all involved: teen parents, their babies, and the community. RBC's investment in 3864 Reading Road would not only help to revitalize the community but could also inspire others to invest in the area and reduce crime. The renovation brings life to a property that has sat blighted for a decade. As noted earlier, Avondale could become a citywide model for joint services, community collaboration, and internal neighborhood growth.

Despite all the challenges, Rosemary’s Babies Co. has a reputation that is grounded in integrity, respect, and transparency. Like a true good neighbor, our intent is to build bridges of opportunities, not fan the flames to further the oppression of our children. We feel called to collectively [Change the Outlook](#) for teen parents in Greater Cincinnati. **The Port has made their choice** and given us an opportunity. Even with several challenging contingencies, including requiring RBC to secure total project costs, \$1M, in just 6 months, we vow to stay the course. Rather than continuing to waste time and resources on the few who are challenging our efforts, we are asking the larger community to support RBC’s Holloway House and the 371 teens we have served this year. We are asking the rest of the community to partner with our organization and those who support our mission. As one North Avondale supporter noted in [this WCPO.com story](#), “I thought, wow, you know, instead of looking out my windows at a decrepit falling-down piece of junk, I could look out my window and see young families, young people taking care of a property, and I could look out for them.”

To learn more visit www.rosemarysbabies.co/changetheoutlook or contact Rosemary’s Babies Co. at (513) 813-8336.