

# Why is Game Changer Trying to Evict People from Wood st?



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**The United Front Against Displacement**

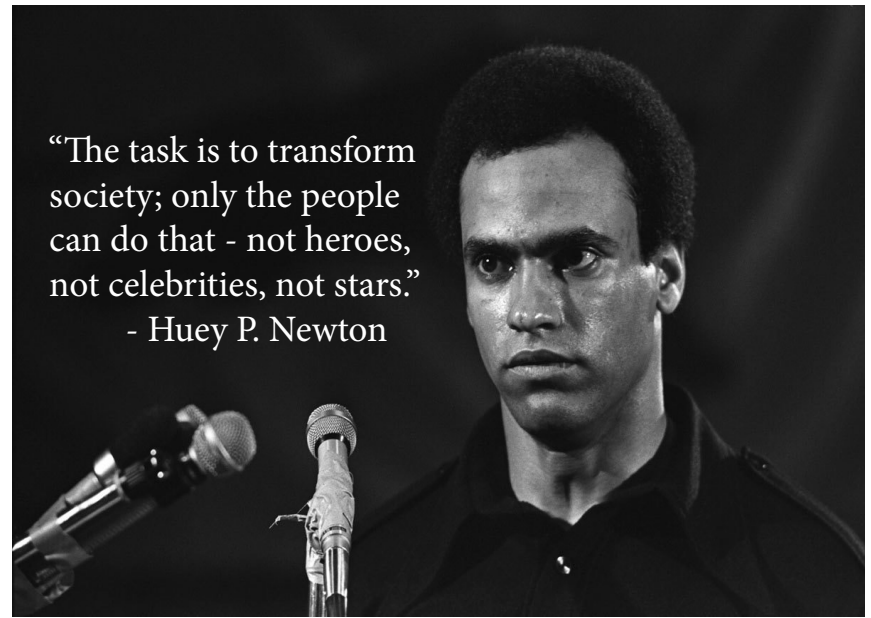
## Who is Game Changer LLC?

On March 17th 2016 Fred B. Craves (founder of Bay City Capital LLC, lead director with Madrigal Pharmaceuticals), a venture capitalist who specializes in pharmaceuticals and biotech investments, purchased a plot of land located between 2201 & 2701 Wood st in West Oakland with his shell company, Game Changer LLC. A venture capitalist tries to invest in new or rapidly expanding businesses in order to make money. Craves has raised over \$1.6 billion dollars through his investments and accrued a net worth of over \$217 million dollars. In 2007, he sold his company Reliant Pharmaceuticals to pharmaceutical conglomerate GlaxoSmithKline for \$1.65 billion dollars, which was the largest all-cash transaction for a venture-backed biotech company at the time. This transaction was possible largely due to the success of the product Lovaza, a supplement. That product is a synthesis of the omega 3 fatty acids found in fish oil ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omega-3\\_acid\\_ethyl\\_esters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omega-3_acid_ethyl_esters)). His latest investment is in the Gentrification of Oakland.



*Fred Craves, founder of Bay City Capital LLC and the man who stands to add to his millions once Wood st is clear of the homeless residents that reside in the area.*

We urge folks interested in showing up to eviction defenses to also conduct their own research independent and not stop here, as things are rapidly changing and escalating every day. We need to come together to struggle collectively around these issues in order to better understand how to unite in the struggle against our common oppressors.



“The task is to transform society; only the people can do that - not heroes, not celebrities, not stars.”  
- Huey P. Newton

These issues are not isolated only to the Bay Area, but appear throughout the entire nation. In addition, these issues are not isolated to only folks living on the streets, but for all working people in the world. We all are at risk of losing our homes and lives under a capitalist system that criminalizes poverty while continuously negating any fair chance at living or survival.



**ALL POWER  
TO THE PEOPLE!**

## The Private Lot on Wood st

This lot was once one of many industrial warehouses in the neighborhood but has been abandoned since at least the 1980s. The property was long in default and was sold by the City of Oakland to Fred B. Craves on March 17th, 2016.



*A photo of the lot owned by Fred Craves and Game Changer LLC. Just over a year ago, the lot was full of residents until many moved after threat of eviction. A couple of residents remain.*

His investment into the supposedly abandoned lot on Wood st is part of a plan to eventually build a biomedical technical research facility. This facility would eventually take on similar ventures in an effort to sell pharmaceuticals and their associated patents at a profit to generate more capital for future investments. This property is also in an attractive location in a rapidly gentrifying city. There are plans to share a parking lot with the music studio across the street and other leased offices and commercial space in front of the facility to attract even more investment as the lot is developed.



## Occupants on the Lot

The City of Oakland's alliance with real estate developers and other capitalists has left almost 10,000 people homeless. The city uses the Oakland Police Department to clear people out of populated areas with threats of property seizures, tickets and other violent harassment. In this situation, many find seemingly-abandoned lots as a refuge from the government, the police and other actors who seek to exploit and oppress the homeless residents of Oakland. The City of Oakland's own records indicate that the lot on Wood st has been inhabited by homeless people as early as 2004. Many people have called the area surrounding the lot home since at least 2013. Most have called Oakland home their entire lives. Over time, the forces of gentrification and the unofficial policy of the government have forced so many onto the streets and onto the lot itself and the surrounding area.



This encampment has grown to be the largest informal homeless encampment in Oakland, with a population of at least 100-200 people. For years, the Oakland Police have directed homeless people to Wood st as an informal "dumping ground" for people with no where to go in order to keep them out of sight. Now that there is money to be made, we are seeing people being asked to move again! The clearing of this lot is just the earliest phase of clearing all of Wood st as even this "abandoned" area is gentrified.

UFAD members have been in conversation with several Wood st residents about the eviction notices and we urge everyone else who works independently to continue to build longstanding relationships with the residents we meet during shifts guarding the gate. It is up to all of us to use this information and personal experiences as a catalyst to inform fellow comrades and residents of this past weeks' events. Wood st residents must be brought up to speed, as well as housed comrades who choose to show up and resist these evictions.



*Activists form a shield blockade to at a recent eviction defense at Wood St to prevent police from entering the Game Changer lot.*

Preventing this illegal eviction of the 6 folks living in the Game Changer lot impacts the entire encampment and all of homeless Oaklanders. We must stand united in preventing sweeps at Wood st due to the hundreds of residents currently living here, while the City and the landlords continue to evict people every day, and most times do this before anyone can intervene. The reality is that folks who continue to be evicted from other parts of the Bay Area will continue to run out of areas to live curbside. Wood st is often the last place in the East Bay people can go.



*Dozens of activists begin to gather at West Grand and Wood at around 5am to provide support in the ongoing eviction defenses at Wood St.*

The most important entry point to watch or guard is located at Wood & West Grand. The gate to enter the Game Changer lot by car would be here, but the lot extends past 24th St where folks could enter through holes in the fences on foot. Midday on Tuesday, three cop cars approached the opening at Wood & West Grand – folks on watch were able to form a barricade using shields and prevented their entry. Since Tuesday, we have had at least 2-4 folks watching the main gate from 5:30 AM to 4:00 PM. The fight has only just begun, and it is only a matter of time until another notice is served, or the sheriffs show up without any warning, as they always do. A sizeable rapid response team are now linked into this struggle and will be notified if and when a raid begins.

## Local History of the Struggle Against Gentrification

Activists and residents of the area came together to form the United Front Against Displacement in October 2018 as a new surge in intense evictions and sweeps began to happen in the neighborhood. That month the city of Oakland towed over 15 RVs and trailers in a single morning, leaving almost 40 people with nothing. These people had been staying on Wood st and as the police had pushed more people into the area, local businesses demanded that the cops clear people out and make sure they couldn't come back. These businesses even went so far as to move massive logs into the street to limit people's ability to park. Obstructing a street is normally illegal, unless it is in the interests of big business. Less than a month later, the City of Oakland sent about 6 cops to clear out the lot of Wood st. This was the first attempt by Fred Craves to clear out the lot. Fortunately, residents and activists were prepared, formed a picket line and turned the police away!



*Photo of Wood st residents and UFAD members from an eviction defense in 2018. Residents and activists have been resisting evictions on Wood St for years.*



## Escalating Eviction Attempts

Since this first attempt, Fred Craves was seriously delayed in his development plans. His legal team (part of the law offices of Alan J. Horowitz) have only increased their harassment of residents of the lot. Fred Craves has a number of paid security guards in the area that regularly harass people. These security guards also pay off a couple of the local drug dealers to violently threaten residents and activists that try to bring people together. This has made it very difficult to bring residents together and encourage them to fight. However, this level of oppression demonstrates how far these developers will go to protect their interests. Furthermore, it also demonstrates how residents and activists have proven that they will not back down and have defeated lesser attempts to displace the community! This escalation hasn't been cheap: Fred Craves and his lawyers have claimed that they have spent \$30,000 a month in security since November 2019. ALL TO HARRASS AND THREATEN PEOPLE!



*UFAD members hold a demonstration to stop evictions at Wood St outside the offices of Alan J. Horowitz, who call themselves "The Evictors."*

The last push to clear the lot was in November 2019, when over 50 people were living on the lot. The city sent out over 50 police personnel, over a dozen vehicles and two tow trucks! Fred Craves also attempted to bribe many residents to move off of the lot (bribes ranged from \$40-\$200). These are pathetic gestures when this many people stand to make money hand over fist! Activists and residents mobilized again in the face of this threat and while many were pressured to leave, no vehicles were towed and no property was confiscated. After this point Fred Craves' legal team served the remaining residents with a "forcible detainer" and began the first actually-legal eviction process. It is worth mentioning that EVERY tenant and homeless legal service refused to represent the residents of Wood St.

## The Current Situation and the "Safe Parking Lot"

Residents were finally served an eviction date of October 13th, 2020. Activists were accosted by a lawyer representing Game Changer on Monday October 12th, who stated that the lot would eventually be turned into the research labs described above, while also somehow being converted into a "Safe RV Lot" even though Craves does not have a contract with the city to build it. If the lot gets built, it would be a very limited resource because most of the folks residing on the land owned by Game Changer do not all own working RVs. This would clearly prohibit them from living on the fictional RV lot they were proposing to us. Not to mention the many folks residing on the sidewalk/curbside of Wood st live in homes they built which are not all mobile. Furthermore, this "Safe RV Lot" would only be an 18-month program, whereas most residents have struggled with homelessness for years. This program will only further destabilize the community.

On Tuesday, October 13th, Sheriff Ahern (from the Alameda County Sheriff's Department) had planned a raid to evict 6 folks currently living on the lot, starting at 6 AM. Folks from various activist organizations in the Bay Area, as well as unaffiliated neighbors, were able to mobilize at 5 AM. Around 40 folks showed up and split into smaller pods--guarding off each entry point to watch for the sheriffs.