

# News Release

For Immediate Release

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## **Center brings cultural, community programs to Lafayette Square** *Arts nonprofit plants city's first garden on top of a parking lot*

More than 150 volunteers have already contributed to the ongoing creative reuse efforts at the Service Center for Contemporary Culture and Community in the former Firestone tire shop in front of Lafayette Square Mall. A project of the Indianapolis-based nonprofit organization Big Car, the 11,500-square-foot building is donated, rent-free, by Lafayette Square mall. Volunteers have spent the last month sprucing up on the inside of the building for use as a community creativity center. And the parking lot in front is now covered with the beginnings of the city's first raised-bed community garden atop asphalt.

Service Center opened in May with multiple public events. Next is a public presentation on May 19 of the area's ongoing gateway planning efforts in partnership with the Lafayette Square Area Coalition. On May 28, Service Center celebrates its official grand opening from 4-7 p.m. with the user-generated review site Yelp! Regular hours at the center will begin later this summer.

Matching Big Car's goals as an organization, Service Center addresses many of the issues facing Indianapolis: education, mass transit, art and culture, diversity, libraries, urban gardening and healthy eating, recycling, and economic development.

At Service Center, Big Car joins community members, volunteers and partners to:

- celebrate the ethnic variety of the neighborhood, engage adults and kids in collaborative art exhibitions created by and about them
- grow a large neighborhood garden featuring international vegetables
- host exhibitions by local and national artists
- offer educational programs in art, performance, and creative writing
- provide a small lending and reference library, meeting area, and computer lab with Internet access
- facilitate a neighborhood international market.

The projected cost for converting and furnishing the space for programming is about \$30,000. The annual operating costs — which includes utilities, staffing and program expenses — will be over \$150,000 per year. This will be funded with the support of grants from the Efrogmson Family Foundation and the Indianapolis Foundation, both CICF affiliates. Sponsorship support will also play a key role. So far, Service Center has received support or commitments from PNC Bank, Apparatus, Ursula David Homes, Georgetown Market, and the art program at Butler University.

Ongoing program partners in the space, so far, include the performance group No Exit and Second Story, a creative writing program for kids. The Lafayette Square Area Coalition will also use Service Center for meetings.

“We’re thrilled at the backing we’ve received from the neighborhood and the great response from people all over the city,” said Big Car executive director Jim Walker. “We’re so pleased to be opening a space that addresses — even if in small ways — many of the issues facing our city. This is about even more than opening an art center. It is about using creative ideas to help spark real change in an area of the city that’s poised for amazing improvement.”

The idea hatched in November of 2010 while artists from the Big Car group worked on a project in the Lafayette Square neighborhood at Saraga International Market as part of the Spirit & Place Festival. Walker spotted the then-abandoned tire center and saw it as the perfect spot to bring a more permanent home to the neighborhood facing a variety of challenges. After a few conversations, the mall and its ownership — Ashkenazy Acquisition — generously offered Big Car the space use at no charge other than utilities. Big Car, based in Fountain Square since 2005, signed the lease and took possession on April 1. It will continue programming, also, in its space in the Murphy Art Center in Fountain Square.

“The Service Center location fits our needs so well. It offers a brightly lit and welcoming space for people to gather and get creative, somewhere people can work and also enjoy art that comes off the wall and into the room. And we can accommodate all types of performances there,” Walker said. “Everybody who walks in the door loves it.”

Links for Service Center and Big Car

Service Center on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/servicecenterindy>

Service Center video: <http://www.vimeo.com/20541910>

Big Car video: <http://www.vimeo.com/20358886>

### **About Big Car:**

*Big Car brings art to people and people to art. And it does this with the big goal of improving neighborhoods in need and boosting the quality of life for everyone. How? The creative people at Big Car facilitate innovative projects that engage people from idea to creation to celebration—sharing with them the joy of making art together.*

*As a community-based nonprofit organization, Big Car is dedicated to supporting urban agriculture and healthy and local food, sustainable transportation including bike and pedestrian access, improved public libraries and public education, and the democratization of cultural experiences.*

*The organization is called Big Car because it helps steer the way to better urban living through smart, sustainable, and creative design. And there’s always room in the car for others to hop in and collaborate. Plus Big Car based out of a former auto repair shop repurposed as a community creativity space. Learn more at [www.bigcar.org](http://www.bigcar.org).*