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Business coalition aims to repair Twin Cities damage from last summer's unrest

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Nancy Kuehn | MSPBJ

R. Lynn Pingol, left, works with Tamiko Trott-Binns, who owns Trott-Binns Construction.

Much of the property damage from last summer's unrest remains unrepaired along Lake Street, North Minneapolis and Midway

commercial hubs. A business coalition is trying to change that by tapping the strength of people of color-owned construction firms.

Since August, Construction Connection to Community, or CCC, has been building a team of construction contractors, legal and insurance experts, and consulting firms to mend the damages. With their forces now assembled, the organization plans to complete the work by pairing firms owned by people of color with some of the larger general contractors in the Twin Cities — generating revenue and relationships that could transform the landscape of the local construction scene, CCC co-founder R. Lynn Pingol said.

"We are not just using [CCC] to shake hands then walk away," said Christopher Tauscheck, project manager at Edmonton, Alberta, Canada-based PCL Construction about his firm's coming collaboration with minority-run contractors. "We are really trying to form partnerships."

CCC's mission isn't simple. At least 400 businesses on Lake Street, 94 in North Minneapolis and 236 along University Avenue in St. Paul sustained damage last summer in riots following the murder of George Floyd while in police custody, according to the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the Northside Economic Opportunity Network. Nonetheless, the coalition's founders, Pingol; Keith Baker, president of Consortium Minnesota Consulting Group; and Tim Worke, CEO of Associated General Contractors of Minnesota, have a plan to get it done.

For each project, CCC affiliated firms will perform a pro bono evaluation of the damage, determine how much the insurer is obligated to cover (if the space is insured), and get estimates from minority-owned construction firms for the price of repair.

For uninsured or under-insured businesses, CCC will pay for the repairs with fundraised capital and, failing that, by tapping grants, Pingol said. Then, CCC will contract a minority-owned firm to make the repairs as that firm receives mentorship from the larger general contractors for the duration of the project.

Repeat that enough times, in theory, and the Twin Cities will have reinvigorated business corridors and a hardier body of minority-

owned contractors.

Paul Edlund, CEO of Hopkins-based J Benson Construction, one of the people of color-run contractors involved, sees CCC as an opportunity to "build and grow my capacity and scale my business," he said.

More than a plan, CCC has a team. It has enlisted the services of general contractors like Minneapolis-based Adolfsen & Peterson Inc.; Kansas City, Mo.-based J.E. Dunn Construction Co.; St. Paul-based Trott-Binns Construction, as well as a number of specialized subcontractors. Minneapolis-based construction insurance company CSDZ, Minneapolis-based business law firm Maslon, and Minnetonka-based engineering and planning firm Sambatek have also joined the coalition. At the ready is also St. Paul consulting firm MaKee Co., run by Pingol, which specializes in helping minority-owned firms land contracts.

CCC is hoping to begin the process of assisting business owners as soon as possible and urges anyone interested in their help to contact them, Pingol said. The coalition is also seeking more contractors run by people of color to join the coalition, as well as donations, supplies and volunteers.

"What we have is the opportunity to build capacity, and that capacity-building has extraordinary benefits to the community," Baker said. "We have to create a stronger base and more force forward to grow more businesses, and this is the ultimate outcome we hope to bring about."



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Reporter - *Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal*

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