

# . **CRAIN'S** GRAND RAPIDS BUSINESS

## Longtime Roosevelt Park bakery owner charts new course as developer

**Andy Balaskovitz**

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Reyes family plans convert this three-story building at the corner of Cesar E. Chavez and Roosevelt avenues into housing and retail. Credit: Andy Balaskovitz, Crain's Grand Rapids Business

The owner of a nearly 25-year-old bakery wants to help transform her business' block in Grand Rapids' Roosevelt Park neighborhood with housing and retail.

Maria Ivette Reyes, owner of M&M Bakery LLC at 1506 Cesar E. Chavez Ave. SW, and her son, Joshua Reyes, are behind the mixed-use plans for Reyes Lofts. The project calls for at least 22 apartments with three ground-floor retail suites and would span the bakery property and an adjacent site at 1521

Roosevelt Ave. SW. The 14,400-square-foot building on Cesar E. Chavez dates back to 1912, according to city property records.

Reyes plans to relocate the bakery, which specializes in custom cakes, to property her company owns across the street at 1500 Cesar E. Chavez to keep the business' presence in the majority-Hispanic neighborhood that's undergoing a historic wave of new investment.

"I like new opportunity to see my neighborhood growing," Ivette Reyes told the city of Grand Rapids' Brownfield Redevelopment Authority board Wednesday morning. "I was the first lady over there after the Dutch community when the neighborhood was completely empty."

Joshua Reyes added that the family wants to "reinvest in the community and continue this legacy," noting that his mother moved to West Michigan from Puerto Rico more than 30 years ago.

In that time, the bakery "has been a staple in the neighborhood and corridor for many, many years," said Jessica Solis, economic development coordinator for the city of Grand Rapids.



M&M Bakery has been a Roosevelt Park neighborhood staple since opening nearly 25 years ago. Credit: Andy Balaskovitz, Crain's Grand Rapids Business

Next steps for Reyes include working with architecture and engineering firm Fishbeck to examine the constraints and opportunities with the property and complete conceptual site plans and investigate hazardous materials onsite.

On Wednesday morning, the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority board approved a \$41,500 "emerging developer" grant for Reyes as part of a program created in 2023 to support first-time developers.

The funding supports various pre-development work for developers defined as "a person with limited experience in the development or redevelopment of real estate who may be supported by a network of more experienced development professionals, or an organized program designed to support first time and less experienced developers."

M&M Bakery expects to request additional emerging developer grant funding for more site planning, similar to funding that was approved in support of the [MVillage project](#) on Grand Rapids' southeast side.

The company also plans to request Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act tax exemptions and brownfield incentives for the project.

Former Grand Rapids City Commissioner Kurt Reppart is working as a consultant for M&M Bakery on the project.



First-time developer Juan Lopez plans a new Cuban restaurant named Palmas, along with 17 apartments, at 1516 Cesar E. Chavez Ave. SW in Grand Rapids. Credit: Maxam Architecture

Reppart noted during Wednesday's meeting that the development team is working with Cella Building Co. on the project design, which is intended to match a **separate mixed-use development next door** that calls for 17 apartments and a new Cuban restaurant called Palmas.

Indeed, Reyes Lofts joins a **historic amount** of investment in the Roosevelt Park neighborhood, which is majority Hispanic and referred to by local leaders as the "Ellis Island of Grand Rapids."

Those neighborhood investments include the \$147 million mixed-use Factory Yards development, a new \$7 million headquarters for the West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and a new \$6 million Supermercado Mexico grocery store and corporate offices, to name a few.

City Commissioner Milinda Ysasi, who serves on the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority board, said she got her wedding cake from M&M Bakery 15 years ago, and noted that the Reyes family was “the early investor in that neighborhood.”

“My dad used to work on that corridor, my mom used to work on that corridor,” Ysasi said Wednesday morning. “To see this investment is going to warm my heart for a while and show others that it’s possible, too.”