



HONORARY STREET NAME SIGN APPLICATION

City Hall, Room 205
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

PLEASE NOTE: A \$100 PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY THIS FORM
(Checks should be made payable to "City Treasurer")

1. Applicant information:

Applicant's Name Touissant Harris
Organization or Company GINGERBREAD LAND INC. / LOVE TABERNACLE Church
Street Address 2640 N. 1st City/State Milwaukee WI Zip 53212
Telephone (414) 519-6626 Fax _____ Email gbl1ststreet@gmail.com

2. Honorary Street Name Request

Street name requested Sister Clara's Way
Location of proposed designation: (for example, West Main Street from North 12th Street to North 15th Street)
2600 block of N. 1st street (Between Center & Clarke)

3. Required Submittals:

- Refer to Chapter 113-3, Milwaukee Code of Ordinances (attached)
- A typed statement containing no fewer than **500 words** describing the significance of the person, place, or event being honored. The statement should indicate why a particular section of street has been requested for the honorary designation.

4. SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

My application consists of the following items necessary to complete the application. Please check:

- \$100 fee (check made payable to "City Treasurer").
- Completed Application Form.
- Autobiography or statement regarding the person, place, or event being honored.

Signature [Handwritten Signature] Date 9/17/2021
Printed Name Touissant Harris



The Gingerbread Houses
2640 North 1st Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212 • (414) 519-6626



Toussaint L. Harris
Gingerbread Land Inc.
P.O. Box 72043
Milwaukee, WI 53212

September 17, 2021

Citizen Advisory Committee
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Dear Sir or Madam,

Founder of Gingerbread Land Inc, Sister Clara had a vision in 1989 to rebuild, restore, and revitalize her neighborhood in the inner city of Milwaukee. Her neighborhood (between Center & Clarke on N. 1st Street) was filled with litter, drugs, and crime. Being who she was, a woman of faith, she could not sit back and let her community deteriorate. Therefore, she prayed about it and sought God for wisdom. Shortly later, Sister Clara traveled to California and was inspired by a small restaurant that she had dined in. She loved the vibrant colors of pinks and pastel purples, and the inviting atmosphere. She was extremely excited about what she had experienced and left the restaurant that day with a vision in tote. She knew what she had to do and it was at that point that her dream began to become tangible to her. She was compelled to adopt the concept for her very own neighborhood. It was then that Gingerbread Land was birthed.

Gingerbread Land Inc. is a non-profit charitable and social service organization that has been committed to serving citizens in some of the most impoverished communities in the City of Milwaukee for decades. Gingerbread Land has provided food, shelter, and clothing to thousands of Milwaukee's residents to date. Additionally, it has been a source of hope and a safe-haven for many of Milwaukee's most troubled youth. Sister Clara had a deep love for children. Although she had six children of her own, she adopted many others over the course of her life. She referred to every child that lived in her community as "Gingerbread Kids". The Gingerbread Kids wore this name proudly. It was almost as if it was a badge of honor to them. Many of them, for the first time in their lives had a sense of belonging and/or purpose.



The Gingerbread Houses
2640 North 1st Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212 • (414) 519-6626



Sister Clara was my maternal grandmother but everyone in the neighborhood affectionately called her “mother”. As the current president of the organization (and a former Gingerbread kid myself), I can personally attest to how my grandmother, through her efforts at Gingerbread Land Inc. has helped individuals and families heal through a sense of belonging and community.

I am inclined to admit that I was raised in a very dysfunctional household. In fact, I was on a path to destruction like so many of the hundreds of gang members, drug addicts, drug dealers, homeless individuals, abused women and children, (the list goes on) that Sister Clara ministered to. Her love and compassion toward me helped me realize that I could be something great and could accomplish anything that I desired to do. Because of her constant support and prayers, I have become a successful electrician, small business owner, and a pastor. Had it not been for Sister Clara’s love and sacrifice in my most crucial adolescent years, I would not be where I am today. I am confident that if she and her friends at GBL, did not provide me a safe place to do homework and eat a hot meal every day, I would have been yet another “statistic” on the books. I am grateful for things that she taught me like, what it means to be successful, to love others, keep my neighborhood clean, and to lead by example as a Christian.

Her dream spans far beyond where it started in 1989. Gingerbread Land Inc. is now comprised of several housing units located on Milwaukee’s urban East side. The units have been occupied by former drug addicts, persons with physical and mental disabilities, and several people in need of temporary shelter. It has been a safe- haven for many of the tenants as they have all attended church at Love Tabernacle Church (Gingerbread Land’s main office) where Sister Clara ministered the word of God as the church’s senior pastor.

Gingerbread Land is planning a project that will expand some of its services by converting part of its main office at 2640 N. 1st Street into a community center. Among many other programs, the community center will offer health and nutrition programs, adult literacy programs, tutoring programs, and a gymnasium for physical education. The community center will provide Milwaukee’s residents a place to eat, a safe place to fellowship, and a place where they can gain valuable life skills.

Unfortunately, on August 2, 2021, Sister Clara departed this world and went to be with her Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. We are deeply saddened but understand that we must finish her work. We at Gingerbread Land Inc. are absolutely committed to keeping her dream alive. We are honored to have been given the privilege of assuming the responsibility to finish what she started; therefore, we are going to continue to work hard to build the new Gingerbread Land Inc. community center that she dreamed of.

In closing, I would like to say that my grandmother, Sister Clara Awater was a pure servant at heart. She educated and trained, fed and clothed, raised dozens of foster children, and loved people from all walks of life. She will be greatly missed by her family and the community that she so diligently served. As we mourn her passing, we believe that there could not be a better



The Gingerbread Houses
2640 North 1st Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53212 • (414) 519-6626



way to honor her legacy and hard work than to name the block that she lived on after her. Her labor of love, prayers, dedication, and compassion is why this community has improved over the years. This great city of Milwaukee has lost an amazing pillar. Someone who was deeply rooted, well known and respected, and loved by many.

We urge the committee to grant us with the opportunity to honor this amazing woman's legacy. We have already taken the necessary steps and have gained the support of all the residents that occupy this block. There is not one person opposed to this idea. Therefore, we have attached the application as requested and we pray that you would carefully consider our request.

Please note that if you would like more information on her life and legacy, you are welcomed to call me directly or visit us on Facebook at Gingerbread Land Inc. or online at www.gblmke.org

Kindest Regards,

Touissant L. Harris
President/Executive Director
Gbl1ststreet@gmail.com
www.gblmke.com
(414) 519-6626

Our grandmother was the recipient of the 2020 Black Excellence Award in the area of Religion. The Milwaukee Times interviewed her, and this is her autobiography. Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate you!



You can expect to be called "precious" throughout any conversation with *Mother Clara Atwater*, and have that conversation end with "have a gingerbread day." Mother Clara, pastor emeritus of Love Tabernacle and founder of Gingerbread Land, Inc., walks the talk she preaches. She wants everyone to feel special and she knows that, in God's eyes, everyone IS precious.

Mother Clara, as she likes to be called, moved to Milwaukee from Detroit, Michigan in the early 1960s as a young woman seeking employment, because jobs were more plentiful here during that time. Shortly after arriving in Milwaukee she accepted Christ and began to embrace the notion that her purpose in life was to benefit others.

"I didn't really know anybody in Milwaukee, so I started going out into the community and befriending people. I noticed children going to school and saw that no one seemed to be caring about them. I started helping them by holding classes in my home after school. In addition to their school work, I taught them how to get along with others and become better human beings. Before I knew it, parents heard about what I was doing, noticed the difference in their children's attitudes, and not only did they start sending more children, but adults also started coming to my home," she said.

That was the impetus for founding Love Tabernacle and, eventually, its nonprofit arm, Gingerbread Land. Including Mother Clara's house, these entities now occupy seven homes on First Street between Center and Clarke Streets. She dubbed her house the Gingerbread House because it is colorfully painted in pinks and purples.

"For a time, I was touring and teaching women in California. During one visit to the University of California at Berkeley, I went into this beautiful gingerbread-themed restaurant. I looked around at the décor—there were dolls and everything was bright, lively with happy colors. While I was sitting there the thought came to me to return to Milwaukee and create Gingerbread Land, so I did," she said.

Gingerbread Land is a nonprofit organization reaching out to those in need of support, guidance, and love. Since 1989, thousands have been assisted through the organization, thanks to Mother Clara's efforts and love. The mission of the organization is to be a beacon of love and hope to all while instilling a sense of worth, personal growth, and Christian values in the underserved people in Milwaukee; and providing food, shelter, and clothing for the needy.

The seven housing units that comprise Gingerbread Land are located on Milwaukee's East Side. Currently, recovering drug addicts, persons with physical and mental disabilities, and several people in need of temporary shelter occupy the homes. It has been a safe haven for many of the residents as they attend church at Love Tabernacle, where Mother Clara's grandson now ministers the word of God.

"The mission for Love Tabernacle is one of love. We initially met in the basement of my home. We quickly outgrew the basement, so we moved to Third and Wright streets and started the mission of love. After even more growth, we moved to First and Center Streets and, after three years, purchased the building," she said.

Mother Clara also gives praise to the Milwaukee Brewers baseball club, which helped her purchase some of the properties and donated the houses to her.

"People have seen what we do and how we do it, and they support us. Many of the young people that we took off the streets and embraced at Gingerbread Land are now professionals—teachers and the like. They also support our efforts, come back and visit and recount how not one of them living on the block and visiting Gingerbread Land ended up dying to violence," she said.

Mother Clara also has a radio show and now at age 80-plus, she broadcasts five days a week on radio station WGLB AM1560 or 96.1FM, from 12 noon to 12:30 p.m.

"We teach prayer and how to develop prayers so that people can communicate with their spiritual father. We teach the simplicity of prayer. We have never kept membership information at Love Tabernacle. We take people in, teach them, and then expect them to go out into the community to help others. I take the hooligans, as they call them, love the troublemakers, and teach them to become productive. You have to care about your community. Milwaukee isn't a bad place to be; you just have to love people. Children come here in droves. We are helping people to develop and mature," she said.

Throughout the block where Gingerbread Land stands, there is African artwork prominently displayed.

"We teach about African heritage. Everything we do is to educate people about who they are. We have beautiful art displays. People stop and read. The pieces have commentary on how wonderfully we have been created," she said.

"I'm going to do what I do until my body retires, but I enjoy it. I watch all my family; they are mostly teachers and professionals. I love my family," she said.



(Gingerbread Land, Inc. logo)

Receipt of Street Naming Fee

Date:	9/17/21
Received Of:	Toussaint Harris
Received By:	LME
Check # (If Applicable):	Cash
Amount Received	\$100.00

CITY OF MILWAUKEE
2021 SEP 17 P 2:17
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE