COMPANIES

August 11, 2026

Housing & Redevelopment Authority
City of Saint Paul, City Council
15 W Kellogg Blvd, Suite 320
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Chair Johnson and Members of the Council,

My name is Johnny Opara, and I have the privilege of serving on the Board of Directors for the Rice & Larpenteur Alliance (RLA). I also support the Alliance as an annual sponsor and as a business owner, deeply invested in the future of this corridor. But beyond my professional roles, this work is personal. I grew up on Rice and Arlington — this community shaped me, raised me, and continues to anchor my purpose.

From attending Saint Bernard's on Rice Street, playing baseball at Sylvan Rec Center, to shopping with my family at the retail along the corridor, Rice Street is woven into my earliest memories. Today, as an adult, a father, and a developer, I see both the challenges and the extraordinary potential of this area. I also recognize the responsibility I carry to help drive the right kind of change — the kind that honors the community that made me who I am.

The Rice & Larpenteur Alliance is vital to this work. RLA brings together residents, businesses, and cities to strengthen a corridor that has long been a cultural and economic anchor for Saint Paul, Roseville, and Maplewood. Their leadership, coordination, and community-driven approach are exactly what this area needs to continue its transformation.

Continued support and investment from the Capital City will go a long way in helping reshape Rice Street and the surrounding communities. RLA's work is not only meaningful — it is essential. It creates safer streets, stronger businesses, deeper community engagement, and a shared vision for a corridor that deserves sustained attention and resources.

One day, when all the stars align, I hope to deliver a beautiful multifamily development on Rice Street — a project that honors the neighborhood that raised me and the place where my father last lived before his passing. That dream is rooted in the belief that Rice Street

deserves the very best, and that the City's partnership with RLA is a critical part of making that future possible.

For all these reasons — personal, professional, and community-driven — I offer my full support for the Rice & Larpenteur Alliance and respectfully encourage continued investment in their work.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to the communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Johnny U. Opara
Board Member, Rice & Larpenteur Alliance
Annual Sponsor
President & CEO,
JO Companies LLC