

Inspiring Change

The 2013 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence



BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

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“Rudy Bruner Award winners highlight the diversity of innovation in our cities today. They show us urban excellence at all scales and inspire us with their optimism.”

—*Simeon Bruner, Founder*

Introduction: 2013 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence



Congo Street Initiative award celebration

The 2013 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) medalists illustrate a diversity of approaches to placemaking. As has been the case over the past 25 years of the award, they demonstrate creative, innovative approaches to addressing complex urban challenges that add beauty as well as provide important social and economic benefits to communities.

Once more, the winners remind us that effective urban placemaking happens at all scales, in all kinds of settings, and with all types of agendas – be it six individual homes or a 222-unit housing development, an 80-seat restaurant, an 85-acre park, or a 3.5-acre arts campus.

Different as they are, these five projects also have much in common. All have transformed underutilized and overlooked urban spaces – deteriorating houses and industrial structures, city blocks and vacant, environmentally contaminated land – into vibrant places that bring people, skills, and communities together. In doing so, they challenge our assumptions about what is possible and how positive change in communities occurs. They inspire us with their optimism and the potential to yield broader changes in their cities and elsewhere.

Some of the themes that emerged from discussions about the 2013 medalists are familiar and have been encountered in past cycles of the RBA. Others highlight issues and concerns that seem particularly relevant to urban development in 2013. Regardless, there is much to learn from these winners, the ideas they embody, and the rich discussions that emerged during the selection process.

It is the exchange of information and the conversation about ideas that makes the RBA and its selection process so compelling, and distinguishes it from other design awards. With each cycle, a new, six-member selection committee is charged with the seemingly impossible task of reviewing a broad array of submissions and selecting five medalists. Every year the submissions include projects of all different types, scales, and budgets that address a variety of ambitions, missions, goals, urban settings and challenges.

Selection committee deliberations are always fascinating, as six people with different experiences and perspectives consider and discuss the submissions, contemplate the definition of “urban excellence” and come to consensus after lengthy, passionate discussions. Every year, the committee takes on the challenge and completes it with style, grace and insightful commentary. In the end, through their selection of and comments about the five medalists, the committee makes a statement about the condition of urban America at that particular point in time that provides valuable insight for anyone interested in the evolution of cities. The goal of this book is to share these insights and what we have learned from the 2013 winners and selection committee discussions.

THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) celebrates urban places distinguished by quality design and their contributions to the social and economic vitality and environmental quality of our nation’s cities. Founded in 1985 by Cambridge, Massachusetts architect Simeon Bruner, the award seeks to promote innovative thinking about the built environment and to advance conversation about making cities better.

One Gold Medal of \$50,000 and four Silver Medals of \$10,000 are awarded each biennial. The RBA is distinguished by its intensive application and rigorous selection process, along with the publication of detailed case studies about the winners that are resources for architecture and planning professionals.

HOW IT WORKS

Application

The criteria for eligibility are intentionally broad, as the RBA seeks excellence in places where it may not be expected. In order to be eligible, projects must be: built (not just a plan or a program), urban and located in the continental United States. Projects should be completed and in operation long enough to demonstrate impact in the community. “Urban” includes incorporated cities, towns and villages; a neighborhood within a city; an urban county; or an officially recognized region made up of two or more cities.

The application requires a detailed description of the project, visuals and perspectives from people involved in the project and its operation. At least four perspectives are required, from categories including architect or designer, community, developer, professional consultant, public agency and other (for people or unique points of view who do not fit the others). These perspectives provide additional information and valuable insight about the project’s development and impact in the community. The application may be submitted by any person involved in the planning, development or operation of the project.



Clockwise from top left: 2013 finalist submissions, selection committee deliberations, Mick Cornett and Cathy Simon review applications, Walter Hood and Ann Coulter discuss submissions

Selection Process

Each award cycle begins with the issuing of the Call for Entries in September, with submissions due the following December.

Award winners are selected by a committee comprised of six urban experts, assembled anew for each award cycle by the Bruner Foundation. Each committee includes a mayor of a major American city and a participant from a past Rudy Bruner Award winning project. Additional members include architects, landscape architects, urban designers and planners, developers and financiers, and urban advocates such as writers, policy experts and community organizers.

The selection committee is convened twice. The first meeting takes place in January at the Bruner Foundation headquarters in Cambridge, Massachusetts. During a day-long, facilitated process, committee members review and discuss all the submissions and select five finalists. They also identify questions and additional information they'd like to know about each project.

Over the next three months a team of Bruner Foundation staff and consultants visits each of the five projects, spending two to three days on site – touring the project and its surrounding neighborhood, taking photographs, and interviewing people involved in the project's development and use. The team also collects additional information – such as articles and publications, drawings and plans, photographs, reports, etc. – provided by the applicant and other project participants as well as through independent research.

Findings from the visits are presented to the selection committee at its second meeting in May, which is hosted by the Mayor in his or her



respective city. Over the course of another day-long facilitated session, committee members discuss the five finalists and the findings from the site visits and determine the medalists. One project will receive the Gold Medal and \$50,000 award and the remaining four will each receive a Silver Medal and \$10,000.

Award Presentation

Once the medalists are determined, the Bruner Foundation works with the winners to plan the presentation of the awards. These events showcase and celebrate the medalists, and often include public programming such as tours and panel discussions that highlight their stories and impact their communities. Past awards have been presented in collaboration with the U.S Conference of Mayors and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Case Studies

The information gathered from site visits and selection committee discussions becomes the basis for detailed case studies about the winners and the award cycle that are produced by the Bruner Foundation so that the winners' stories and lessons learned can be shared with students and practitioners. Each case study includes information and illustrations that describe the project's history, leadership, development, design, operations, financing and impact. A summary of the selection committee discussion highlights key ideas and themes from their review of the submissions and the process leading to the selection of the winners.

Clockwise from top: touring Congo Street Initiative, meeting with The Steel Yard staff, interviewing visitors at Louisville Waterfront Park, Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park walk-through, Via Verde discussion



Clockwise from top left: Dallas Center for Architecture presentation, panel discussion at The Steel Yard award ceremony, Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park board and staff with award, 2013 Bruner Loeb Forum on Legacy Design program, panel discussion in Detroit

RESOURCES

Publications

Case studies from each award cycle are assembled into a publication that incorporates a summary of themes and distillation of selection committee discussions. Case studies and publications are available online on the foundation website and in hard copy. For more information, visit www.brunerfoundation.org/RBA.

Digital Archive

A digital archive provides access to information on Rudy Bruner Award medalists from 1987 to the present. The archive contains original application materials and images and may be searched by keyword, award year or project type. The project was initiated in 1998 by the University of Buffalo Libraries in cooperation with the Bruner Foundation, and is coordinated through The Urban Design Project of the School of Architecture and Planning. It is a valuable tool for students, practitioners and others interested in the urban development and cities. The archive may be accessed via the Bruner Foundation website or <http://libweb.lib.buffalo.edu/bruner/>.

Bruner-Loeb Forum

Established in 2001, the Bruner-Loeb Forum is a partnership between the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence and the Harvard University Loeb Fellowship Program that brings together distinguished practitioners from across the country to advance creative thinking about placemaking in American cities. Hosted in partnership with organizations working in cities across the country, these annual forums are designed to encourage local and national dialogue, share resources, and foster new approaches to issues facing the urban environment. To learn more visit www.brunerloeb.org.

THE 2013 AWARD

The 2013 RBA selection committee reviewed 90 applications from 57 cities and municipalities representing 30 states and the District of Columbia. Projects ranged in scale from development budgets of \$100,000 to over \$550 million. Over the course of two meetings that took place in Cambridge, Massachusetts and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma the committee selected five finalists and determined the 2013 Gold and Silver Medalists. The selection process was facilitated by Rich Wener who participated in all of the site visits and oversaw – along with RBA director Anne-Marie Lubenau – development of the site visit reports, winner case studies and the 2013 publication.

SELECTION COMMITTEE

The 2013 selection committee included*:

Honorable Mick Cornett, Mayor
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Ann Coulter, Owner, A. Coulter Consulting
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Walter Hood, Principal, Hood Design and Professor,
University of California, Berkeley College of Environmental Design
Oakland, California

Cathy Simon, FAIA, Design Principal, Perkins+Will
San Francisco, California

Susan S. Szenasy, Editor-in-Chief, METROPOLIS
New York, New York

Jane Werner, Executive Director, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
(2007 RBA Gold Medalist), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**titles listed as of 2013 selection process*



Clockwise from top left: Mick Cornett, Ann Coulter, Walter Hood, Cathy Simon, Susan Szenasy, Jane Werner

AWARD WINNERS

The 2013 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence medalists include:

Gold Medal:

Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park, Chicago, Illinois

An 80-seat restaurant in Chicago serving affordable, healthy meals prepared by people rebuilding their lives in a workforce development program.

Silver Medals:

Congo Street Initiative, Dallas, Texas

Six houses designed and constructed/reconstructed in collaboration with residents along Dallas' first public green street.

Louisville Waterfront Park, Louisville, Kentucky

An 85-acre waterfront park that reconnects the City of Louisville with the Ohio River.

The Steel Yard, Providence, Rhode Island

The redevelopment of a historic steel fabrication facility into a campus providing arts education, workforce training, and small-scale manufacturing in Providence's Industrial Valley.

Via Verde – The Green Way, Bronx, New York

A 222-unit mixed income housing development in the Bronx that aspires to establish a new model for affordable housing in New York City.



Photos clockwise from left: Steven Gross; Christian Phillips Photography; David Sundberg/Esto; Waterfront Development Corporation; buildingcommunityWORKSHOP

Clockwise from top left: Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park, The Steel Yard, Via Verde, Louisville Waterfront Park, Congo Street Initiative

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Anne-Marie Lubenau, AIA is the Director of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. Prior to joining the Bruner Foundation she practiced architecture, developed and taught curricula on the built environment and served as President and CEO of the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh. She was a 2012 Loeb Fellow at Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Jay Farbstein, FAIA, PhD is an architect by training. He leads a consulting practice in Los Angeles, California that specializes in helping public sector clients develop and document their requirements of building projects as well as in post-occupancy evaluation. Jay was recently honored with a lifetime achievement award by the Environmental Design Research Association.

Robert Shibley, FAIA, AICP is Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning at SUNY Buffalo. He is also the founding partner of Caucus Partnership, a consulting practice on environmental and organizational change. Bob received the American Institute of Architecture's 2014 Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Architecture.

Richard Wener, PhD is an environmental psychologist, and professor in the Department of Technology, Culture and Society at the Polytechnic School of Engineering of New York University, where he heads the Sustainable Urban Environments program. He has done extensive research on the effects of built environments on individuals and communities. Rich received the Environmental Design Research Association's 2013 Career Award.

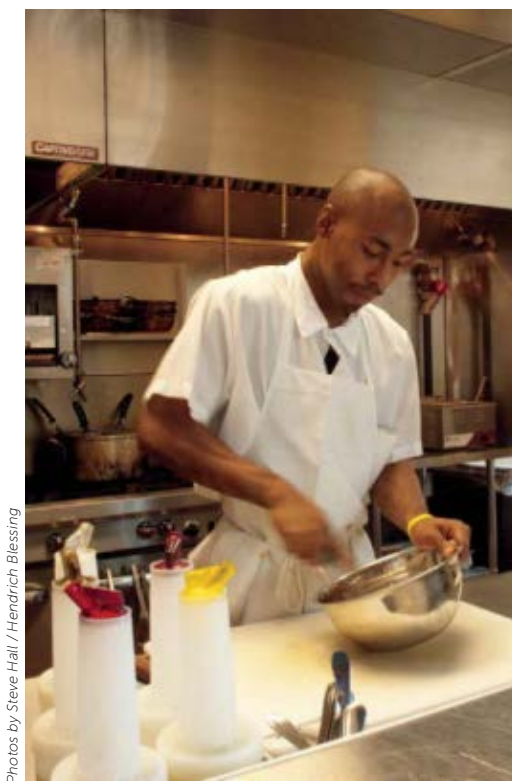
ABOUT THE BRUNER FOUNDATION

Established in 1963 by Rudy and Martha Bruner, the Bruner Foundation seeks to create opportunities for others and to instigate meaningful social change. Building collaborative partnerships, leveraging resources and tackling complex societal issues are the common threads of the Foundation's 50-year history. It has placed priority on assisting neglected and disenfranchised segments of society and has influenced national policy in health care delivery, holocaust studies, educational policy and non-profit evaluation methodologies, and increased understanding of the urban built environment. The Foundation's Effectiveness Initiatives focuses on building and sustaining the internal evaluative capacity of non-profit service providers (visit <http://www.evaluativethinking.org> to learn more).

For more information please contact:

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Gold Medal Winner
Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park
Chicago, Illinois



Photos by Steve Hall / Hendrich Blessing





Steve Hall / Hendrich Blessing

Overview

Submitted by: Inspiration Corporation

Completed: 2011

Total Development Cost: \$2.5 million

Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park is an 80-seat restaurant created by Inspiration Corporation that provides free meals to the working poor and market-rate meals to the public along with foodservice training and catering.

The restaurant is located four miles west of the Chicago Loop in East Garfield Park, across the street from the 185-acre Garfield Park and one block east of the Garfield Park Conservatory. Opened in 2011, the facility is a non-profit, social enterprise that provides workforce training and healthy, affordable meals in one of the city's most distressed neighborhoods.

Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park's restaurant, kitchen, and offices are housed in a 7,315 square foot, single-story, former factory alongside the Chicago Transit Authority's elevated Green Line. Designed by Wheeler Kearns Architects, the renovated brick structure features a light and airy interior that takes advantage of natural daylight from skylights and large windows. The main dining room includes exposed brick walls and tables, and built-in benches and paneling. Large windows facing the street were designed to maximize transparency between the restaurant, kitchen, and community and to minimize sound transmission from passing trains. The project features an energy-efficient kitchen exhaust, a solar thermal hot water system, and a superior building envelope, the use of recycled wood, as well as bike racks and shower facilities.

“INSPIRATION KITCHENS—GARFIELD PARK IS AN EPITOME OF HOPE. IT IS AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF A PLACE THAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER – AROUND GOOD FOOD, JOB TRAINING, AND A WELL-DESIGNED SPACE.” *—2013 Selection Committee*

The property includes a small parking lot and garden that, along with another community garden, provides produce used in meals prepared by the kitchen. The gardens and meals are intended to offer a healthy dining alternative in a community with little access to fresh food.

The project's sit-down restaurant offers a “Southern-inspired” menu of affordable, high quality meals prepared by clients of the foodservice training program. They are available to market-rate paying customers and to local, low-income residents and families at no cost via a “Guest Certificate” program. Inspiration Corporation partners with local community organizations to distribute the certificates to residents who use them to pay for meals in the restaurant.

The host corporation for Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park is Inspiration Corporation. Founded by Lisa Nigro, a former Chicago police officer, the Corporation offers employment, housing and supportive services to help those affected by homelessness and poverty move toward self-reliance. Under its aegis, Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park offers an intensive 13-week job training program that enables homeless individuals, ex-offenders, and low-income individuals to obtain employment in the food industry. The organization has provided a restaurant-style meals program since 1989 through its initial cafe and foodservice training program in the city's Uptown neighborhood.

The idea for the Garfield Park restaurant emerged through discussions with the project's lead donor, whose dream was to open a restaurant that provides free or affordable meals to working poor families. At the same time, expansion of the foodservice training program was envisioned in Inspiration Corporation's 2006-2010 strategic plan. The organization solicited input from the community, public officials,

non-profit, and philanthropic leaders and targeted East Garfield Park as a place where its services could yield the most impact. Inspiration Corporation and its design team then worked with Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Chicago's New Communities Program – East Garfield Park to convene a series of community meetings to gather input that informed the design of the building and restaurant.

Funding for the nearly \$2.5 million cost of purchase and construction was raised through a “Catalyst Campaign” that included a significant gift from a private donor and additional support for ongoing operating costs and an operating reserve. The project receives annual support from the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services.

Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park is one of eleven “model kitchens” that are part of Catalyst Kitchens, a national network of organizations with a shared vision to empower lives by providing job training, quality foodservice, and revenue generation through social enterprise. While a bit off the beaten track, the Garfield Park restaurant has garnered local attention, including awards from AIA Chicago, Chicago Architecture Foundation, Chicago Association of Realtors, Richard H. Driehaus Foundation, Urban Land Institute Chicago, and the US Green Building Council (USGBC) Illinois.



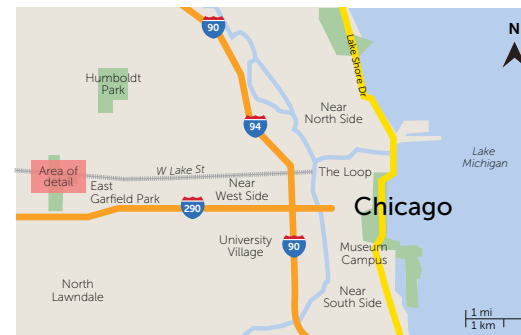


Project at-a-Glance

- Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park (IKGP) is a program of Inspiration Corporation that assists families and individuals affected by homelessness by offering a high-quality experience at no cost for diners in a restaurant that also offers training, counseling, and placement in the foodservice industry for hard-to-employ individuals.
- IKGP is a facility that provides attractive space for these programs in an energy-efficient, adaptively re-used, century-old structure that has also provided a much-needed community gathering space in a neighborhood struggling for regeneration.



- IKGP is a board, staff and student population of dedicated individuals that make the program and facility work. They bring an overall sophistication and capacity to the organization providing the vision, leadership, and horsepower to sustain it.
- IKGP is also the product of hands-on and intellectually rigorous philanthropy by Leonard and Gabriel Goodman. The Goodmans had a vision, sought out a capable not-for-profit organization to act on that vision, and engaged in the development process fully to completion.
- IKGP is, in the long view, the result of the intrepid individual initiative by Lisa Nigro who set out to serve the homeless with a little red wagon full of coffee and bagels, led by the simple idea that the transformational attitude toward those she served must be one of respect.
- Finally, IKGP is a manifestation of the broad-based strength, capacity, and sophistication of the not-for-profit and social-enterprise sector in Chicago and its environs – in housing and neighborhood development, community development finance, education and workforce development, parks and recreation, and much more.







Project Goals

- To offer working poor families affected by homelessness a high-quality dining experience – gourmet-quality food with table service offered in a way that expresses respect for the individual – with some meals provided at no cost through an innovative Guest Certificate program.
- To help move difficult-to-employ individuals – often homeless themselves, many returning from prison – into the workforce through training, education, counseling, supportive services, referral, and placement, guided by the principle that the best preparation for work is work.
- To reinforce ongoing community revitalization efforts in one of Chicago's poorest and most distressed neighborhoods by creating an attractive community meeting place for organized events and serendipitous encounters.
- To create a truly "green" facility through the adaptive re-use of an existing building incorporating a wide range of energy-efficient features, located near public transit, and providing support to those who come by car, train, bicycle or on foot.

Chronology



1989 Inspiration Cafe founded by Lisa Nigro, a Chicago police officer on leave. The Cafe began when she borrowed a red wagon from her nephew and served coffee and sandwiches to homeless people on the streets of Chicago. This operation moved from the wagon to a sport utility vehicle and then to a building in the Northside Uptown neighborhood.

1992 Lisa Nigro begins the process of stepping away from the Cafe's day-to-day work with the hiring of the first staff person, but still volunteers and engages in the evolution of work.

1994 The Employment Project is founded by Luke Weisberg, serving the homeless and impoverished Chicagoans. In 2003 it becomes part of Inspiration Corporation.

1995 The Living Room Cafe is founded by Jennifer Kihm, a former intern at Inspiration Cafe.

2000 Cafe Too, Inspiration Corporation's social enterprise and foodservice training program in the Uptown neighborhood, initiates its pilot program.

2001 Inspiration Cafe receives its first government grant for subsidized housing in Chicago's north side.

2003 Inspiration Cafe and The Living Room Cafe merge, forming Inspiration Corporation.

2005 East Garfield Park: Growing a Healthy Community plan is completed by LISC Chicago.

Inspiration Corporation opens Inspiration Kitchens – Uptown (formerly Cafe Too).

2006 Inspiration Corporation's five-year strategic plan identifies expansion of programs as an agency priority.

2007 Inspiration Corporation starts "Career Connections" to provide pathways to education and vocational training for participants.

2008 East Garfield Park is identified as the target neighborhood for a new facility to become Inspiration Kitchens – Garfield Park through an intensive community selection process.



Inspiration Corporation



Wheeler Kearns Architects



Steve Hall / Hedrich Blessing

The Catalyst Campaign begins in December with a \$6 million goal and receives its first gift: \$100,000 to create an operating reserve, which was later named for the seed donors, Paul and Mary Ann Judy. The campaign has two priorities: expansion of Inspiration Corporation's food service training program and social enterprise at a new facility to become IKGP and creation of an operating reserve fund to ensure the agency's future.

2009 The Catalyst Campaign receives a \$4.26 million lead gift to fund expansion into East Garfield Park.

Inspiration Corporation buys 3504 W. Lake Street building in October.

Beginning in October, IC staff and the project architect network with community groups and host meetings to discuss project design and potential partnerships over the next ten months.

2010 IKGP Construction begins in June.

July: Board of directors approve revised construction budget, raising the Catalyst Campaign budget by \$550,000 to \$6.55 million and extend the campaign through February 2012.

Catalyst Campaign meets original \$6 million goal in August.

A project blog is launched in October to provide the public with updates on construction, program development, building access, tour info, staffing, etc.

Between December and April 2011 IKGP hires 13 full- and 5 part-time staff positions for its Garfield Park location.

2011 The building passes inspections and foodservice training begins in March.

April-May: Adjacent 2,000 square foot lot is acquired and a garden installed.

Restaurant opens in May.

Part-time catering manager is hired in October.

IKGP signs two-year agreement with the City of Chicago for an additional 11,000 square-foot garden in Garfield Park.

2012 Fiscal year ends in June with goals for catering and restaurant exceeded by 80 percent.

Catering business expands in July/August as a van is purchased and full-time manager and part-time driver are hired.

Project Description

Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park (IKGP) is an 80-seat restaurant on Lake Street in Chicago's East Garfield Park. It offers an affordable menu, free food for working poor families, and foodservice training for poor, unemployed, often homeless clients as part of a larger nonprofit organization called Inspiration Corporation (IC). The place occupies a 1906 manufacturing building that has been renovated from its prior use as a warehouse with parking on site together with an adjacent vacant lot. The long-term goal for the facility and staff is to serve 3,000 meals a year at no cost to working poor or homeless families and operate a high quality, moderately-priced restaurant for the community, while enrolling 90 students a year in a 13-week foodservice course. The simple expression of the place and program, however, involves a much richer story about how IC developed an approach for working with distressed populations of poor, sometimes homeless, and often formerly incarcerated clients.

HISTORY AND VISION

There are many threads but several key storylines that lead to the development of Inspiration Kitchens. The first is the story of Lisa Nigro, a Chicago police officer, who found a calling to serve the homeless and hungry in her city with respect and dignity. These early efforts provided the foundation for what grew into a sophisticated, professional nonprofit agency that became strong enough to survive her stepping away. This tale further involves the thoughtful philanthropy of Leonard Goodman, a Chicago defense attorney and philanthropist and his cousin Gabriel Goodman, a businessman who joined the Inspiration Corporation Board of Directors. The Goodmans not only brought to bear the vision and led financial support for the Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park initiative, but also drove the development process from beginning to end.



Steve Hall / Hendrich Blessing

The facility design and development offers another set of stories that further reveal these organization and leadership themes. These stories illustrate the quality of place and strength of the governing board and staff that now supports the activities and programming of IKGP. They also show the role of not-for-profit organizations that at one crucial moment or another, aided the development of IKGP. Finally, this is also the story of the neighborhood not-for-profit and community organizations that welcomed Inspiration Kitchens to East Garfield Park.

CONTEXT

The origins of the East Garfield Park community go back to its annexation into the city of Chicago just two years prior to the fire of 1871. Because of the promise of the park, there was an initial spate of real estate speculation but virtually no development resulted. It was destined to remain undeveloped in any significant way after the fire as well because speculators sprawled further out to get beyond the perimeter of the fire's destruction. Weak transportation links contributed to continued slow residential development, even as the railroads to the north, east and south invited manufacturing expansion. Commercial development followed the elevated tracks on Lake Street, which began operation in 1893, leading to the eventual development of two-family homes and some apartments supporting the emerging manufacturing workforce.

Some of the real promise of the park, originally designed by William Le Baron Jenney, was not realized until Jen Jensen took on the landscaping in 1905. This work was completed in time for early Irish and German residents to enjoy, followed by Jewish, Russian and Italian workers and their families. The area was a stable but modest

mix of residential, commercial and manufacturing land uses up to the Great Depression and World War II. Before the Great Depression, East Garfield Park enjoyed some additional vitality following the creation of places like the Madison-Crawford Shopping District, a high-end residential hotel, and new schools.

After the Great Depression and the War, the community saw two-family homes carved up into multiple unit boarding houses that were poorly maintained. The racial profile of the community also shifted from 1930 to 1960 with the white population dwindling from 97% to less than 40% while the population of African-Americans grew from about 3% to over 60%. In this same time period the community demographics shifted from about 24% foreign-born to just over 5% foreign-born. Larry Bennett, author of *Fragments of Cities: The New American Downtowns and Neighborhoods*, argues that the shift in settlement demographics were, in part, prompted by the displacement of residents due to the construction of the Congress Expressway in the 1950's as well as to the arrival of African-Americans who had been crowded out of the South and Near West Side. The demographic shift was further prompted by new Chicago Housing Authority projects that had been on the east edge of the community by 1960. The overcrowding and landlord neglect of properties exacerbated the previous decades of community decline and poverty levels rose still higher.

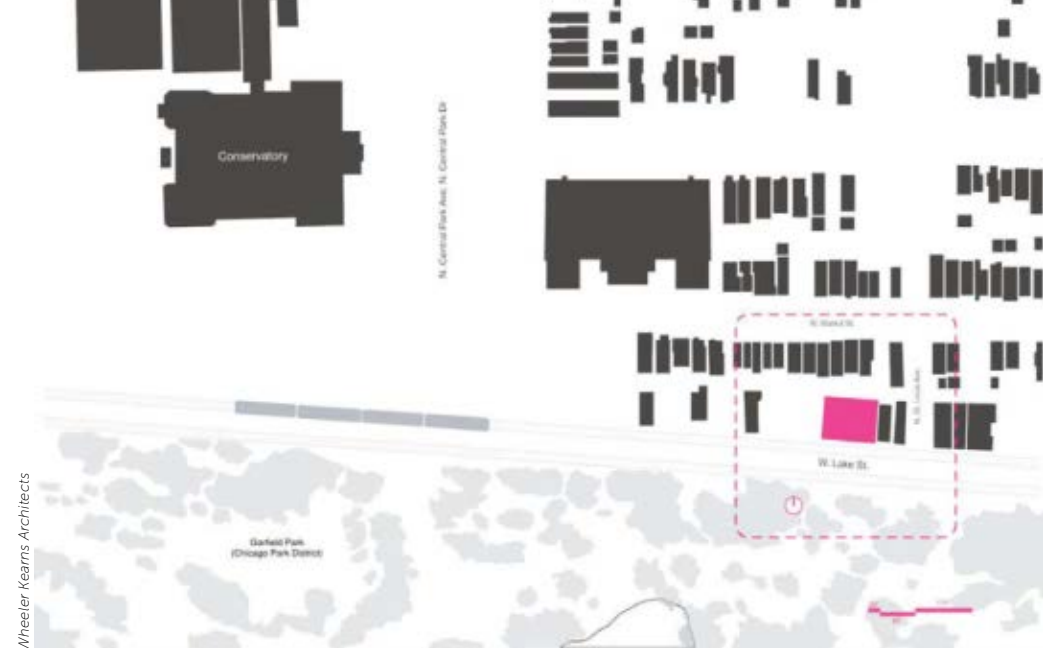
The 1960's were a time of activism in the community. Organizations addressing civil rights issues set out to confront the decline by resisting new public housing, promoting successful rent strikes, and establishing the East Park Cooperative, set up to acquire grocery stores and housing. But these and other efforts ran into the face of riots on Madison Street in 1968 and the resultant loss of business and resettlement

programs led to vacancy and the outmigration of still more population and economic opportunity.

Today, East Garfield Park is part of a larger archipelago of West Side Chicago neighborhoods deeply mired in poverty. The long-term population trend has been disastrous for Garfield Park, with a loss of two-thirds of its population over the past 50 years. This trend has stabilized in recent years, with a slight loss of population in the core census tract but an increase in several nearby tracts in the 2010 census.

At the time of the project's development, most census tracts within about a two-mile radius had median household incomes of below \$30,000 and some well below that level. The median household income for the census tract in which the project is located was \$15,202 (American Community Survey estimates, 2005-2009). Two adjacent tracts had median incomes that have declined in recent years to \$24,734 and \$26,836 respectively. There are lower income neighborhoods on Chicago's West Side, but not many and not by much. Inspiration Kitchens-Garfield Park cites other figures showing 41% of households at or below the federal poverty line and 23% of households living in extreme poverty.

Distress in the neighborhood extends to housing, as well. The number of vacant housing units in the core census track doubled from 2000 to 2010 when 18.5% of all units were vacant. In 2013 a visual scan of Google Maps satellite imagery suggested at least 10% of the residential lots in the immediate neighborhood were also vacant. Notably, these were concentrated along W. Lake Street, which sits underneath the "L" and along N. St. Louis Avenue. In contrast, the building stock along N. Central Park Avenue – facing the Conservatory – appeared largely intact.



Project location in relation to Garfield Park Conservatory, Garfield Park and the "L"

There is a suggestion in the data of a shift in the racial composition of the neighborhood population. Overall, the area immediately around the project and for a significant radius beyond is overwhelmingly African-American – mostly 90% or higher. But the change from 2000 to 2010 showed significant in-migration of ethnic groups other than African-American. In the core census tract, the African-American population declined by 10% during the period while White, Asian, and Hispanic populations each increased by roughly 300%, even though their absolute numbers remain small.

It is impossible from census data to say whether this is a harbinger of broader demographic changes to come or merely a temporary blip. However, the combination of the proximity of these neighborhoods to whiter, more affluent neighborhoods closer to downtown Chicago, and a slight uptick in total population in several census tracts adjacent to the Garfield Park Conservatory suggests that the conditions of poverty and food desert may give way to gentrification and upscale food shops in the near future. While the area suffered a spike in foreclosures during



Views along W. Lake Street towards the Loop and across to Garfield Park

the recession starting in 2008, price appreciation of housing in the area, while low at 5%, was the best in the metro area.

The neighborhood surrounding IKGP is defined most prominently by the “L” which travels above W. Lake Street, the Conservatory immediately to the west, and the park to the south. At this scale, the “L” might be both a blessing and a curse, providing access from Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park to the broader region by public transit (just 15 minutes by the Green Line to the corner of State and Lake in the Loop) while depressing property values somewhat due to the nuisance

impact of noise, vibration and what some, but by no means all, might find the unsightly infrastructure of the train. To the north of the site are a series of densely parceled single family houses, while to the east and scattered throughout the neighborhood is the roughness of still largely vacant or underutilized manufacturing land uses.

In a sense, the neighborhood’s greatest assets are the same things that might make it vulnerable to the dynamics of rapid reinvestment from outside leading to residential displacement. Garfield Park has just enough special resources to make it attractive in a strengthening residential real estate market. It includes the historic and architecturally prominent Conservatory and Golden Dome Field House recreation facility, as well as proximity to downtown Chicago, strong service by rail transit, emerging community development through non-profits, and now Inspiration Kitchens. While gentrification has not arrived, there are already some who are sounding the alarm about its potential.



The neighborhood is part of what has been characterized as “Chicago’s largest food desert.” A 2009 study conducted by Inspiration Corporation found that only one-quarter of 32 restaurants within 20 blocks had seating and none were described as serving healthy food. Except for a small handful of soul food restaurants, these were mostly sub shops, chicken shacks, and Chinese take-out restaurants. Staff report that many local residents who come into IKGP for dinner have never before ordered from a waiter at their table, as opposed to walking up to a counter.

The planning documents supporting the revitalization of East Garfield Park indicate that the community is a frequent point of reentry for people leaving incarceration and returning to the community. From 2004 to 2006, a total of 2,082 previously incarcerated people re-entered society and relocated to East Garfield Park – one of five communities in the state with the highest number of the previously incarcerated.

In the broader picture, homelessness is a major and chronic problem in Chicago. An estimated 60,000 people in the city are homeless for some period of time each year. The causes for homelessness are multiple and complex, but one of the fundamental reasons for homelessness is a lack of affordable housing. A study by the McArthur Foundation estimated there is a shortage of 180,000 units of housing in the Chicago metropolitan area with an additional 53,000, needed by the year 2020 – a total shortfall of 233,000 of affordable units.

Neighboring homes and businesses

ORGANIZATION HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

The cop and the little red wagon

The story of Inspiration Kitchens begins with Lisa Nigro, who had been a bartender when she determined – literally on a bet – to join the Chicago Police Department. She made the force and won the wager, but she carried out her duties, by her own account, more like social worker than a conventional law enforcement officer. Arriving at the scene of a domestic shooting (where the mother-in-law had apparently put a bullet in the groin of the man she suspected of molesting her granddaughter), Nigro worked to arrange appropriate supportive services for the family and was happy to leave the attempted murder unsolved. Her supervising officers were not pleased with this resolution, and eventually Nigro decided to express her determination to help in more straightforward ways outside of the force.

Nigro hoped to open a cafe that would serve the hungry and homeless, not just a meal, but with the respect that really good food and personal service express. She scouted out restaurants of the type she hoped to open, places like Atlanta's Café 458 and a similar facility in the Twin Cities. However, no one in Chicago wanted to help a former cop with no track record and what she describes as that "look in her eyes" revealing the intensity of her personality. Undaunted, she borrowed a little red wagon and trundled the streets of Uptown Chicago with a load of bagels and coffee. Really good coffee – not "shelter coffee" – served in real mugs, a taste of quality to let the hungry know they had value.

This first initiative brought attention from the media and ultimately support from early funders. She was able to acquire a sport utility vehicle from which to serve her meals. Soon after, a North Side land-



Lisa Nigro (left) and display referencing the "little red wagon"

lord agreed to rent her space for her first cafe – what became known as Inspiration Cafe in Uptown. The equipment was rudimentary – a toaster, a coffeemaker, and a wok – but she was in business. Nigro began with a focus on homeless women and children. The cafe remained mostly empty, in large part because the preponderance of the homeless population was single men. She shifted targets and the place filled up.

As the enterprise grew and evolved, the underlying philosophy remained the same: treat the homeless with real eyeball-to-eyeball respect. This wasn't to be a soup kitchen. It was a place where homeless people could sit down and be served by a waiter or waitress, where the food was good, and where all patrons were treated with respect. This was not an environment of patronizing volunteer service. It made no distinction between those who volunteered and those who were served meals. Nigro liked to say that the volunteers weren't there to improve the experience of the customers but rather the volunteers were there to have their own life-changing experience through which they came to see the homeless in a different light.

She took the task personally and used a “tough love” approach in dealing with her patrons. Nigro would demand to know from her regular customers what they were willing to do to “get off the street.” She was ready to help but wanted them to help themselves. Nigro was also willing to police the promises her customers made. She reports that one time she saw someone who had pledged to quit drugs standing on a street corner smoking pot. She grabbed the joint out of his hand and squashed it on the sidewalk. She then went home with him, searched the apartment, and flushed the rest of his stash down the toilet.

A maturing organization

The agency professionalized during the 1990’s. At the same time Lisa Nigro began to step away. While she was the inspiration for Inspiration Cafe, she also recognized that additional organizational skills would be needed to build it for the future and to deal with all the details that would give it longevity. It drove her crazy, she admits, to see some leadership that didn’t always share her vision for the place or her affinity for the clientele, but the idea of Inspiration Cafe and the structure that was in place was strong enough to survive her letting go.

After a decade or so in business, the various enterprises we now know as Inspiration Corporation were consolidated. This began with Inspiration Cafe in Uptown in 2001 adding foodservice training and placement, supportive services, case management, and housing to its portfolio. In 2003, Inspiration Corporation was formed through the merger of Inspiration Cafe and The Living Room Cafe, a South Side counterpart to Inspiration Cafe that had been started by a former volunteer at the Uptown establishment. Two years later, Inspiration Corporation also merged with The Employment Project to advance

the integration of serving food with general employment preparation training programs and a broader array of “wraparound” services for those affected by homelessness.

By then, Inspiration Corporation’s three main elements were geographically focused on neighborhoods on the North Side in Uptown – an ethnically and socio-economically diverse area – and on the South Side in the Woodlawn neighborhood not so far from the University of Chicago.

The creation of Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park was supported by the lucky coincidence of a growing interest in the same kind of development by an active and informed local philanthropist – Leonard Goodman – and his cousin and advisor Gabriel Goodman. The Goodmans wanted to create a restaurant not unlike Cafe Too in Uptown (now Inspiration Kitchens – Uptown) or Fare Start in Seattle – places that combine great food with job training and support for the poor and homeless. Len was willing to make a very substantial donation and they were intent on making sure the money was well invested.

Len and Gabe Goodman spent considerable time talking with area not-for-profit agencies to determine what organization might be entrusted to make best use of the kind of gift Len was willing to give. Most of those conversations came back around to one agency: Inspiration Corporation. The Goodmans’ plan to create a new restaurant dovetailed with Inspiration Corporation’s strategic plan goal of expansion.

Len Goodman, working with his cousin Gabe, engaged in extensive discussions with Inspiration Corporation's leadership about his proposed gift and the restaurant plan, resulting in a contribution that would support capital costs for the new restaurant and a portion of operating expenses for the first five years. The new restaurant could begin its life free of any debt service and have the promise of five full years to ramp up earned income from food sales as well as grants and contracts. The model does not assume the full costs of operations will ever come from revenues, but does anticipate increases in revenue reducing the required subsidy.

Len and Gabe Goodman's involvement continued throughout project planning and development after their due diligence helped identify Inspiration Corporation as the home organization for the restaurant they wanted to see created. They worked with the agency to select a neighborhood in which to locate, and later to find a property to purchase. They consulted on the selection of the architect and, subsequently, on the design itself. Len and Gabe Goodman were the epitome of engaged, thoughtful – one person said "intellectually rigorous" – philanthropists. They had a lot of help as Len Goodman's lead gift was followed by a numerous other donors, securing the financial future of IKGP.



FACILITY DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The facility occupies a 7,315 square foot manufacturing building and includes: a 60-seat restaurant; a room with 20 additional dining seats for groups and families; offices for 14 staff; a computer lab to support job-seekers; a 1,990 square foot kitchen for teaching, restaurant production, catering, and a growing business in contract meals; and a small classroom space. Also included are showers, lockers, and bike racks for bike commuters. Outside are a small "permaculture" garden and a five-stall parking area which includes storm water design features that manages storm water on site and slows its flow into the city's sewer system.

The design of IKGP is a thoughtful effort that avoids heroic gestures. Given the values of the other participants, including the major funder, it's probably not surprising that they chose Wheeler Kearns Architects (WKA) to design the building. Larry Kearns describes the firm on his web site as being "devoted to a critical pursuit and practice of architecture," toward a "search for spaces which define a full, rich, and dignified way of life." The firm's architects take pride in "the participatory atmosphere of (their) studio," and a process which "involves clients, engineers, consultants, and contractors in the development of structures which respond to desire, function and budget." Part of that involves "finding the 'emotional center' of a project" early in the design process.

Perhaps even more to the point, the firm splits its efforts about fifty-fifty between higher-end residential clients who pay in full and not-for-profit organizations who get a different rate. When first engaged with Inspiration Corporation Wheeler Kearns was asked to do the job on a purely pro bono basis. Partner Larry Kearns demurred, as he was philosophically opposed to working for nothing, and argued that it was

Rick Easty, Larry Kearns and Chris-Annemarie Spencer

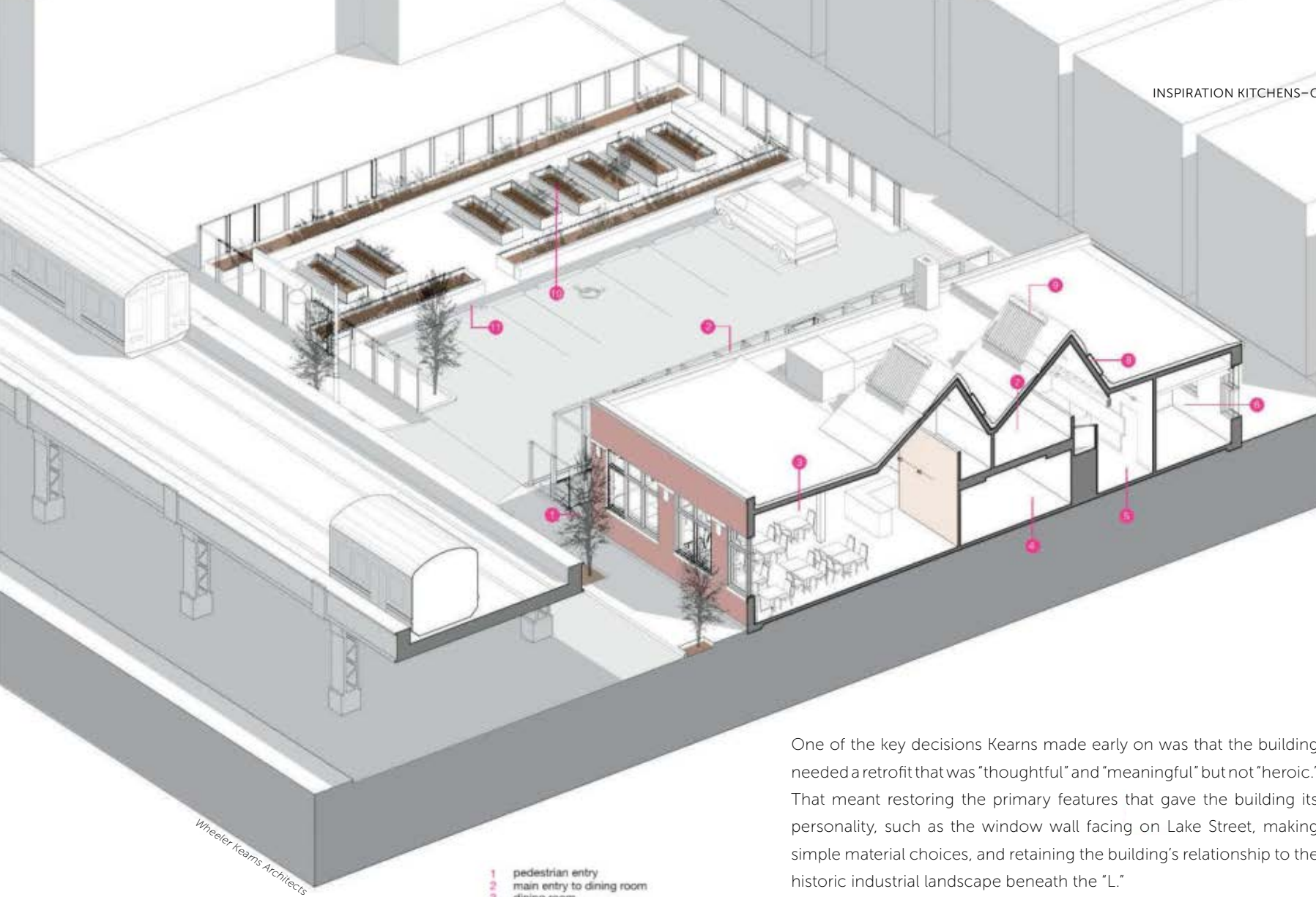


crucial for everyone, including the designer, to "have some skin in the game." Instead, WKA did the job at a substantial discount. Much of the work in the design was covered by a green design grant from Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation.

The firm remained true to its stated philosophy, however, engaging not only the Inspiration Corporation staff, but also the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance and its partners during their planning process in a series of workshops to present their plans and ask for guidance. Wheeler Kearns established a blog to show preliminary plans to the public, seek comment and make additional in-person presentations to the community.

Warehouse interior prior to renovation





Wheeler Kearns Architects

- 1 pedestrian entry
- 2 main entry to dining room
- 3 dining room
- 4 classroom/ meeting room
- 5 computer alcove + hallway
- 6 office
- 7 storage loft/ office
- 8 skylights
- 9 evacuated solar tubes
- 10 garden w/ ornamental edibles
- 11 gravel fill for storm water retention

One of the key decisions Kearns made early on was that the building needed a retrofit that was “thoughtful” and “meaningful” but not “heroic.” That meant restoring the primary features that gave the building its personality, such as the window wall facing on Lake Street, making simple material choices, and retaining the building’s relationship to the historic industrial landscape beneath the “L.”

A “thoughtful” design also meant resisting suggestions from some members of the Inspiration Corporation board of directors to create a more defensive facility. The idea of walling the place off from East Garfield Park and the neighborhood was seen by the design team to be antithetical to the whole intent of the project. Safety is clearly a

concern in the neighborhood, but addressing it without walls, bars, or bullet-proof glass – common building features in East Garfield Park – was understood as key to the success of the project.

A more humane approach to the problem was demonstrated during the construction phase by members of Rick Easty's Heartland Construction Group. The workers, led by Chicago native Vince Perino, made a point of getting to know the immediate neighbors, even to the extent of volunteering to fix a leaky toilet or a wobbly porch. The result was that residents took a proprietary attitude toward the site and the construction process and kept a watchful eye on the place and construction materials. As a result, IKGP was relatively free of the kind of vandalism, graffiti, and theft that often plagues such projects.

The actual design of the project focused on the reuse of the 1906 manufacturing building – with no major additions and an emphasis on reclaiming positive features that had been lost during the structure's previous uses. Skylights were rediscovered and thermally insulated; blocked up front windows were replaced with expansive triple-glazed glass angled to help further insulate against noise and vibration from the passing "L"; original materials were exposed to give character to the interior spaces; works from local artists hang on the walls of an open, well-lit dining area.

The building has been certified LEED Gold — something which members of the board pushed hard to achieve – and features an array of energy-saving technologies. Variable speed exhaust hoods in the kitchen only run at full-speed when heat or smoke demands it. Lights are on timers or sensors to save electricity. Dining room furniture is made from recycled barn wood. Bike racks, lockers, and showers



Exterior and interior views of restaurant

Photos by Steve Hall / Hedrich Blessing

are available for bicycle commuters and the parking lot is designed to manage storm water. Roof-top solar-thermal panels supply much of the facility's hot-water needs. (An economic analysis comparing possible returns between roof-mounted, photo-voltaic arrays and a solar hot water system led to the choice of the hot water system.) There were some early problems resulting in a messy leak, but the system is now functioning well.

Total purchase, design, and construction cost was \$2,478,840 with a square foot project cost of \$339. Wheeler Kearns estimates



that the building offers 21% better energy performance than other contemporary high-performing buildings. Expenses related to the solar hot water system and variable speed exhaust hoods were offset by grants for green building from Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and the Field Foundation of Illinois. These features also helped attract additional funding, such as major grant from The Kresge Foundation. Nevertheless, the architects acknowledged that additional energy saving features were omitted due to cost constraints.

The general contractor for the project, Heartland Construction Group, solicited sub-contractors from the surrounding community and encouraged local laborers to apply for work, though it is unclear whether any firms or individuals from the neighborhood actually participated in the work.

ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMING

The two primary activities that take place at Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park are foodservice training for chronically unemployed and under-employed individuals as well as healthy sit-down meals for the public including free meals for low-income families and individuals.

The training features a 13-week course providing “hard-skills” in the restaurant and foodservice industry, leading to a sanitation certificate. The program also provides individualized case management for students and graduates, including placement and follow-up.

The restaurant serves lunch, dinner and weekend brunch. Meals in the IKGP dining room are provided in one of two ways. First, the menu is affordably priced, in a manner consistent with the market in Garfield

Clockwise from top: Catering kitchen, service kitchen, bike racks at entrance, acoustically insulated window, family dining room



Photos by Steve Hall / Hedrich Blessing



Clockwise from top: computer alcove, classroom/meeting room, announcements board

Park, though underpriced compared to the high quality of food and experience offered, made possible by IKGP's willingness to accept lower profit margins than other restaurants. Patrons are given the opportunity to "pay up" – to add a little extra in lieu of tipping as a way to support the organization's mission. The wait staff is salaried without expectation of tipping and the "pay up" goes to the restaurant's net revenues. Second, a "Guest Certificate" program provides free meals for low-income residents in the neighborhood. The program description at IKGP states "These certificates were distributed at community events

such as back-to-school picnics and health fairs and through a network of community partners – including social service agencies, schools, and religious congregations. Partners used the certificates in support of their mission as incentives, engagement tools, or to supplement their participants' budgets." Offering free meals to the public, as done through the certificate program at Inspiration Kitchens – Garfield Park, is new to Inspiration Corporation operations, and was not a part of the program at Inspiration Kitchens – Uptown.

The process for using Guest Certificates is designed to minimize the stigma for people receiving free meals. To use a certificate, the holder calls the restaurant and makes a reservation, indicating they intend to use the certificate at that time. They pay with a card that resembles a credit card or gift card, making all diners feel and appear equal.

The goal is to serve 3,000 free Guest Certificate meals per year – which the restaurant is still working to achieve. In the first year 112 families took advantage of the program – for a total of 629 meals. IC hopes to do better in the future and is evaluating two particular hurdles to the program's acceptance. First is the commitment from the partner agencies to promote the system. Second is the willingness of diners to actually use the certificates. Staff acknowledged that something as modest as a requirement to place a reservation may be a deterrent for some potential uses of the guest certificates and are seeking still more creative ways to facilitate use of the system.

Ultimately, what is most important for IC is the ongoing story of what happens inside the IKGP kitchen and dining room in terms of what the students learn and the diners – paying customers and otherwise – experience.

It is not easy to get into the culinary training program, as IKGP continually searches for applicants who are the most motivated and most likely to succeed. Of the first 800 people to attend an initial orientation in the first year, 200 opted out immediately. They screen out applicants with severe mental health problems. Personal choices and failure to meet threshold conditions ultimately left 300 participants from the original group who were invited back for an interview. Of those, some failed to show up for their interview appointment and, finally, about 130 were enrolled. As the course proceeds, the attrition rate is fairly high. The leadership of the IKGP exercises a strict attendance policy and evaluates student performance on a regular basis – in respect to knife skills, recipe math, work ethic, food savvy, and more. Some get into the program and realize it is “not for me.” Others drop out. The combination of a strict and demanding program and participants with several social and economic challenges results in the heavy attrition rate.



Brunch

Two Eggs any Style, Potatoes, Toast: 7
 Omelet, Bacon, Roasted Shrimp, Gravy, Potatoes, Toast: 8
 Shrimp, Three Sisters Gravy, Sauce Americana: 9
 Crawfish Hash, Poached Eggs, Smoked Tomato Hollandaise: 8
 Biscuits & Gravy, Cheddar Biscuits, Scrambled Eggs, Chorizo Gravy: 9
 Pecan French Toast, Toasted Almonds, Chantilly Cream: 8
 Buttermilk Pancakes, Poached Pear, Ginger Syrup: 7

Soup & Salads

Soup du Jour, Ask your server about today's soup: 5
 Matzo Ball Gumbo, Chicken, Andouille: 7
 Roasted Beets, Candied Pecans, Goat Cheese, Arugula, Honey Vinaigrette: 7
 Southern Lyonnaise, Dandelion Greens, Braised Pork Belly, House-made Corn Nuts, Poached Egg, Creole Mustard Vinaigrette: 8

Sandwiches (all sandwiches served with chips or mixed greens)

Catfish Po Boy, Red Pepper Aioli, Remoulade, Corn Relish: 8
 Braised Oxtail, Smoked Date Spread, Arugula, Spicy Peanut Slaw: 9
 Pan-seared Chicken Breast, Swiss, Smoked Bacon, Vidalia Marmalade: 8
 Quinoa Burger, Herbed Aioli, Slow Roasted Tomato, Mixed Greens: 8
 Stuffed Squash, Mixed Greens, Carrot Slaw: 8

Sides

Fresh Fruit: 4
 Yogurt Parfait, Homemade Granola, Fruit Compote: 4
 Bacon or Chicken Apple Sausage: 3
 Toast, Wheat or Sour Dough: 2

INSPIRATION KITCHENS

Inspiration Corporation provides employment training, housing, supportive services and job referrals to Chicagoans affected by homelessness and poverty, serving as a catalyst for self-reliance. We inspire our participants to take action to improve their own lives. Here at Inspiration Kitchens, we help individuals gain valuable skills and experience that lead to employment in the food service industry. Every plate is produced by a participant in our 13-week job training program. Each graduate receives sanitation training, employment assistance, housing assistance and access to other services, because at Inspiration Kitchens, we serve people on both sides of the counter!

Thank you for dining with us and changing lives!

Dine Well. Do Good.
www.inspirationkitchens.org



Clockwise from top: Salad, catering van, brunch menu, food preparation, appetizer, window stickers highlighting travel guide listings

Steve Hall / Hedrich Blessing

Nevertheless, dozens have made it through the program, been placed in permanent employment, and retained their jobs. Even those who don't make it, IKGP staff noted, absorb new work skills that are transferable to other arenas.

IKGP is premised on the ideas that well-prepared food is an expression of the respect the homeless and the formerly incarcerated need to start the process of rebuilding their life. By all accounts, the food at IKGP is very good – a creative, southern-inflected cuisine with dinner served Wednesday through Saturday, lunch Wednesday to Friday, and brunch on the weekend. Customer reviews on Yelp overwhelmingly give it four- and five-star ratings. Although IKGP staff is uncertain about the exact makeup of their clientele, the restaurant is clearly becoming an important site for not-for-profit organizations around the neighborhood and well beyond for informal meals and meeting spaces. People in these emerging networks bring their families to IKGP and commission the catering services for parties, meetings, and the like.

COMMUNITY

Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park provides a welcome addition to the neighborhood largely identified with Garfield Park Conservatory. The strength of the not-for-profit sector in Chicago extends to the immediate neighborhood where the project is located. The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance (GPCA) is a not-for-profit organization that maintains, manages, programs, and promotes the conservatory of the same name.

Before inception of the GPCA in 1998, the conservatory received about 10,000 visitors a year. Fifteen years later about 150,000 people

visit annually, including 80,000 Chicago-area school children. The organization has an annual budget of more than \$2 million and a staff of about 25. It is one of the largest conservatories in the country, providing a range of programs – hands on gardening, composting, bee keeping, and master gardener classes.

Leaders of GPCA like Eunita Rushing clearly see the need to build the neighborhood as well as the conservatory, or else the Conservatory would just be an island in a sea of poverty and decline. They worked with Local Initiative Support Corporation and its New Communities Program to create the Garfield Park neighborhood plan, and created the Garfield Park Community Council (GPCC) to implement the plan. With a staff of four, GPCC focuses on initiatives that addresses health, housing, public safety, and retail business, but with a clear emphasis on activities that would grow new business and create jobs.

In that sense, East Garfield Park, the Conservatory, and the fledgling neighborhood association were looking for partners like Inspiration Corporation and the Goodmans. Even though it was a natural match of interests, it wasn't easy. IC was an organization perceived as "white," coming into a neighborhood that was overwhelmingly black. Clearly, some local support and introductions were needed.

For their part, Inspiration Corporation seems to have done everything right in making connections to the neighborhood. The organization had a strong track record. They learned about the community, engaging it in a respectful way without making judgments, and presented their proposal to community groups in a way that addressed local concerns. They made their goals clear, and showed graphically what they hoped to do. They described the "wrap-around" services they



*Clockwise from top: Garfield Park Conservatory,
Mike Tomas, Conservatory-Central Park
CTA Green Line stop, Eunita Rushing*



intended to offer for the previously incarcerated: counseling, job training, showers, and housing.

An example of the care taken includes the identification of the name Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park. Multiple names were tested with residents. “Corporation” was considered too “corporate” and cold. “Kitchen,” however, was seen to connote the warmth of the kitchen table at home. Garfield Park in the name was obviously appropriate and captured the sense of ownership of IKGP by the community.

And Inspiration Kitchens also needed a local host – a “home-grown way in” to the community sponsored by a local organization that residents trusted. The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance and the Community Council played that role and convened the community to hear from Inspiration Corporation.

Even with this support and collaboration, gaining acceptance wasn’t a slam dunk. This neighborhood had previously and successfully fought transitional housing proposals, arguing that there were enough social services in the area. As noted earlier, East Garfield Park has one of the highest rates of formerly incarcerated residents of any place in Illinois. In the end, the residents who came to the meetings didn’t place IKGP in the same category as the transitional housing project, and recognized that it was very different from a standard soup kitchen. Rather they saw it as a social enterprise that could be beneficial to the neighborhood. To the credit of all involved, the IKGP never got an initial “no” that it had to overcome. There is no evidence of any resistance to the place or program. A frequent IKGP diner from the West Side Cultural Arts Alliance, for example, didn’t see the restaurant as gentrification because of who it helps and what the program proposed to do.

FINANCING

Capital Costs

As noted above, the project benefited from a major gift by a single donor – a total of \$4.26 million – with part dedicated to the capital costs of construction and another major part set aside to help cover the first five years of operating expenses. Because capital costs are already paid in full, the enterprise will be able to operate without debt service indefinitely. The IKGP budget calls for an increasing proportion

of costs to be covered by earned income generated from restaurant sales and catering. There is no expectation that the enterprise will ever be fully self-sustaining from foodservice income, given that much of its expenses are in instruction, counseling, and support to students who enroll at no cost. Going forward IC expects to close this gap with additional philanthropic donations and program-specific government grants.

Even with the major gift from Leonard Goodman, it was necessary for the project to raise additional funds from individual and corporate donations. There was strong support from major national and regional foundations and corporations such as The Kresge Foundation. There were also a large number of individual supporters who gave donations less than a thousand dollars. More than 30 staff members of Inspiration Corporation donated a total of \$25,000.

TABLE 1: 2013 REVENUE BREAKDOWN*

	Amount	Percentage
Philanthropy	\$726,280	63%
Government	\$56,410	5%
Earned Income	\$319,656	28%
In-Kind Income	\$45,043	4%
Total	\$1,147,389	100%

*For fiscal year 2013, indicating 28% of the resources were earned income (down 1% from 2012) and an additional 5% came through government sources.

The only other significant element of the financing was a "bridge loan" of \$520,000 made by IFF, a not-for-profit lender, during construction. IFF's ability to make the loan and their confidence in Inspiration Corporation's ability to raise the additional money allowed the project to move forward without delay.

Operating costs

IKGP is meeting its operational cost goals. From January to December 2012, the Restaurant averaged 10.5 full time equivalent (FTE) staff positions and has 6.5 FTE more staff working hourly. The total earned revenue was \$297,731 and the total budget was \$1,020,690. Earned income as a percent of budget in 2012 was 29%, just ahead of their target 25%. The ultimate goal in the first five years of operation is to work toward 50% earned income as a percent of budget. Total enrollment for the year was 52 students, of whom 40 graduated (an 81% graduation rate). The fiscal year 2014 operating budget for IKGP is 23% of the total Inspiration Corporation budget. The total budget for IKGP in fiscal year 2013, was \$1.17 million. Table 1 shows the revenue breakdown for fiscal year 2013 indicating 28% of the resources were earned income (down 1% from 2012) and an additional 5% came through government sources.

Staff report they are working to increase earned income, especially through expansion of the catering business, but do not have an estimate of how much it will grow in the coming years. 2013 operating expenses for the Garfield Park site were \$1.17 million, with about 64% expended on personnel and fringe costs.

IMPACT

Given the relatively recent opening of the project, as well as the lack of a track record for IKGP, it's difficult to assess the success of the project or its impact in areas for which the project sponsor set its goals. It is easier to frame a few issues for further investigation.

IKGP is still ramping up in terms of production, sales, and meals provided. They reported 12,000 meals served in the first year and just over \$250,000 in revenue. This was 180% of the goal they set for themselves though still less than 50 meals a day, resulting in an average daily revenue of about \$800. These figures do not include, however, the sales from a growing catering business. The Guest Certificate program provides an average of about ten free meals a day for low-income patrons. Clearly, IKGP still has some hurdles to overcome in drawing the level of patronage they want and need.

The capacity of the training program is 90 students per year, and the goal for first year was 70, although only 52 were finally enrolled. Of those enrollees, 81% students graduated and 55% of the graduates (21) were placed in jobs, underscoring the severity of the challenges this population faces in finding long-term employment.

That said, these estimates may be too limited. A full accounting should also consider the value added from the program through its job placements. One value-added calculation developed by the IKGP addresses the number of clients actually placed and their estimated wages, discounted by about 10% for those who might have found jobs without the program. That totals over \$290,000 per year. In addition, the organization has also calculated the amount of public benefits not acquired by clients who have been placed in jobs, such as reduced

TABLE 2: VALUE ADDED BENEFIT CALCULATION

Estimated clients placed and anticipated benefits

clients placed x average wage x average number of hours worked/week
x number of weeks (*retention less 15% if program did not exist)

\$322,924.80

Total \$322,924.80

Estimated public benefits saved by clients placed

Clients not needing food stamps, Medicare, or other programs \$172,800.00

Clients not in homeless shelters \$112,420.00

Clients (70% ex-offenders) not incarcerated \$551,880.00

Total \$837,100.00

use of food stamps, Medicaid and other programs, as well as the cost of incarceration for at-risk groups like ex-offenders. Altogether, this suggests a savings of over \$1.7 million per year in public expenses (see Table 2).

IKGP also points to still broader impacts, suggesting that the project might be encouraging other investments in the neighborhood, including housing and commercial ventures. While this is a goal of the GPCC plan, and the community council may have programs to work toward that goal, given the newness of this project, its particular focus, and its limited scope, it seems unlikely to have significant impact on neighborhood redevelopment in the immediate future.



Sunday Brunch

Ray Oldenburg writes about the importance of “third places” in helping communities develop a sense of place that supports social organization. IKGP is becoming such a place where community groups use the space frequently for meetings as well as meals. Some groups make it their regular gathering spot. Staff members from the conservatory are also frequent diners. The conservatory also uses IKGP as its standard caterer for all but their larger events. People interviewed from the neighborhood report that Garfield Park is becoming a “destination”, at least in part because IKGP is there.

CURRENT PROJECTS AND FUTURE PLANS

IKGP is on target in respect to its strategic/business plan and goals; it has established effective processes for regularly evaluating its progress in respect to its own goals and performance of peer organizations;

and it is making headway in addressing significant, pervasive urban problems. There are no plans for expansion. Appropriately enough, the only plans are to stay the course with incremental improvements year over year fulfilling the promise of its initial goals

Assessing Success

Inspiration Corporation identified four categories of goals for Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park: a high-quality dining experience, foodservice training for hard-to-employ individuals, reinforcement of community revitalization efforts, and the creation of a “truly” green facility in support of the first three goals. It is clear that all of the categories are well met and that the project has achieved much more.

- It is a sustainable business/philanthropy partnership model that is ahead of schedule to meet the revenue goals needed to sustain its operation. In many ways this is already exemplary, but especially so because it is an intentional long-term partnership.
- Teaching and client support is ranked high by clients. Reports from the students routinely offered in annual surveys show high levels of client satisfaction over two years of classes and illustrate an increase in satisfaction from 2011 to 2012.
- Monthly assessments, including year-to-date assessments of FY 13 compared to FY 12 record of achievement, indicate success and improvements in all categories including enrollment, graduates, graduation rates, transitional jobs, total job placements, job retention, housing placements, business

partnerships, meals provided, guest certificate meals provided, and total sales.

- Outcome measures have met or exceed donor, Board, and City of Chicago (Department of Family and Support Services) expectations. These outcomes include earned revenues, meals served, students enrolled, students graduated, and students placed.

Another measure of success is the design awards the facility has received, including a Social Economic Environmental Design (SEED) award, and LEED certification. These awards offer external affirmation of the quality of design, community engagement and green aspects of the project. Although the design is neither “heroic” or particularly innovative, it illustrates best practices in renovation – including the simple, approaching elegant, use of materials and very sensible building systems and envelope design that minimizes the building’s carbon footprint and successfully addresses the acoustic control required by the proximity to the “L.”

It is difficult to consider the success of IKGP without looking at its peers for comparison, such as the members of the Catalyst Kitchens network. Catalyst Kitchens is a national organization whose members have a shared vision to empower lives through foodservice training, generate revenues through social enterprise, and nourish bodies and minds through quality foodservice. The organization offers resources to its members that include comparisons of metrics, while noting the uniqueness of each member in terms of client, context or mission circumstances that make them not so comparable. In 2013 job retention for Inspiration Corporation’s foodservice training program was the lowest of the 11 network members, as was graduate employment.

Moreover, Inspiration Corporation also served the lowest number of meals and was second from the bottom in trainee retention. None of this addresses the scale of the organizations in the network or the relative difficulty of the work they do. It would be a mistake to imagine such statistics give IKGP very much useful information about their performance. The benchmarking at Catalyst Kitchens is still very much a work in process.

To their credit, Inspiration Corporation was a charter member of the network and continues to stress the importance of its work as it strives to build peer benchmarks. Concurrently IKGP also sets internal, year over year improvement metrics on their individual performance, testing each year against the previous which, at least over the first two years, show great progress.

All of these comparisons actually raise more questions than they answer. They don’t and can’t tell the whole story about the IKGP passion for the organization’s mission, the ambiance of the place, and the character of the staff, board and clients. They do speak to the transparency of their operations and aspiration to improve on the way the organization measures progress.

There is no single or even primary reason why Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park is worthy of recognition. Rather, IKGP and the process that created it exemplify important aspects of the social enterprise development process – the role of passionate individual commitments to change, the power of engaged and well-informed philanthropy, the importance of building and maintaining a strong organizational infrastructure for not-for-profit organizations, and the making of a fundamentally good, well-designed place.



IKGP is also worthy of note in the way the project incorporated such a broad range of best-practices in energy efficiency and green design; urban design to support neighborhood life; comprehensive programming and services to deal with entrenched poverty, unemployment, and homelessness; true collaboration among private, public, and not-for-profit players to achieve shared goals; and robust communication and participation in community planning and development. There are many aspects to the story of IKGP. Together they reveal a comprehensive approach to social enterprise development.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

In selecting Inspiration Kitchens–Garfield Park as the 2013 Rudy Bruner Award Gold Medal Winner, the Selection Committee was impressed with the project’s focus and its ability to help people improve their personal condition by addressing issues of food and nutrition broadly – using food service as an employment opportunity while providing healthy meals in a vast food desert on Chicago’s West Side. The Committee commended IKGP as a thoughtful nonprofit that has grown incrementally, expanding services comprehensively, and – in the process – meeting or exceeding expectations for revenue generation. The Committee noted that for a not-for-profit organization, meeting fifty percent of its expenses with earned revenue was an excellent benchmark.

In design and program, IKGP addresses human dignity in the way food is considered, menus are designed, and meals are prepared, presented and served. The Selection Committee observed that it is important to have national and local conversations about the importance of



Steve Hall / Hedrich Blessing

Fresh produce is grown in the on-site garden and offered for sale

providing access to fresh, healthy food, particularly in communities with limited or no access. The Committee saw this project as addressing the fundamentals of life – food, community, and the dignity of work. They noted that while the restaurant is the most prominent aspect of this project and an important symbol of nutrition and change in this neighborhood, it is not the main reason for the project, which is largely about job training for difficult to employ populations.

IKGP illustrates that design matters. The facility's architecture is attractive, thoughtful, sustainable and supportive, without being ostentatious. The design demonstrates respect for the neighborhood in presenting a

light and open interior that is visible to the street, with a facade that rejects security bars and grates. Even so, the Committee noted that the value of the IKGP's education and job training extends beyond the immediate outcome of getting a job by teaching responsibility, learning skills and the importance of showing up every day.

The Selection Committee found IKGP to be truly inspirational and selected it as the Gold Medalist to celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit of this nonprofit, as well as the "do-it-yourself" (DIY) approach to urban rehabilitation that is spreading in the United States (as also illustrated by 2013 Silver Medalists The Steel Yard and Congo Street Initiative). IKGP is an example of a small not-for-profit that can bring real change to a community, while operating within a relatively small budget and short time-frame.

Inspiration Corporation chose Garfield Park for the location of the facility because of – not in spite of – the fact that it was a neighborhood with great needs, while also recognizing its significant potential. While the Selection Committee acknowledged some uncertainty about the pace of change in Garfield Park and questioned how much this single, small facility might contribute to it, they anticipated that IKGP's investment will support future development in the neighborhood. The Committee also noted the complexity of the task IKGP has taken on – training for work in the food service industry, which is a notoriously underpaid and unstable profession, as well as supportive programs to reduce the likelihood of re-incarceration of program participants. They admired the organization for taking on such a difficult problem.



Steve Hall / Hedrich Blessing

Exterior at dusk

Resources

INTERVIEWS*

Inspiration Corporation:

Lisa Nigro, Founder, Inspiration Corporation

John Pfeiffer, Former CEO, Inspiration Corporation

Gabe Goodman, Treasurer of the Board of Directors, Inspiration Corporation

Carl Segal, Vice Chair – External Relations of the Board of Directors,
Inspiration Corporation

Shannon Stewart, Executive Director and CEO, Inspiration Corporation

Diane Pascal, VP External Relations, Inspiration Corporation

Margaret Haywood, Director of Workforce Development,
Inspiration Corporation

Jennifer Miller Rehfeldt, Chief Program Officer, Inspiration Corporation

Sean Cunneen, Associate Director of Social Enterprise, Inspiration Corporation

Michael Webb, Case Manager, foodservice training program

David Rosenthal, Executive Chef, Inspiration Kitchens – Garfield Park

Tony Reinhart, Front-of-house Manager, Inspiration Kitchens – Garfield Park,
Program Graduate

Samara Hightower, IKGP Program Participant

Consultants, Advisors to Inspiration Corporation:

Ayse Kalaycioglu, IFF, Director of Owners Representative Services

Kate Ansoorge, IFF, Senior Project Manager

Laurie Alpern, Open Door Advisors

Architects and Contractors:

Larry Kearns, Principal, Wheeler Kearns Architects

Chris-Annmari Spencer, Project Manager, Wheeler Kearns Architects

Rick Easty, The Heartland Construction Group

City and Local Organizations:

Evelyn Diaz, Commissioner, Chicago Department of Family &
Support Services

Eunita Rushing, President, Garfield Park Conservatory

Mike Tomas, Executive Director, Garfield Park Community Council

Melissa Crutchfield, Lawndale Christian Health Center

Dawn Ferencak, Advertising Sales Representative, Austin Weekly News

Lavette Haynes, West Side Cultural Arts Council

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**titles listed as of March 2013 site visit **web sites listed as of 2014 publication*



Silver Medal Winner
Congo Street Initiative
Dallas, Texas



Photos by Noe Medrano & buildingcommunity WORKSHOP





Overview

Submitted by: buildingcommunityWORKSHOP

Completed: 2012

Total Development Cost: \$975,000

Congo Street Initiative involves the renovation/reconstruction of five houses and construction of a sixth, in collaboration with residents, along a rebuilt one-block long street in the East Dallas community of Jubilee Park.

The idea for the project emerged from a desire to stabilize home ownership for the families living in the houses, many of which had occupied their homes for generations. The houses, modest one-story, 600 square foot frame structures built in the 1920's, were significantly deteriorated. The entire street had been targeted for demolition and redevelopment in plans developed by Jubilee Park Community Development Corporation and adopted by the City of Dallas.

"THE PROJECT PROVIDES A DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING ABOUT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, INCORPORATING EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION IN A MEANINGFUL WAY." —2013 Selection Committee

buildingcommunityWORKSHOP (bcWORKSHOP), a Dallas-based non-profit community design center, began working with residents in 2008, exploring approaches that would enable them to remain in place without undue financial burden. Together with residents, the City, corporate and nonprofit partners in the Dallas community, they crafted an alternative strategy for "redevelopment" that focused on rebuilding the existing homes and street infrastructure over the next five years, without displacing a single resident.

Residents worked together with staff from bcWORKSHOP and volunteers from the community to renovate or reconstruct each home one at a time, reusing existing materials and maintaining the small footprints and front porches. A new "Holding House" was constructed on an empty lot donated by one of the residents and served as a temporary residence for each family, in turn, as its own house was being renovated, allowing them to remain on the street during the process.

All six houses have been certified Leadership in Energy Efficiency and Design (LEED) for Homes Gold or Platinum by the US Green Building Council. The homes incorporate solar panels and solar thermal systems and bcWORKSHOP staff worked with residents to help them understand and reduce energy consumption.

Congo Street itself was rebuilt by the City of Dallas with design support from bcWORKSHOP, and incorporates permeable pavement along with storm water management, retention and bio filtration. Now

recognized as Dallas' first "green street," the project has inspired the current mayoral administration to consider applying the approach to other streets in the city. Congo Street has garnered local and national awards and sparked new investment in Jubilee and the adjoining neighborhood of Dolphin Heights.

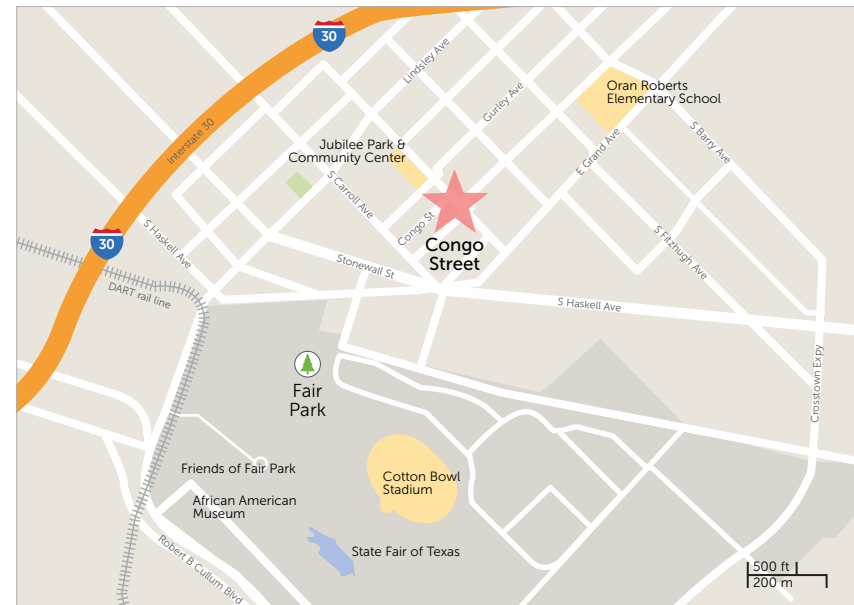
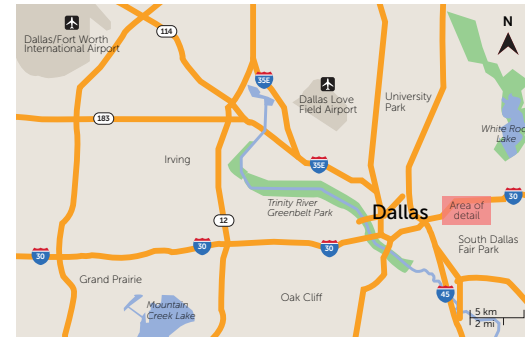


Photos by Noe Medrano & buildingcommunity WORKSHOP



Project-at-a-Glance

- Six adjacent houses on a one-block long street in Dallas, Texas.
- The rehabilitation and expansion of five existing, owner-occupied homes – the designs of which were individually tailored for and in collaboration with resident families to meet their needs while maintaining the vernacular character of the street – and the construction of a new “Holding House” that provided temporary housing for each family while its own home was being rebuilt, so that no residents were displaced during the process.
- Reconstruction of Congo Street as Dallas’ first public “green street” incorporating permeable paving and landscaped bio-swales in the public right-of-way while preserving its role as a social space for the community.
- A collaborative, community-based approach that involved existing homeowners, architecture and engineering students, and volunteers in the design and deconstruction/construction of the six houses and re-engineering of the street.



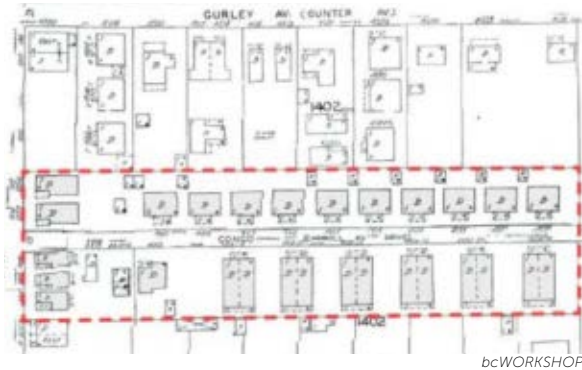




Project Goals

- Disrupt the systemic inequality threatening the residents of Congo Street
- Improve the livelihood and housing conditions of the residents without displacing any resident in the process
- Maintain the social fabric of the community
- Enhance the quality and energy efficiency of the housing while maintaining affordability
- Improve the street in a manner that is consistent with its history, culture, and character
- Create trustworthy relationships with the families in order to serve and empower them
- Create a viable model than can be reproduced

Chronology



1890 City of Dallas annexes East Dallas.

1920s Carroll Drive develops as residential street.

1933 City of Dallas changes name from Carroll Drive to Congo Street in preparation for the Texas Centennial at Fair Park.

1970s Jubilee Park neighborhood begins to decline due to Ford manufacturing plant closing.

1992 Family of Congo Street landowner deeds six homes/lots to multigenerational renters/residents.

1997 As part of the Silver Jubilee celebration for St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, community leader Walt Humann establishes a neighborhood revitalization effort to turn around the neighborhood, founding Jubilee Park and Community Center.

2004 Jubilee Park and Community Center hires planning consultant (Antonio Di Mambro) to develop a neighborhood revitalization strategy, which includes community residents in planning efforts through engagement.

2005 Dallas architect Brent Brown founds bcWORKSHOP as a donor-advised fund of Dallas Community Fund with two gifts totaling \$35,000.

2007 T. Boone Pickens funds new community center, park and neighborhood police station with \$6 million gift to Jubilee Park and Community Center Corporation (JPCCC).

Brent Brown/Brown Architects receives commission to design community center and incorporates six-month community engagement as part of the design process; community engagement is under bcWORKSHOP project label.

During community engagement sessions, Brown meets Congo Street residents Ella Garrett, Vivian Garrett and Frankie Boulden.

2008 Spring: Brown teaches a design studio as an Adjunct Professor at University of Texas (UTA)-Arlington School of Architecture. Studio researches and visits two neighborhoods for selection as studio project area – Trinity Heights and Jubilee Park – with the class voting to engage work in Jubilee Park.



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UTA students conduct a project to say "hello" to the neighborhood and meet Jubilee residents. Four different community strategies are developed, one of which engages Congo Street residents and incorporates a potential "Transitional House" as a model for street revitalization.

bcWORKSHOP incorporates as a Texas Non-profit Corporation and applies for IRS 501(c)3 status in order to receive donation of lot at 4537 Congo Street.

Fred Bowie, a Congo Street homeowner, gifts 4537 Congo Street property to bcWORKSHOP for construction of the Transitional House.

Summer: Transitional House is re-designed based on resident feedback and renamed the Holding House. The house is funded by a \$38,000 grant from The Real Estate Council Foundation and completed by end of summer.

Fall/Winter: Frankie Boulden and her daughter Erica move into the Holding House while reconstruction begins on their home (4529 Congo Street).

Holding House receives Dallas AIA Excellence in Community Design and Excellence in Sustainable Design Awards.

2009 Spring: Frankie Boulden's Home (4529 Congo Street) is completed.

The Holding House (4537 Congo Street) receives LEED Gold certification.

Vernessia Garrett and family move into the Holding House as construction begins on her home (4523 Congo), funded by a \$40,000 grant from The Real Estate Council Associate Leadership Council (ALC), who also volunteer in the construction of the home.

bcWORKSHOP receives IRS 501c-3 status.

Vernessia Garrett's home is completed.

Brown teaches a design studio as an Adjunct Professor at UTA. The first investigation includes the exploration and development of proposals for the renovation of the street infrastructure. These proposals are the result of extensive resident input and review including a final pin-up where key elements are selected by the residents. The second studio project included the programming and design of Pat and Earnest Garrett's home (4525 Congo). Design is approved in May and Pat and Earnest Garrett move into the Holding House.

Chronology *continued*



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City of Dallas Housing Department commits \$100,000 to 4525, 4539, and 4533 Congo Street.

Summer: The Meadows Foundation commits \$142,000 to the Congo Street homes. An additional \$25,000 is donated by an anonymous individual.

4525 Congo St is rebuilt. Students from UTA are given AmeriCorps positions.

Four bcFELLOWS (funded through AmeriCorps) refine the conceptual design of the street improvements.

Fall: Fred Bowie moves into the Holding House as renovations begin on his home (4539 Congo)

2010 January: 4529 Congo Street receives LEED Platinum certification

Spring: Mr. Bowie's home renovations are complete.

Jubilee Park and Community Center opens.

A team of investors, led by Robert Camacho, purchase and rehabilitate the rental duplexes on the south side of Congo Street.

Summer: Ella Garrett and family move into the Holding House as construction on their home begins (4533 Congo), funded in part by an individual donation of \$30,000.

Southern Methodist University Lyle School of Engineering Students provides technical support for the design of the street improvements.

bcWORKSHOP engaged by the City of Dallas to design senior housing project adjacent to Congo Street homes on Gurley Avenue.

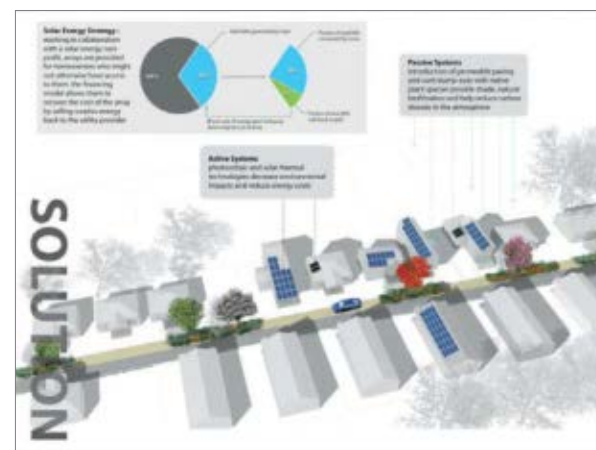
Ella Garrett's home is completed.

Fall: Sue Pope Foundation donates \$250,000 to Patriot Solar Power, a subsidiary of a partner group. bcWORKSHOP is asked to manage a portion of the grant for use on Congo Street. ONCOR Alternative Energy Rebate provides an additional \$25,000 towards the installation of solar arrays on the Congo Street homes over the next year as a pilot program through Patriot Solar Power.

Winter: Holding House is occupied by bcWORKSHOP staff after the final home renovation/reconstruction is completed.



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Solar arrays are installed on Frankie Boulden (4529) and Ella Garrett's (4533) homes.

bcWORKSHOP receives AIA Excellence in Community Design Award and Excellence in Sustainable Design Award for 4533 Congo Street and AIA & US Housing and Urban Development Department Secretary's Award: Excellence in Community Informed Design for Congo Street.

Community Resource Center on S. Carroll Avenue, designed by Brown Architects and developed by Jubilee Park and Community Center Corporation (JPCCC), is completed.

Under NSP funding and upon invitation by a partner group, bcWORKSHOP establishes the bcCORPS effort in Dolphin Heights in East Dallas to apply the Holding House revitalization model on a larger scale.

December: 4523 and 4525 Congo Street receive LEED Platinum certification.

2011 January: 4533 and 4539 Congo Street receive LEED Platinum certification.

Spring: Design is completed on the Congo Street infrastructure improvements.

Solar array is installed on 4523 and 4528 Congo St, while a solar thermal array is installed on 4525 Street.

CITI commits \$10,000 towards an Energy Education program called "Power Plus" to promote environmental stewardship of Congo Street residents around energy use and education in the new homes.

Summer: Power Plus program begins.

Fall: bcWORKSHOP receives a 2011 SEED Award for Congo Street Initiative.

Winter: Construction begins on Gurley Place Senior Housing adjacent to the Congo Street homes, designed by bcWORKSHOP and developed by Jubilee Park and Community Center Corporation.

2012 Construction on Congo Street infrastructure begins.

Gurley Place Senior Housing is completed; receives Honorable Mention in 2012 SEED competition.

Congo Street infrastructure construction is completed.

2013 HUD publishes Congo Street case study.

Project Description

Congo Street Initiative is the renovation/construction of five owner-occupied houses and construction of a sixth, in collaboration with residents, along a rebuilt one-block long street on the east side of Dallas, Texas. Sponsored by the nonprofit buildingcommunityWORK-SHOP, the project entailed a collaborative, community-based approach that involved existing homeowners, architecture and engineering students, and volunteers in the design and construction of the six LEED-certified houses and re-engineering of Dallas' first public green street. The construction of a new house, known as the "holding house," provided temporary housing so that no residents were displaced during the process.

CONTEXT

Dallas

Dallas was founded as a trading post by John Neely Bryan in 1841 on the shores of the Trinity River in north central Texas. Dallas quickly grew into a center for commerce, initially serving the surrounding rural communities and later, with the arrival of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad in 1872 and Texas and Pacific in 1873, growing into a regional shipping point for raw materials like grain and cotton.

Business and manufacturing dominated Dallas' economy during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The discovery of oil in 1930 and the development of the East Texas Oil field – "the largest petroleum deposit on earth at the time" – further fueled the Dallas' growth as it became the financial and technical center of oil industry. Business expanded with the introduction of aviation and development of Love Field Airport during the early twentieth century, and again with the opening of Dallas Fort-Worth International Airport northwest of the



Edwin J. Foscue Map Library, Central University Libraries, Southern Methodist University

1933 aerial view of Dallas

city in 1973. By the end of the twentieth century, Dallas was home to numerous corporate headquarters, serving as a hub for transportation, finance, industry and technology, which continue to drive the economy.

The 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy was a defining moment for the City of Dallas and the nation. The Dealey Plaza National Historic Landmark District and Sixth Floor Museum commemorate the event, serving platforms for collective remembrance and inspiration.

Like many Southern cities, racial segregation has been a factor in the development of the city and its neighborhoods. Texas seceded from the Union in 1861 and after the Civil War it struggled through reconstruction. The Ku Klux Klan became a dominant presence in the city in the 1920's, holding parades and mass swearing-in of new members in Dallas' Fair Park. Dallas remained a segregated city until 1961 and school integration progressed slowly. However, the demographics are changing. According to a 2010 Wall Street Journal article (*Segregation Hits Historic Lows*) "Dallas Fort-Worth and Houston were the country's least segregated large cities," although pockets of segregation persist, particularly in the lower-income neighborhoods surrounding the city's core.

In 2013 Dallas was the ninth largest city and fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States. The city covers approximately 343 square miles and has a population 1.2 million people. The City is part of the Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington Metropolitan Statistical Area, which encompasses 12 counties and was home to an estimated 6.5 million people in 2011.

In Dallas cheap land, convenient highway access, and pro-growth land-use policies have contributed to significant physical sprawl. The suburban development that began after World War II exploded following the opening of Dallas Fort-Worth International Airport, which precipitated a real estate development boom that gave rise to the city's current downtown skyline, replacing much of the historic core. It also led to the development and growth of additional, outlying communities that pulled more residents away from older neighborhoods.

There are indications that attitudes in Dallas towards the urban core may be changing. As in many American cities, there is renewed interest in downtown and investment in new housing, cultural attractions, and the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) light rail system. There is also increased attention to planning. In 2009 the Dallas CityDesign Studio opened, funded through a grant to the City from the Trinity Trust and housed within City Hall. The Studio, directed by bcWORKSHOP's Brent Brown, is raising awareness about urban design in Dallas through public events, design review and projects.

The pioneering spirit and "can do" attitude that defined Dallas' early days remain dominant in the City's culture, which values entrepreneurship and risk-taking, and are central themes in the Congo Street Initiative story.

East Dallas and Jubilee Park

The Congo Street Initiative is located in Jubilee Park, a neighborhood located in East Dallas. East Dallas emerged as a result of the routing of the Houston & Texas Central Railroad through North Texas in 1872. The community was incorporated as an independent town in 1882 and annexed by Dallas in 1890, making Dallas the most populous city

in Texas. New neighborhoods developed in East Dallas throughout the early 20th century as streetcar lines pushed the city outwards. Today the area is home to a collection of neighborhoods that are diverse in race, income and urban fabric – ranging from mansions along Swiss Avenue to modest craftsman bungalows on Mount Auburn Avenue. Over time, both East Dallas and Jubilee Park have evolved in conjunction with economic, social and physical changes in the neighborhood and Dallas.

Development in the area began with the arrival of two railroads in the 1870's, with the majority of growth occurring in the 1900's to 1930's. Ford operated an auto assembly plant on East Grand Avenue from 1925 to 1970. East Dallas has been the site of the State Fair of Texas since 1886. In 1936 the city of Dallas hosted the Texas Centennial Exposition, building a large complex of buildings in East Dallas now known as Fair Park that comprise the city's first National Register Historic District. The construction of Interstate Highway 30 in the 1950's, the closure of the Ford Plant in 1970's and increased crime in the 1980's contributed to white flight, unemployment and disinvestment in the community.

Jubilee Park, a 62-block neighborhood in East Dallas, was settled in the late 19th-century. The neighborhood is located two miles from city center and three blocks from Texas State Fair Grounds, and is bounded on the south by the Texas State Fair Grounds and the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) rail line, Interstate 30 to the north and west, and East Grand Avenue. The majority of homes in the neighborhood are modest, one-story frame structures dating from the early 1900's to the present. More recently constructed, one-story homes developed by the City of Dallas, Habitat for Humanity and a local church are scattered throughout the neighborhood.



Fair Park (top), an example of a typical older home and street (middle), more recently constructed house (bottom)



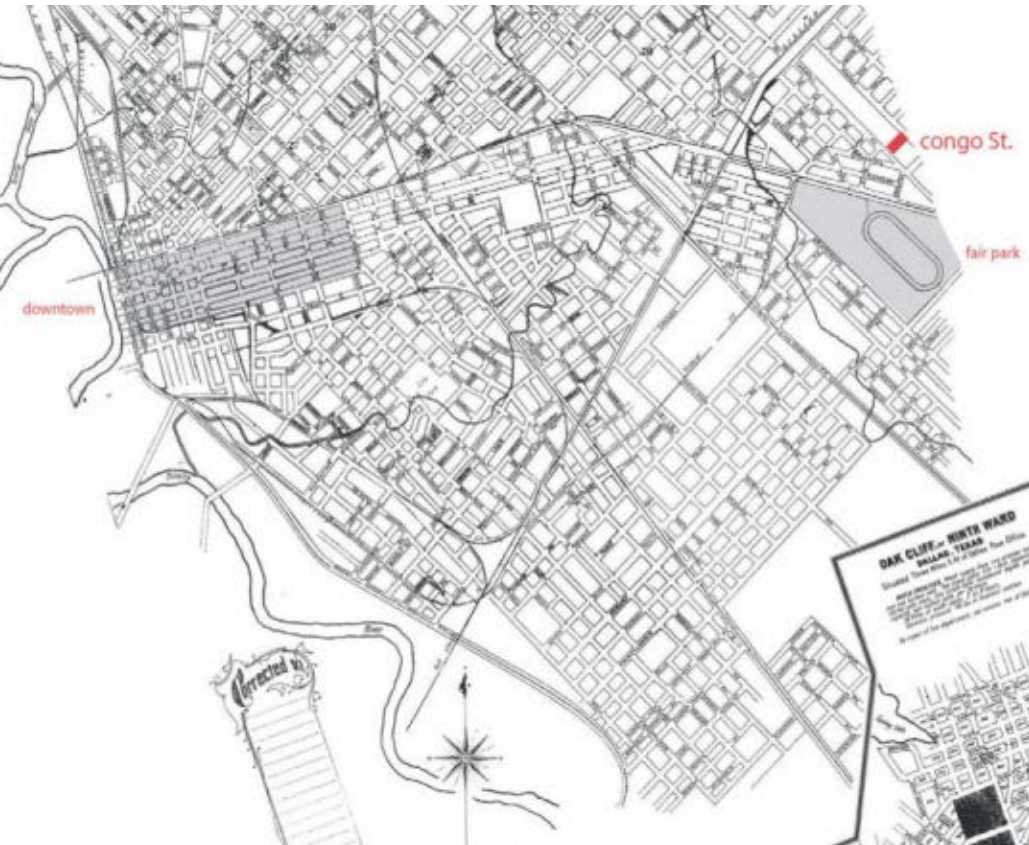
David's Place (top) T. Boone Pickens Community Center

According to demographic information supplied by bcWORKSHOP, in 2013 Jubilee Park was home to 1,488 residents, with a median age of 26.6 years. The community is racially diverse – 38% White, 38% Other, 17% Black, and 7% American Indian, Asian or more than two races (the majority of the latter is of Hispanic origin). There were 302

families, with an average household size of 3.97. In 2013 the median household income was \$19,920, compared to \$39,172 for all of Dallas. In 2013 the community had 450 dwelling units, 41% of which were owner-occupied, 42% rental, and 17% vacant. The median home value is \$72,945, compared to \$137,595 for Dallas.

The area immediately surrounding Congo Street contains a number of newly built community-serving facilities, including the T. Boone Pickens Community Center and fenced community park, developed by Jubilee Park & Community Center. Other nearby amenities, also developed by Jubilee, include a community resource center and police station; David's Place, which provides early childhood education; and Gurley Place, a 24-unit complex of senior housing. A new facility for Oran M. Roberts Elementary School, part of the Dallas Independent School District), opened for the 2013-2014 school year.

Jubilee Park & Community Center was founded in 1997 by members of Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in conjunction with the church's 50th anniversary. During this celebration the neighborhood was renamed "Jubilee Park." Today it is a community and social service organization that provides education, housing, meals and other programs to support residents in East Dallas communities, although the majority of the members and live in North Dallas. Jubilee Park and Community Center Corporation (JPCCC) has acted as a developer in the neighborhood, building community service facilities and investing \$15 million in property acquisition and construction of new homes in partnership with Dallas City Homes, Habitat for Humanity and The Meadows Foundation. According to several sources, board member Walt Humann was a "driving force" behind Jubilee's development efforts in the community.



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Congo Street

Congo Street is a one-block long, 19-foot wide street comprised of one-story wood frame houses built in the 1920s. Initially known as Carroll Avenue, the street was renamed "Congo Street" in 1933 – reportedly to deter whites and other Texas Centennial and Fair Park visitors from venturing into the area – a blunt reminder of the segregation that existed at the time. It is considered by some to be a historic line of demarcation separating the African American and Anglo communities in the neighborhood.

The houses had for many years been owned by Topletz and GW Works, established real-estate businesses in Dallas, which control rental properties throughout the community. After the death of a member of the GW Works family, the heirs elected in the 1992 to deed several adjoining and deteriorating properties on north side of the street for \$10 each to the families living in the houses, most of whom are the children and grandchildren of former renters.

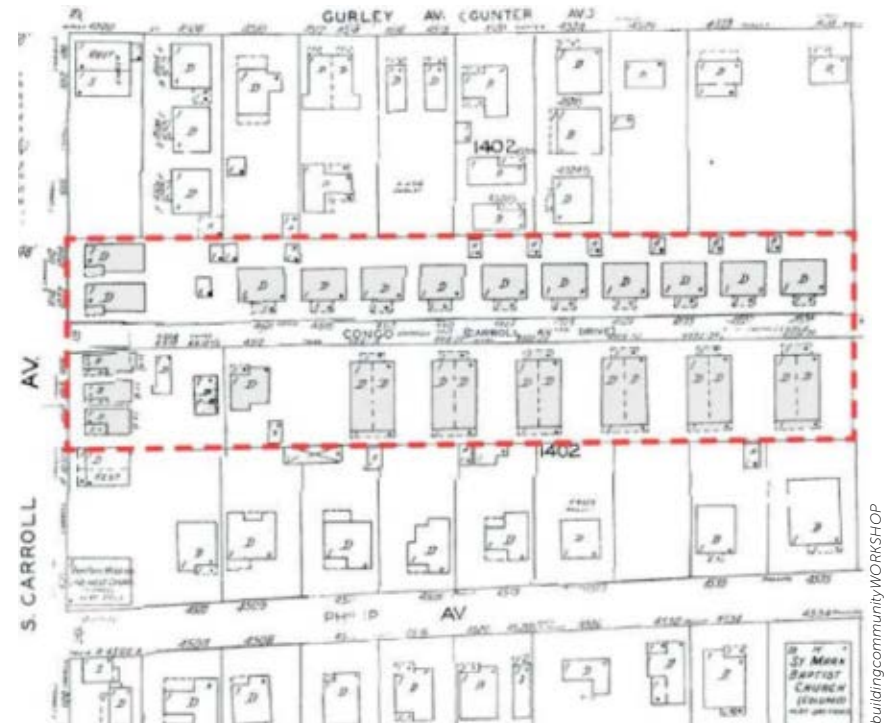


1905 Sanborn map illustrating Congo Street in relation to downtown Dallas, a neighboring house (bottom right)

The original buildings on the street each contained one or two units, each with approximately 600 square feet of living space. At the time of the transfer of title, all had been neglected for decades, suffering from leaky roofs, crumbling front porches, gaps and holes in the walls, windows and doors that didn't close properly, and outdated or absent plumbing and wiring.

Congo Street itself had also been neglected and not improved in over 40 years. The width of the paved surface ranged from 10- to 18-feet, in some places less than half the size of the typical 26-foot wide Dallas street, and looks more like an alley. The street contains one of the lowest elevations in the neighborhood, and flooded frequently due to an antiquated storm sewer, with water occasionally entering homes.

Congo Street and the houses were slated for demolition and redevelopment in a plan sponsored by JPCCC and adopted by the City of Dallas. Plans called for tearing down the houses and consolidating the lots.



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Clockwise from top: 1924 Sanborn map illustrating Carroll Drive (revised in 1952 with current street name), views along Congo Street

buildingcommunityWORKSHOP

The revival of Congo Street was made possible by buildingcommunityWORKSHOP (bcWORKSHOP), which was founded in 2005 by Dallas architect Brent A Brown. At the time, Brown had a private architectural practice (which he since closed in 2009) and was an adjunct faculty member and lecturer for the School of Architecture at University of Texas Arlington. The WORKSHOP was initially established in 2007 as a donor advised fund of the Dallas Community Fund with two gifts of \$35,000. It was incorporated into an independent 501(c)3 in 2008.

According to its mission statement, "The buildingcommunityWORKSHOP is a Dallas based nonprofit community design center seeking to improve the livability and viability of communities through the practice of thoughtful design and making. We enrich the lives of citizens by bringing design thinking to areas of our city where resources are most scarce. To do so, the bcWORKSHOP recognizes that it must first understand the social, economic, and environmental issues facing a community before beginning work."

bcWORKSHOP has expanded rapidly since its inception. In 2013 the organization operated three offices with a combined staff of 30. In 2009 bcWORKSHOP was instrumental in helping to establish the CityDesign Studio through a partnership and grant to the City of Dallas from the Trinity Trust Foundation, funded with a \$2 million gift from Deedie and Rusty Rose and a five-year contract with the City of Dallas. Housed within City Hall, the purpose of the studio is "to elevate the design consciousness and culture of Dallas, while working to balance social, economic, environmental and design sustainability towards enhancing livability of all Dallas residents."

In 2011 bcWORKSHOP established an office in the Rio Grande Valley in south Texas and in 2013 an office in Houston.

Current funding for the workshop and its projects is derived from a mix of public and private sources, including individual gifts, foundation grants and corporate contributions. Additional support has come through the form of service partnerships with AmeriCorps and local organizations.

Known as bcFELLOWS, the service program has engaged over 100 participants in work with bcWORKSHOP. Between 2007 and 2009, more than 80 individuals were supported through a partnership with CitySquare and the OneStar Foundation. Since 2009, 34 individuals were recruited from across the United States through a direct partnership between bcWORKSHOP and OneStar. In 2013 bcWORKSHOP began funding the program independently from the AmeriCorps model, with the goal of placing 10 to 14 individuals annually. Several participants in the bcFELLOWS program have joined bcWORKSHOP as permanent staff members after their service was completed.

Recent planning initiatives include:

- **Activating Vacancy:** a collaborative effort to engage residents in positive redevelopment of Dallas' historic Tenth Street District, funded with \$50,000 from the 2012 National Endowment for the Arts 'Our Town' grant program
- **City Builder Lab:** an educational program for middle school students held with Big Thought's Thriving Minds camp
- **POP Dallas:** a public design effort to strengthen the social, economic and physical health of Dallas' neighborhoods through three steps – Knowing Your City, Planning Your Neighborhood and Exploring Your Street

- **Power Plus:** an energy education initiative addressing underlying social, economic and environmental factors that influence energy use
- **sustainABLEhouse:** a partnership with community development organizations, cities and neighborhoods that provides design services to any family that wants to build and own an affordable and efficient home within the Dolphin Heights and Frazier neighborhoods in Dallas and areas of the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

bcWORKSHOP evaluates its programs and projects by measuring the number of participants, the percentage of stakeholder involvement and gathering comments and criticism.



buildingcommunityWORKSHOP office in downtown Dallas

PROJECT HISTORY

Approach to the Project

In 2007 Brown's private architectural practice received the commission to design the Walt Humann – T. Boone Pickens Community Center. The project, located a block away from Congo Street, was developed by Jubilee Park & Community Center with funding from a \$6 million gift from T. Boone Pickens.

Brown included a six-month community engagement process as part of his contract and decided to brand it as a project of buildingcommunityWORKSHOP. Ella Garrett, who owned a house on Congo Street, participated in the regular community meetings held at the site of the future center. During the course of these meetings Brown got to know her as well as Frankie Boulden and Vivian Garrett, and learned about the families living on Congo Street, walking the street with them and visiting Frankie and Ella's homes.



Brown discovered a close-knit, multigenerational community of related families living side-by-side in five houses along the north side of the street and learned about owner finances that limited their ability to make necessary repairs and improvements. Driving the street with officials from the City's housing department, Brown learned that existing programs and policies did not address owner occupied homes and he identified Congo Street as an opportunity to make a positive change.

At this time Brown was teaching an architectural design studio at University of Texas Arlington that focused on the City of Dallas and his students had selected the Jubilee Park neighborhood as their focus for an urban neighborhood project. Together Brown, a contractor, and the students began working with Congo Street residents to craft a plan to begin renovating the five houses. Key to the plan was the construction of a new "Holding House" that provided temporary housing for each family while their own home was under construction. This idea emerged from conversations with the residents who were reluctant to leave the community during the renovation of their homes. The site for the Holding House was donated by Fred Bowie (Frankie Boulden's uncle), who owned the adjacent property at 4539 Congo Street. bcWORKSHOP changed its status from a donor-advised fund to an independent 501(c)3 organization in order to acquire the property.

In 2008 bcWORKSHOP received a \$38,000 grant from The Real Estate Council (TREC) Foundation, secured with support from Jubilee Park Community Center president Don Baty to support construction of the Holding House. The Holding House was designed and constructed by University of Texas Arlington architecture students and neighborhood residents with oversight from bcWORKSHOP staff, along with guidance



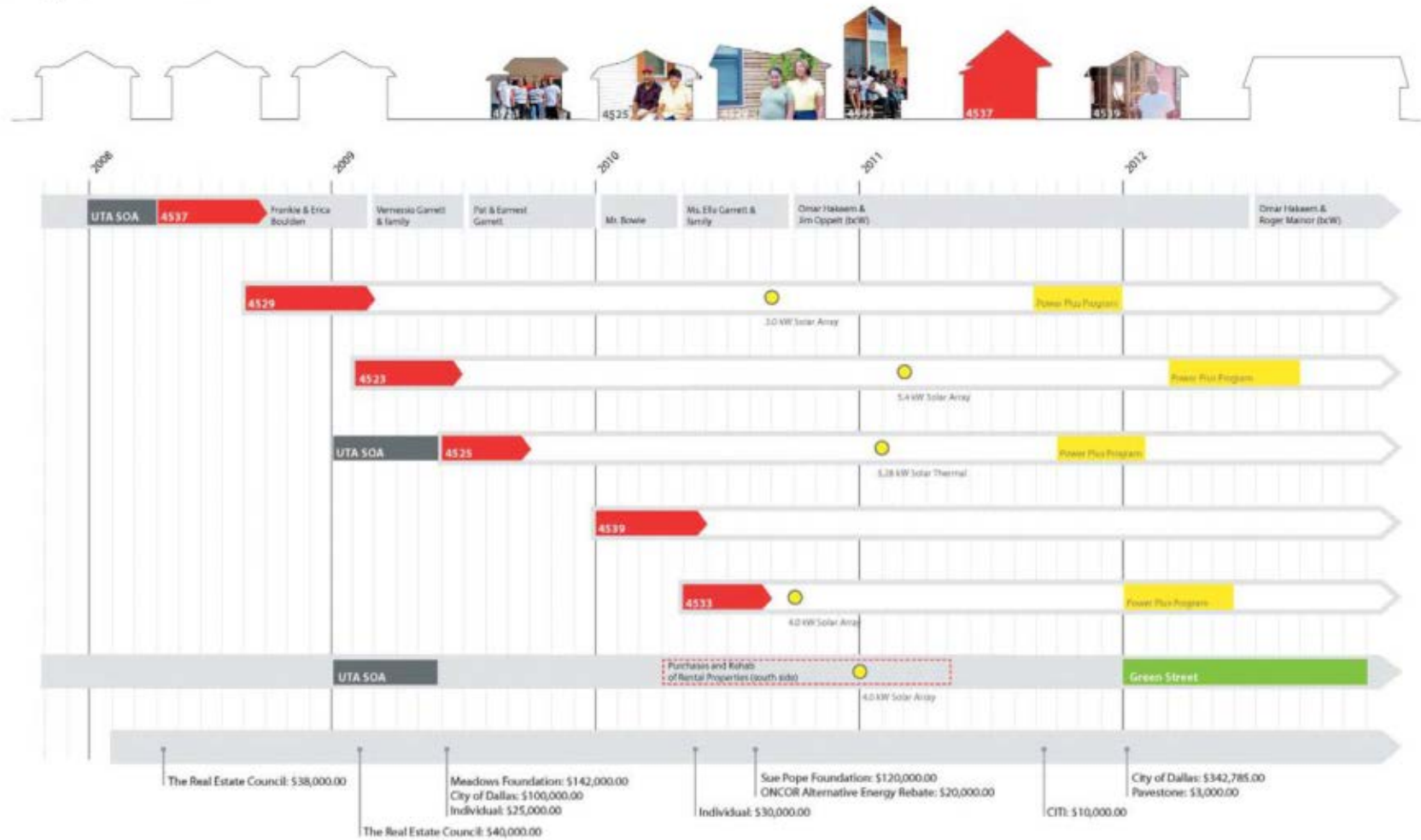
Green Street





Congo Street and the six properties prior to reconstruction (circa 2008)

Project Timeline



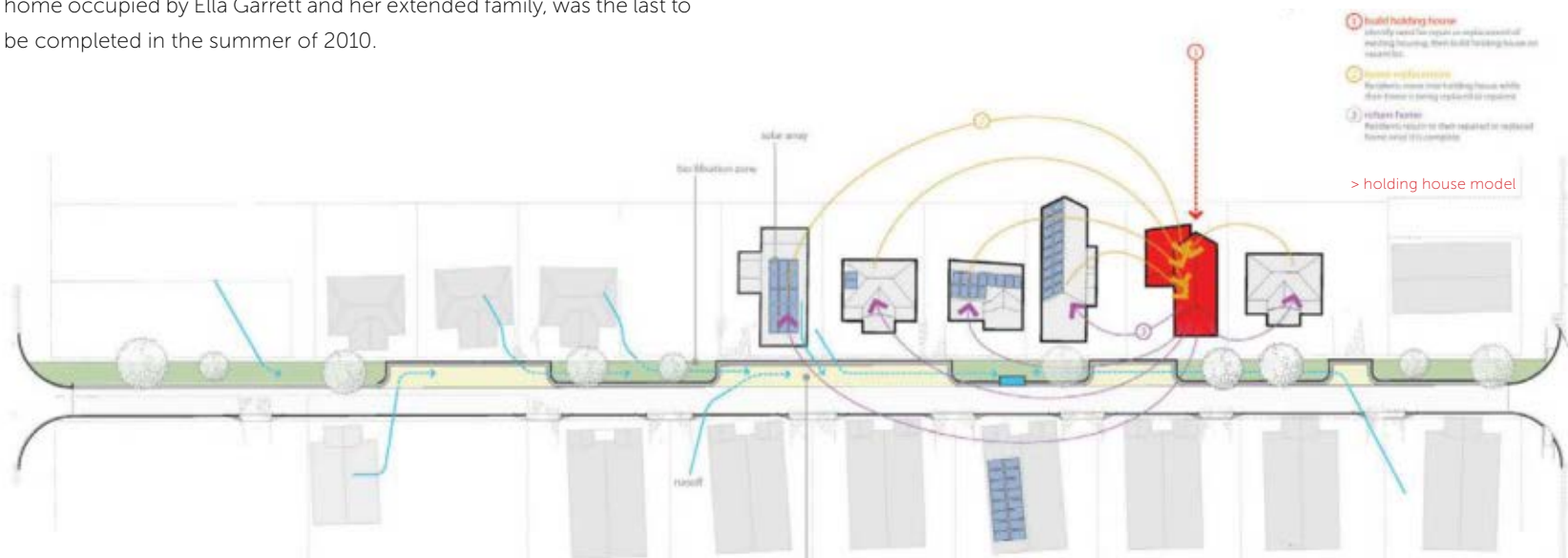
Phasing Plan

and support from Rusty Goff, a Dallas-area custom home builder and member of Saint Michaels Church and the Jubilee Park Building Committee. Homeowners, their families and other residents in the community were recruited to work on the project and provided with onsite training. Construction was completed in 2008.

bcWORKSHOP staff worked with residents to determine the order in which the houses would be renovated/reconstructed. The construction phase for each home took approximately three and a half to six months. One at a time, each family moved into the Holding House for four to six months while their own home was renovated or rebuilt. 4529 Congo Street, Frankie Boulden's house, was the first, with construction beginning in 2008 and completed in early 2009. It was followed by 4523, 4525 and 4539. 4533 Congo Street, the two-story home occupied by Ella Garrett and her extended family, was the last to be completed in the summer of 2010.



Photo & plan by bcWORKSHOP



Planning meeting with residents (top), site plan illustrating phasing of construction including relocation of families into the Holding House (in red)

Construction was made possible with funding from the City of Dallas, TREC Foundation, other corporate and philanthropic sources, and private individuals. The project also benefited from in-kind contributions of materials and a significant amount of pro-bono services and volunteer labor (refer to the Financing section for additional details).

As the last home was completed, solar panels were installed on four of the homes through a partnership with Central Dallas CDC and Patriot Solar Power LLC. Additional solar panels were installed on

one of the houses across the street that are owned by an investor group. bcWORKSHOP staff provided education and energy audits for residents through the organization's PowerPlus Program to help them understand and reduce their initially high electric bills.

bcWORKSHOP worked with a student team and faculty from the Southern Methodist University (SMU) Lyle School of Engineering to create a conceptual design for addressing problems of the street. The City of Dallas reconstructed the street in 2012 using detailed plans and construction documents developed by Dallas engineering firm.

DESIGN

The new Holding House and renovated/reconstructed homes are distinguished from other homes along Congo Street and in the neighborhood by their design, use of building materials, and construction details.

bcWORKSHOP staff and University of Texas Arlington architecture students worked with each family to develop plans for the renovation or reconstruction of their home. In each case, the process was iterative. bcWORKSHOP representatives would meet with each family, generate a design, review it with the family, revise it and meet with the family again. Sometimes the process went through as many as four full iterations. As a result, according to one resident, each house reflects each family's personality.

The initial plan was to renovate the houses, however all but one were too deteriorated and were instead taken apart and rebuilt from the foundation. In all cases, materials from existing structures were carefully

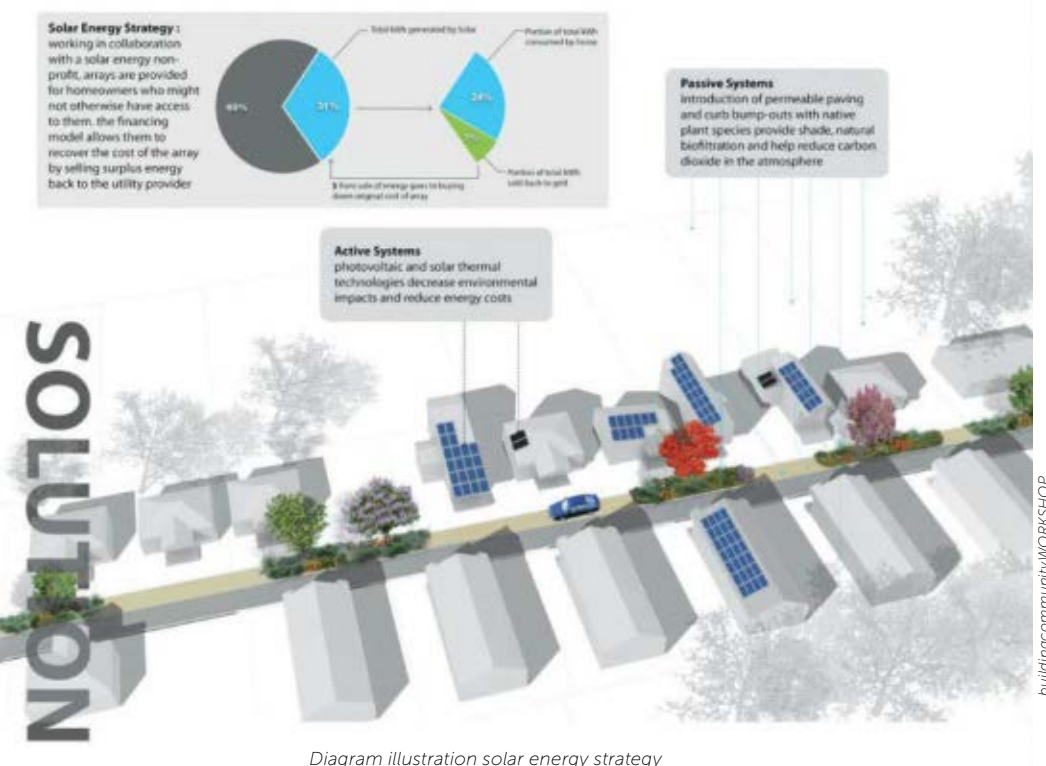


Diagram illustration solar energy strategy



sorted and placed in piles as they were removed to be recycled and reused whenever possible. According to several residents, reusing materials helped preserve for them the history and memories of their homes.

The plan for each house maintained the modest footprint of the original structure and limited the square footage in order to minimize costs (typical new affordable homes in the city average 1300-1400 square feet, about one third larger than these homes). Front porches were considered to be key elements of the homes, contributing to a sense of community and the physical and social character of the street, and are part of the unique design of each home. The rooflines of four of the houses were tilted up from the street to accommodate second floor storage areas and living spaces while maintaining the rhythm of roof eaves and small-scale character of the street.

The reconstructed houses make use of new and recycled traditional building materials – such as wood sheathing and siding, asphalt roof shingles, vinyl windows and wood doors – that are used in combination with modern materials – such as galvanized and painted metal siding – and detailed in new ways. Original wide plank wood sheathing (used under wood siding on the existing structure) is used here as exterior cladding in contrast to traditional wood siding. Other boards are used as casing around windows. Cleaned and stripped wood siding is re-installed as a rain shield over new exterior walls.

Photos: Noe Medrano & bclWORKSHOP



Planning meetings with residents and construction details



Clockwise from top: property prior to construction, exterior, living room

Residents of the street have given each building a nickname that reflects its external appearance:

4537 Congo Street is the Holding House. It is owned by bcWORK-SHOP and at the time of the site visit housed two of its staff. The house is referred to as the "House on the Lake" by Congo Street residents. Designed to house each family while their own home was under construction, the two-bedroom, one bath house has a living/dining room/kitchen with a cathedral ceiling and storage loft.



Clockwise from top left: exterior before and after, interior looking towards kitchen, Frankie and Erica Boulden, living room

4529 Congo Street is occupied by Frankie Boulden and her daughter Erica. Referred to as "Little House on the Prairie," the reconstructed house has two bedrooms and one bath. The lower level contains the living room/dining room, kitchen, a bedroom, bathroom, and alcove that Ms. Boulden uses as a study. An open stair to the second floor bedroom acts as a divider between the living room and kitchen. Cleaned and stripped wood siding was reinstalled on the interior living room wall and on the exterior rain shield.



Clockwise from top left: before, side view, Vernessia Garrett and her family, front facade

4523 Congo Street, known as the "Sleigh House" is occupied by Vernessia Garrett and her family. The original, one-story, 525-square foot structure was replaced with a deep, narrow house that rises from one story in the front to two stories in the back with a wood-clad room that juts from one side. The reconstructed house provides 880-square feet of living space.



Clockwise from top left: Pat and Ernest Garrett, after, side view, before

4525 Congo Street, "The Business House," is owned by Pat and Ernest Garrett. This renovated house retains the original floor plate. A new foundation was installed and the roof of the house was raised and tilted up in back to accommodate second floor living space.



2013 RUDY BRUNER AWARD



Clockwise from top left: before, Frank Bowie, interior, after



Photos by Noe Medrano & buildingcommunity WORKSHOP



Clockwise from top left: before and after, Ella Garrett and her family, stair

4539 Congo Street, the "Western House," is owned by Frank Bowie, who donated the adjacent property for construction of the Holding House. From the outside, this house appears the most "traditional" and resembles the original structures on the street. It is one of two houses that were renovated rather than rebuilt. The interior rooms were opened up per Mr. Bowie's request.

4533 Congo Street, the "Titanic," is occupied by Ella Garrett and her extended family of six. The existing, single story, 525 square foot structure was replaced by a new, two-story, approximately 800 square foot structure. The compact floor plans include a living/dining room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom on the first floor and three bedrooms on the second. To maximize floor space inside the house the staircase to the second floor was pushed outside the building footprint and is enclosed in red metal siding, which gives it the ocean liner appearance and nickname. The house is the only two-story structure on the street and has enclosed porches on both floors. The owners have added plastic sheeting inside the screening of the first floor porch which now functions as storage space. Staff from bcWORKSHOP acknowledged that while this personalization by the owners suited their needs for additional space, it was unanticipated and detracts from the intended purpose of preserving the front porch as an outdoor living room and social space open to the street as it functioned on the original house.

The five reconstructed houses have been certified LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Homes) Platinum (the highest rating) and the Holding House has been certified Gold by the US Green Building Council. Green features include recycled/reclaimed materials, super-insulated building envelope, high efficiency/multi-zone HVAC systems, Energy Star fixture/appliances, solar photovoltaic panels, EPA Water Sense interior plumbing fixtures and high-efficiency glazing units.

Street Design and Reconstruction

A team of two Southern Methodist University engineering students overseen by a PhD student and a professor conducted research and developed a design for the street that integrates techniques such as permeable paving and bio swales. Huitt-Zollars Inc., a Dallas engineering firm, provided guidance with technical details and helped producing drawings. After the design was approved, the City commissioned Huitt-Zollars Inc. to develop more detailed plans and construction documents. buildingcommunityWORKSHOP recruited engineer Nigel Smallridge from Nigel Nixon & Partners to assist with the design.

The reconstructed street, completed in 2012, maintains the existing, narrow right-of-way. The primary right-of-way is paved with asphalt and has concrete curbs and a central storm drain. Four areas lined with concrete pavers along the north side provide space for parallel parking and access to driveways.

A landscaped bio-swale along the north side collects water from house roofs and properties, where it is filtered before draining into underground storm drains (required due to dense, clay soil). The concrete pavers are intended to provide permeable surface that allows rainwater



The reconstructed street includes permeable paving (with standing water at time of site visit) and a landscaped bio swale

water to drain slowly into the ground rather than running directly into the storm drain and sewer. Congo Street is the first publicly developed street in the City to incorporate a bio swale.

Unlike neighboring streets, Congo Street has no sidewalk, except for a small section in front of the Holding House. This section was constructed before residents decided that a sidewalk was not needed and requested an exception to the requirement. The narrow roadway functions as a sidewalk, a street, and – according to Brown – “the kids’ playground. The neighborhood is like one big house.”

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

While it is likely that Congo Street would not have happened without Brown and bcWORKSHOP, additional community partnerships and resources – many of which the two brought to the table – were instrumental in facilitating the project's completion.

AmeriCorps members have contributed significant technical expertise and labor to the project. AmeriCorps provides opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds to serve through a network of partnerships with local and national nonprofit groups. AmeriCorps members have worked as bcFELLOWS over the years through a program funded by the OneStar Foundation and managed by CitySquare, a Dallas-based nonprofit that offers a variety of programs that address poverty in the city as well as in San Antonio and Austin.

The City of Dallas provided funding via the Department of Housing/Community Services and the Department of Public Works and Transportation to support construction of three houses and the reconstruction of Congo Street.

Jubilee Park & Community Center/Jubilee Park and Community Center Corporation (JPCCC) was founded in 1997 by members of Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in conjunction with the church's 50th anniversary. Today it is a human and community service organization that provides education, housing, meals and other programs to support residents in East Dallas communities, although the majority of the members work and live in North Dallas. JPCCC's investment in the community has drawn support from other funders, including the City of Dallas and Meadows Foundation. While JPCCC did not play a direct role in the Congo Street project, many volunteers and

leaders associated with the organization did, and the organization's investments in the community and their decision to hire Brown and bcWORKSHOP to design several facilities were key to its inception.

The Meadows Foundation is a private foundation established in 1948 with a broad mission to benefit the people of Texas. Since 2009 Meadows has granted a total of \$312,000 to bcWORKSHOP, including \$142,000 to support the Congo Street Initiative. The project is aligned with the Foundation's interest in addressing the need for affordable housing in Dallas and its significant investments in Jubilee, including Jubilee Park and Community Center. Foundation staff like bcWORKSHOP's innovative and creative approaches to addressing urban problems including the process of working with the neighborhood and engaging people in the process, keeping residents in place, and connecting green building goals with affordable housing.

Patriot Solar Power LLC supplied solar panels for Congo Street houses. It is a limited liability company that makes solar power available to residents living in areas where the median income is less than 80% of the Dallas Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) through a partnership with Central Dallas Community Development Corporation. Panels are installed at no cost, with the company receiving as lease payments a portion of the utility bills paid by participants.

The Real Estate Council (TREC) is a membership organization that provides networking for professionals in the real estate industry (Brown is a member). The TREC Foundation is a 501(c)3 philanthropy that invests the resources of the commercial real estate community in low-to-moderate-income neighborhoods. The Foundation provides grants, loans and pro-bono services through an annual Associate Leadership

Council (ALC) class project. Each class selects a service project and contributes time, talent, services and dollars to the project. In 2008 the class chose to work on the reconstruction of 4523 Congo Street.

Southern Methodist University (SMU) and the University of Texas at Arlington provided in-kind support through student labor. The University of Texas at Arlington School of Architecture students provided initial design and construction services for Congo Street through design/build studios taught by Brown. Several students have gone on to work for bcWORKSHOP including associate director Benje Feehan. The Southern Methodist University Lyle School of Engineering supplied in-kind support via students and faculty who provided design and engineering services in connection with the reconstruction of Congo Street.

FINANCING

The total development cost for Congo Street Initiative was \$975,000. Funding for the project came from a broad range of public, private and non-profit sources, including the City of Dallas (53%), private foundations (23%), businesses and corporations (10%) and individual contributions (10%). The balance came from the ONCOR Energy Rebate (3%), and Brown’s architecture firm and teaching stipend (2%).

Expenses included property acquisition, construction, professional services (design, engineering, project management, etc.) and construction materials. Construction costs for the houses totaled \$473,550 or 51%. Reconstruction of the street totaled \$413,785 or 44%. The remaining costs included site acquisition and bcWORKSHOP’s PowerPlus program.

TABLE 1: PROJECT BUDGET

Overall Project Budget		
<i>Sources</i>		
City of Dallas - Street		\$396,130
City of Dallas - Buildings		\$100,000
Meadows Foundation		\$142,000
Sue Pope Foundation		\$70,535
The Real Estate Council		\$78,000
Individuals		\$90,927
Oncor Alternative Energy Rebate		\$29,215
Citi		\$10,000
Pavestone		\$3,000
	Subtotal	\$919,807
<i>Uses</i>		
Buildings		\$473,550
Street		\$413,785
Property Acquisition		\$22,472
PowerPlus Program		\$10,000
	Subtotal	\$919,807

TABLE 2: 4523 CONGO STREET PROJECT BUDGET**4523 Congo Street Project Budget**

	bcWORKSHOP	TRECALC*	In-kind	Total
Construction Management	\$8,480	\$4,000		\$12,480
Consultants (geotechnical, structural, survey)			\$4,000	\$4,000
Materials	\$5,000	\$19,000	\$6,000	\$30,000
Subcontractors (electrical, mechanical, plumbing, insulation, pest control, roofing, security, storage, windows)	\$400	\$16,950		\$17,350
Americorps	\$18,000			\$18,000
LEED Home	\$1,500			\$1,500
Total	\$33,380	\$39,950	\$10,000	\$83,330

*TREC Association Leadership Class

According to bcWORKSHOP, the construction costs for the individual structures ranged from \$27,615 to \$104,515 each, with total construction averaging \$65 to \$75 per square foot. These costs do not reflect the entire value of in-kind donations of materials and services which included a variety of donated building materials and a significant amount of pro-bono or discounted design services and volunteer labor. The kind and value of the contributions varied greatly from house to house and there is little documentation of value and number of hours provided.

The most detailed records exist for 4523 Congo Street, which was funded and constructed by The Real Estate Council (TREC). TREC provided the first outside funding for the Congo Street project, making a \$38,000

grant to bcWORKSHOP in 2008 to support construction of the Holding House (4537 Congo Street). Then, in 2009, TREC provided a \$40,000 grant and pro-bono services for the demolition and reconstruction of 4523 Congo Street through its Association Leadership Class (ALC). The twenty-five members from the class gave assistance securing in-kind contributions of building materials and provided pro-bono services including volunteer and staff management; construction and schedule management; design and estimating; public relations and marketing; fundraising and donations; and title, tax and legal services. The latter included title work and surveys, waivers/memos of understanding between bcWORKSHOP and the homeowner, a restrictive covenant on the sale of property that protected the Foundation's investment, and a legal instrument alleviating the tax burden on the property owner

that was used on all the Congo Street projects. The total construction cost of 4523 Congo Street is valued at about \$83,330, including grants and in-kind contributions of materials and labor, including over 2,000 volunteer hours (at \$10/hour) from 25 volunteers in the class.

The project was financed through a variety of sources over the five years of the project. Initial funding for site acquisition and construction materials was provided by bcWORKSHOP, with Brown paying some of the expenses with his personal credit card, which illustrates both the risk taking and the level of trust that enabled the project to go forward. As bcWORKSHOP became more formalized and the project more established, additional contributions were received.

The City of Dallas provided significant financial support for the project that totaled \$496,130, including a two-year \$100,000 loan from the Department of Housing/Community Services to support deconstruction/reconstruction costs for three houses (4525, 4539 and 4533 Congo Street) and \$396,130 from the Department of Public Works and Transportation to reconstruct the street. The loan was forgiven once construction was completed. Brown cites Jerry Killingsworth, former Director of Housing for the City of Dallas, as a key proponent of the project.

The Meadows Foundation contributed a total of \$142,000 in grants to support renovation/reconstruction of the five existing houses. Additional funding was provided by the Sue Pope Foundation (\$70,535), Citi (\$10,000) and individual donors (\$90,927).

Considerable volunteer hours (in addition to TREC's Associate Leadership Council 2008-09 class detailed above) came from students from the University of Texas at Arlington School of Architecture, AmeriCorps volunteers, Volunteers in Service to America, and local service groups. A full accounting of total volunteer hours and their value in dollars has not been made.

IMPACT

According to several people interviewed for this case study, Congo Street Initiative changed perceptions and expectations in Dallas about affordable housing, green design and how to approach redevelopment of existing communities as well as ways to attract new investment to the community.

Changing Perceptions about Affordable Housing

The project has inspired people in Dallas – including community residents, builder's, designers, developers, funders and city officials – to think differently about affordable housing. The striking design of the houses has challenged assumptions about what affordable housing looks like, and the feasibility of constructing energy-efficient, LEED certified homes that are also affordable.

The new and reconstructed homes on Congo Street do not resemble other affordable houses in the community constructed by the City of Dallas or Habitat for Humanity. The City of Dallas develops approximately 500 new units of affordable housing a year. They range from 300 to 1400 square feet and cost an average \$75,000. Typical new homes in the Jubilee neighborhood are simple, one-story, slab-on-grade ranch-style homes with brick facades. Unlike these houses,

the Congo Street homes been referred to as “artful” and “interesting” architecture, appreciated for their creative recycling and reuse of existing materials.

Community reaction to the completed project has been positive. bcWORKSHOP is working with Dolphin Heights Neighborhood Association on a housing development project modeled on Congo Street, described in the next section.

Rethinking Approaches to Community Redevelopment

Congo Street appears to have influenced how designers, developers and city representatives think about the design process. The project has inspired them to do more to engage residents and the community in the planning process, and make better use of existing, small building lots rather than merging them into larger ones.

The project has had a “trickle-up” effect, encouraging people who work for the city to consider different approaches to affordable housing, community engagement, redevelopment and sustainable development. It has inspired the city and other developers to think more globally and approach development differently. The City has begun encouraging other developers to look to Congo Street as a model and has established an ongoing relationship with bcWORKSHOP.

Congo Street has become a popular attraction for people interested in architecture, planning and sustainable development. The Dallas planning department regularly takes people on tours of the street to look at the Holding House design and Green Street elements.



Clockwise from top: Cobbie Ransom and Henry Ngyen from City of Dallas, landscaped bio swale, children at play



Green Streets and Sustainable Development

The project has also influenced the city's attitude towards street design. Congo Street is the first public street in the City of Dallas to incorporate permeable paving and a bio swale. The City of Dallas is now looking at incorporating rain gardens and bio swales in other projects, and has started sending staff to training programs on green design. The Assistant City Manager has directed the Public Works Department to develop new standards for storm water retention on streets.

Clockwise from top: Gurley Place senior housing, neighboring property for sale, house renovated by investor group

Attracting Additional Investment

This project has attracted additional development and investment. In 2010 a group of investors assembled by Robert Comacho, a local real estate broker and investor who owns and manages 45 properties in the area, purchased six duplexes containing twelve units on the south side of Congo Street. Approximately \$30,000 to \$40,000 was invested in each unit to upgrade foundations, electrical and plumbing systems, kitchens and bathrooms. Based on the appearance of the units from outside and reports of residents, the quality of these renovations is not up to the standards of the five houses reconstructed by bcWORKSHOP. The units now rent for \$495-\$595 per month. The Topletz family continues to own the corner properties on the street, one of which was being offered for sale at the time of our visit.

There has been additional development adjacent to Congo Street. In 2012 24 units of senior housing developed by Jubilee Park and Community Center and designed by bcWORKSHOP were completed on Gurley Avenue, the next street to the north.

bcWORKSHOP began working in a neighboring community with the Dolphin Heights Neighborhood Association (DHNA) on a housing development project modeled on Congo Street. The goal of the project is to construct three holding houses for use in neighborhood revitalization, using Neighborhood Stabilization Program funding awarded by the state to DHNA. bcWORKSHOP has a strong and ongoing relationship with the Dolphin Heights neighborhood and has been involved in several efforts since, including designing a playground, providing support for the neighborhood association and after school programming, and conducting a National Endowment for the Arts POP Neighborhood Stories event in March 2013.



Brent Brown

Leadership, Trust and Risk Taking

Many of the people directly and indirectly involved in the project note the critical role that bcWORKSHOP and particularly Brown played in this process. He and bcWORKSHOP effectively leveraged relationships with the city and other partners to bring resources – such as the City, TREC, Meadows Foundation and others – to a street that had been largely overlooked. As one person put it “But for Brent Brown, the houses would have been torn down.”

Key to the project was establishing trust with residents on a street that had been overlooked by the City of Dallas and written off by the local nonprofit leading investment efforts in the neighborhood. Brown established trust by spending time getting to know the residents of Congo Street and by following through on his commitment to the project. As one person noted, “Brent is a person of his word. When he says he will do something you know he will do it.” The project may not have gotten started without Brown paying the back taxes owed on the

property out of his own pocket. He risked his personal resources on this project but, locals repeatedly point out, risk taking is considered to be a part of Dallas’ entrepreneurial culture. Brown’s “can do” approach was an important aspect of making an initially risky project like Congo Street possible. One person referred to his “tenacity” and “impatience” that made it possible to get the project going.

Brown also needed to overcome resistance to the project by Jubilee Park and Community Center, which had invested in a community plan that called for demolition and redevelopment of Congo Street. At one point Walt Humann from Jubilee told Brown to cease and desist because this project didn’t fit into the Jubilee master plan, but Brown persisted because of his personal commitment to the residents.

Brown and bcWORKSHOP succeeded in bringing the community – including local residents, the city and organizations in the broader, Dallas community – together to make the project possible. He has been visibly active in design, development and planning in Dallas and he has been able to leverage personal and business relationships to broker key partnerships with the City of Dallas, TREC and Meadows Foundation to bring resources to the project.

Brown has also been a leader nationally in the fields of community and public interest design. The bcFELLOWS program attracts recent graduates from architecture, planning and other disciplines from across the country and introduces them to the practice of community design at bcWORKSHOP’s three locations in Texas. One recent participant joined bcWORKSHOP after working at the Gulf Coast Design Studio in Mississippi and went on to become an Enterprise Rose Fellow at the Detroit Collaborative Design Center.

Much of the success of the Congo Street project rides on Brown and his force of personality, talent and will power. He has succeeded in attracting a significant amount of monetary and social capital to the project, that made it possible. It is not clear to what degree a similar project could happen or if bcWORKSHOP would continue without him.

The Value of Human and Social Capital

The Congo Street Initiative would not have been possible without significant contributions of pro-bono and discounted professional services, and student and volunteer labor, including donated design and engineering services from bcWORKSHOP, SMU and UTA students and faculty. In addition to construction labor, TREC volunteers working on 4523 Congo Street supplied estimating, scheduling and construction management, public relations and marketing expertise, fundraising, title, tax and legal services and homeowner education including financial planning and homeowner manuals.

The project exposed students, AmeriCorps VISTA participants and TREC volunteers to a different side of Dallas and a different way of working with clients and community. Several formed strong bonds with Congo Street residents and regularly stop by to say “hello” and participate in celebrations and other events. Two bcFELLOWS continue to live on the street in the Holding House, which is owned by bcWORKSHOP.

The five renovated/reconstructed houses are owned by members of the extended Garrett family. It is unclear how this project might have proceeded without such close connections among the residents.

Community Design

The overall approach and tactics that bcWORKSHOP employed – spending time in a community, involving residents and students in the design and building process, and brokering relationships with other partners resources – are shared by other nonprofit community design centers in the United States. What stands out is the degree to which bcWORKSHOP’s staff – particularly Brown – immersed themselves in the community and the project and invested significant amounts of in-kind time and expertise.



Construction involved residents, job training participants, and bcWORKSHOP staff, fellows and AmeriCorps interns

Also noteworthy is the degree to which Brown and the WORKSHOP work at different capacities and scales – engaging in design/build projects such as Congo Street, involving urban design via the City-Design studio, and providing homeowner educational programs like the Power Plus program. This approach has the potential to yield significance influence over time, helping to increase understanding in Dallas about the role of design in urban development. Additionally, bcWORKSHOP is influencing the future of design practice by introducing recent architecture, landscape architecture and planning graduates to community design through the bcFELLOWS program.

Awards and Recognition

Brown and bcWORKSHOP are gaining local and national attention for their work. The project has won several local and national awards including:

- 2008 Dallas AIA Excellence in Community Design Award & Excellence in Sustainable Design Award (Holding House)
- 2010 Dallas AIA Excellence in Community Design Award & Excellence in Sustainable Design Award (4533 Congo Street/ Ella Garrett's House)
- 2010 AIA & US Housing and Urban Development Department Secretary's Award: Excellence in Community Informed Design (Congo Street)
- 2011 SEED National Competition Winner (Congo Street)

Additionally, the US Housing and Urban Development published a profile of the project in April 2013.



Residents, volunteers, staff and alumni gather at the Holding House to celebrate buildingcommunityWORKSHOP's fifth anniversary

Assessing Success

- [Disrupt the systemic inequality threatening the residents of Congo Street](#)

The project enabled the families who lived on a street targeted for demolition and redevelopment – assuming the Jubilee redevelopment plan went forward – to remain in place. It succeeded in bringing attention to the families and to an area of the city that had been overlooked. At this point it is unclear to what degree the project has disrupted the system as a whole.

- [Improve the livelihood and housing conditions of the residents without displacing any in the process](#)

The project succeeded in improving the housing conditions of five families (a total of 27 people) without displacing any in the process. It is likely that the improved living conditions and stability that comes from not worrying about dislocation will likely make a difference in their lives. One resident was hired as an AmeriCorps VISTA participant during the project and continues to work occasionally for bcWORKSHOP and another contractor. There are reportedly fewer incidents on the street involving the police.

- [Maintain the social fabric of this small community](#)

The approach enabled the five families who have lived together on this street to remain in place, even during construction, and maintained the social fabric of the street.

- [Make the housing more efficient and affordable](#)

The financing of the project enabled residents to move into newly constructed or reconstructed homes without assuming any costs associated with the improvements. Given what we saw and heard about the previous structures, it seems safe to assume that the LEED certified houses are more energy efficient than the previous structures, although that has not been documented by a review of utility bills. bcWORKSHOP worked with residents to understand power usage and reduce their utility bills when they moved back into their homes.

- [Improve the street in a manner that is consistent with its history, culture, and character](#)

Conditions on Congo Street, particularly for residents living in new or reconstructed homes, have improved. The design and construction of the six houses reflect the history and patterns of lives of the residents and, to varying degrees, incorporate the vernacular architectural character and building materials of the original homes. The street no longer floods and the narrow design and lack of sidewalks preserve its historical proportions and function as a social space for the community.

- [Create trustworthy relationships with the people and the families in order to serve and empower them](#)

Brown and bcWORKSHOP established a high level of trust and respect with the families on Congo Street and other people in the community. That trust and the collaborative approach enabled them to engage the residents in the design and construction/reconstruction of their homes and street. The residents had input into the design of their homes, learned about building and design, and participated in the construction. Brown has established a significant amount of trust

with a number of partners in the community – including the City of Dallas, foundations, universities, nonprofit and corporate partners – that, in turn, helped to empower the residents by providing access to resources.

- [Create a viable model than can be reproduced](#)

While the project is compelling and there are lessons that can be applied to other projects, there are circumstances that make this project unique including: Brown and his ability to build trust and attract talent and resources; the intergenerational families living in the five houses; and the risk taking attitude that infuses this venture and Dallas as a whole. When one factors in the value of volunteer labor and services that went into the project that enabled the custom design and construction/deconstruction of each home, the costs of the project become substantial. Even Brown does not suggest that this is a model for Dallas or national development.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Congo Street Initiative, like 2013 RBA Gold Medalist Inspiration Kitchens – Garfield Park and Silver Medalist The Steel Yard, illustrates the potential of small projects to drive larger change. As the Selection Committee commented, “it is not about making a big plan, but rather planting small seeds.” In this case a project directly affecting only five families on a tiny street may have changed the way the City of Dallas views the process of involving residents in affordable housing design, as well as their approach to sustainable street infrastructure. The project also illustrates the value of hands-on projects that involve people directly in the process of “making” change in their communities.

The Selection Committee commended Congo Street Initiative for the collaborative process of development, particularly the involvement of homeowners in the design and construction of the houses in a meaningful way. Selection Committee members commented on the importance of the Holding House as an innovative approach to avoid the displacement of residents during the construction process, a common challenge in community revitalization efforts.

The Committee also noted the significance of addressing broader sustainable development and ecological goals in the rehabilitation of existing housing and street infrastructure. The project illustrates that alternatives to more typical “redevelopment” – demolition and new construction – are possible, including more idiosyncratic approaches that retain the unique characteristics of a community’s architecture and culture. Ultimately, it was agreed, Congo Street offers a different way of thinking about community development.



Brent Brown with Ella and Vivian Garrett

The engagement of the local community in the process, including students and volunteers, was recognized as a significant contribution. In particular, the Committee noted the value of involving and mentoring young design professionals, commenting that the bcFELLOWS program "is about education in a very real way." There was excitement about the potential of the program and bcWORKSHOP to influence the next generation of design practitioners and, in turn, shape the future of design practice.



Looking north on Congo Street

Like many of the 2013 RBA winners, Congo Street had been recently completed at the time of our site visit, and it was not possible to gauge its performance and long-term impact over time. Our site visit team and selection committee members expressed concerns about the durability of some of the construction details and finishes, some of which were already showing signs of damage and wear. Much of the appeal of the project has to do with the attention to design, including many innovative and unique details, such as the new rain screen on 4529 Congo Street that makes use of the original wood clapboards. Time will tell whether the construction holds to normal wear and tear and maintenance.

While the committee recognized the importance of Congo Street Initiative in bringing attention to sustainable development in Dallas, members suggested that the project should have considered the project in respect to the broader ecological and community context. Understanding the underlying ecology – such as hydrology and the network of neighborhood green spaces – could have informed decisions on Congo Street and made connections to the adjoining community that may have increased its impact.

Ultimately, the most significant question will be Congo Street Initiative's long-term impact in the community. Anecdotal evidence gathered from interviews with project participants and representatives from the City and immediate community suggest that it has catalyzed interest and generated discussions about sustainable development and new approaches to community development in Dallas, and possibly elsewhere. If so, the idea that a small-scale, organically developed project like Congo Street Initiative can change the way a city like Dallas approaches development is compelling.

Resources

INTERVIEWS*

buildingcommunityWORKSHOP:

Brent Brown, Founding Executive Director
Benje Feehan, Associate Director
Elizabeth Jones, Evaluator

Residents:

Frankie Boulden, owner, 4529 Congo Street
Ella Mae Garrett, owner, 4533 Congo Street
Vivian Garrett, resident, 4533 Congo Street
Ernest and Pat Garrett, owners, 4525 Congo Street

City Agency Staff:

Cynthia Rogers Erickson, Manager/Development Contracts,
City of Dallas Housing/Community Services
Henry Ngyen, Program Manager, City of Dallas Public Works
and Transportation
Cobbie Ransom, Neighborhood Development Manager,
City of Dallas Housing/Community Services
Miguel Serrano, Manager II/Inspector, City of Dallas Housing/
Community Services

Community Representatives:

Don Baty, Jubilee Park & Community Center Corporation,
former board member
Joe Beaudette, Construction Professional, Beaudette Construction Services
Shawn Busari, Jubilee Park community resident
Robert Comacho, Broker Associate, Keller Williams Real Estate
Anna Hill, President & CEO, Dolphin Heights Neighborhood Association Inc.
Jemonde Taylor, former Chaplain, St Michael's Episcopal Church

Consultants and Volunteers:

Kate Alpert, National Business Development Officer, Stewart Title; Volunteer,
The Real Estate Council
Robert Cabral, graduate student in Urban Planning and Landscape
Architecture, University of Michigan
Sarah Hamzeh, University of Texas Arlington student, volunteer
Emily Henry, Associate/Landscape Architect, TBG
Wahid Manawi, PhD student, Southern Methodist University Lyle School
of Engineering
Harry McDonald, AmeriCorps Volunteer

Funders:

Larry James, President & CEO, CitySquare
Michael McCoy, Senior Program Officer, Meadows Foundation
Linda McMahon, President & CEO, The Real Estate Council
Robin Minnick, Foundation Director, The Real Estate Council

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Silver Medal Winner

Louisville Waterfront Park

Louisville, Kentucky





Waterfront Development Corporation

Overview

Submitted by: Waterfront Development Corporation (WDC)

Completed: 2013

Total Development Cost: \$95 million

Louisville Waterfront Park, an 85-acre riverfront park developed over more than two decades, reconnects the city of Louisville with the Ohio River.

Waterfront Development Corporation (WDC) transformed industrial land along the Ohio River occupied by an elevated highway, sand and gravel companies, and scrap yards into a new riverside park and gateway to the city. Planning for the park began in 1986 with the creation of the WDC, a quasi-public agency, to oversee the development of Louisville's riverfront. WDC held ten public meetings soliciting input on proposed development of the site that yielded a strong desire for green space. Subsequently, they initiated an international search for a design firm beginning with a Request for Qualifications to which 85 firms responded. Hargreaves Associates, one of four firms invited to Louisville to meet with WDC and city representatives to present their ideas, was ultimately selected to create the master plan and design for the \$95 million park.

"THE PARK HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OWNERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING A PROJECT OF THIS SCALE, PROVIDING A MODEL FOR OTHER POST-INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT CITIES." *—2013 Section Committee*

The park provides an important green space for the city and visual and physical connections to the river. Its linear configuration stretches east to west along the Ohio's southern shore in a series of linked spaces that include trails, landscaped areas for active and passive activities, children's play areas, and public art. At its center, the Great Lawn and adjoining water feature draw people from downtown to the river's edge. The lawn is tilted from the higher city elevation toward the water, opening river views from downtown under the elevated highway while still protecting the city from periodic floods. A memorial to Kentucky native (and 16th president) Abraham Lincoln includes interpretive panels that highlight his life and how his visits to Louisville influenced his opposition to slavery. Two privately-operated restaurants provide riverside dining, and a boathouse and marina offer access for rowers and motorboats.

The park was constructed in three phases. The first phase focused on the western area immediately adjacent to downtown, the second on the eastern end, and the third on the remaining center section. The Big Four Bridge is the most recent addition to the park, rehabilitating a former railroad structure into a pedestrian and bike path that spans the river and will connect Kentucky with Indiana when the northern landing is completed (projected for 2014).

Two-thirds of the park's development was funded by the city, county, and state, with the remainder donated by corporations, foundations, and individuals. Today, the county and state continue to provide the majority of its operational funding, while WDC generates income from event rentals and business leases.

More than 120 events are held at the park every year. These include concerts, walks for charities, and sports events. Large special events like the July 3rd & 4th Waterfront Independence Festival and fireworks and the Kentucky Derby Festival's Thunder Over Louisville draw thousands. The park is also home to the Belle of Louisville, a historic paddle wheeler operated by WDC that offers educational programming for children and adults.

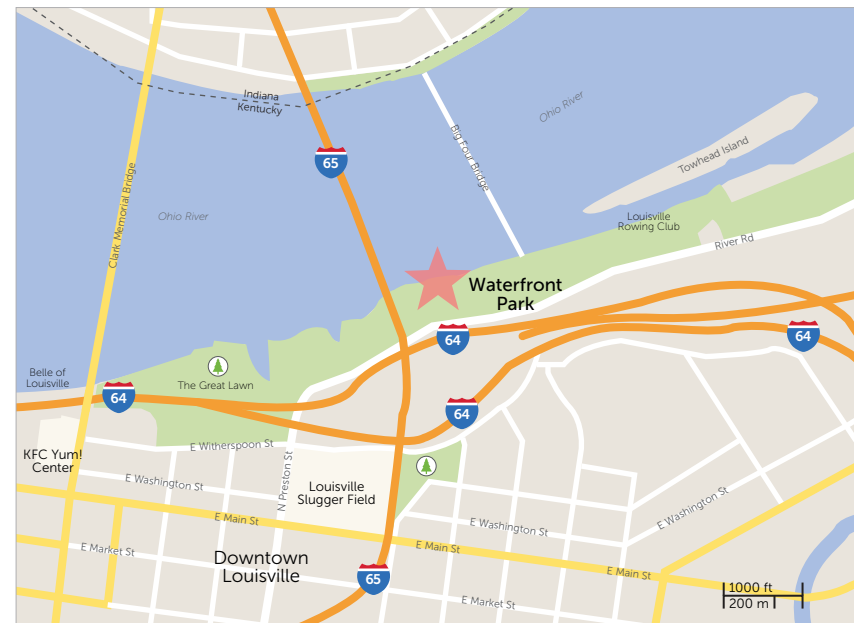
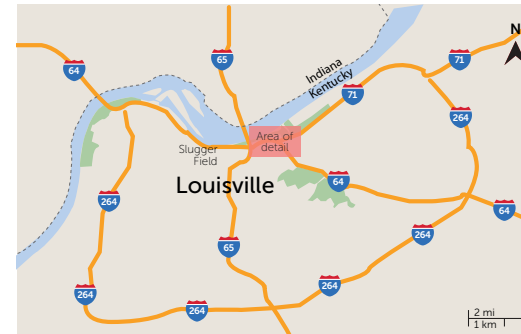
Since its inception over 25 years ago, Louisville Waterfront Park has become a new town commons for the city, attracting over 1.5 million visitors a year. It has sparked an estimated \$1.3 billion investment in the Waterfront District including residential apartments and condominiums, Louisville Slugger Field, and the Yum! Center sports and concert arena. The park has garnered attention from other waterfront cities and is one of five from around the world featured in the Reclaiming the Edge: Urban Waterways and Civic Engagement exhibit at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, DC.





Project-at-a-Glance

- An 85-acre urban park reconnecting downtown Louisville with the Ohio River.
- Transformed an industrial wasteland into an attractive gateway to the city.
- Attracts 1.5 million visitors per year.
- Offers a wide variety of informal and organized activities, including festivals, concerts, fireworks, and special events.
- Contains a variety of landscaped areas, performance venues, two playgrounds, picnic areas, walking and running paths, and two marinas.
- Houses public art/sculpture installations that range from historical to contemporary to local folk-based.
- Was created and is operated by an organization that is also responsible for design review of projects in the surrounding area, assists with development of other river-related parks, and manages the only steam-powered paddle wheel riverboat still in operation.





Project Goals

- Reconnect the city to the Ohio River, its very reason for being, providing public access and a reminder of the city's history.
- Involve the community in planning for the new park and foster a feeling of ownership.
- Make a place where all races, ages and social classes feel comfortable together.
- Clean up the industrial wasteland along the river and make a more attractive approach to the city.
- Tailor the park to unique features of Louisville – its history and sense of place.
- Overcome key challenges of the site – especially the elevated and surface roads and flood control – in an unobtrusive manner.
- Reuse the abandoned rail bridge over the Ohio River to create a pedestrian and bicycle link to Southern Indiana.
- Catalyze the revitalization of downtown areas adjacent to the waterfront.



Willie MacLean, Birds-Eye Foto



Chronology



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



Waterfront Development Corporation

Pre-1700s The site of Louisville on the Ohio River is an important location for Native American buffalo hunters due to the falls – the only obstruction along the length of the river.

1778 George Rogers Clark is credited with founding the first European settlement in the vicinity of modern-day Louisville on Corn Island.

1780 The town charter of Louisville is approved by the Virginia General Assembly. The city is named in honor of King Louis XVI of France, whose soldiers were aiding Americans in the Revolutionary War.

1803 At the Falls of the Ohio, William Rogers Clark receives a letter from Meriwether Lewis inviting him to help command an expedition to explore the Louisiana territory; they assembled their Corps of Discovery and set off down the Ohio River from the vicinity of Louisville to explore the western territories.

1800s The waterfront becomes a vibrant hub of steamboat-based commerce, with many wharf-related and industrial activities.

1900s The City declines in the early 20th Century.

1960s I-64 is constructed along the riverfront, further isolating it from the rest of the city.

1986 Louisville Waterfront Development Corporation is formed by the city, county and state as a quasi-independent entity and holds first board meeting.

1987 Funds are donated to acquire WDC's current office on the waterfront.

1988 Public forums determine community wants/needs for the waterfront – with a strong expression of desire for green space. The notion of Waterfront Park is born.

1990 Hargreaves Associates selected as master plan designer.



Waterfront Development Corporation



Waterfront Development Corporation



1991 Master plan approved.

1992 Private fundraising campaign begins for Phase I.

1994 Ground broken on Phase I.

1995 Mass excavation completed.

1996 Wharf completed.

1997 Waterfront Park hosts its first concert series at the wharf; plans announced for Louisville Slugger Field adjacent to the park; Joe's Crab Shack opens; Linear Park and children's play area open.

1998 Great Lawn dedicated.

1999 July 4 – Phase I dedicated.

2000 Docks installed; Harbor Lawn opens; widening of River Road completed.

2004 Phase II opens.

2006 Riverview Park and RiverPark Place announced by Poe Development and WDC.

2007 Construction of Phase III begins.

2009 Lincoln Memorial complete.

2010 Big Four Lawn opens; ramp to bridge complete.

2011 University of Louisville rowing facility opens. Big Four Bridge construction begins.

2013 February – completion of Big Four Bridge pedestrian/bikeway; except for completion of landing on the Indiana side, projected for 2014, park is 100% complete.

July – construction begins on new I-65 Downtown Crossing Bridge over the river, impacting the center of the park.

Project Description

Louisville Waterfront Park is an 85-acre urban park that transformed an industrial wasteland into an attractive gateway to the city, reconnecting downtown Louisville with its historic origins on the Ohio River. The park, with its wide variety of spaces for organized and informal activities, arts, festivals and special events, is the result of 25 years of planning, community participation, and development.

CONTEXT

Louisville

The same location that attracted Native Americans also appealed to European settlers, trappers, and others as the site of the only obstruction to navigation of the Ohio River, requiring portage around a shallow falls. The city's early growth was influenced by the fact that river boats had to be unloaded and moved downriver before reaching the falls. By 1828, the population had swelled to 7,000 and Louisville became an incorporated city. The city grew rapidly in its formative years. Louisville was a major shipping port and slaves worked in a variety of associated trades. The city was often a point of escape for slaves to the north, as Indiana was a free state. Abraham Lincoln observed slaves being loaded onto a ship in the vicinity of Louisville – and wrote that he had been profoundly influenced by the experience.

Project History and Vision

Period photographs support the description that by the 1940's the "city was a sprawling eyesore." In particular, the area along the river was heavily industrial with unattractive operations including sand and gravel quarries and scrap metal yards that compressed junked cars. Historic downtown buildings that define the park's eastern edge were underutilized and in poor condition.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The park site in the 1940's

The current waterfront project was not the first time the city had imagined improving the area. Rather, Louisville “struggled for almost 85 years to implement this project.” For example, in 1931 the Bartholomew Plan envisioned the Belvedere as a precursor of Riverfront Park in bringing people back into contact with the river. There were at least eleven subsequent studies of riverfront use and development. The immediate antecedent to the creation of the park was a study prepared in 1981 by local planning authorities titled the *Riverfront Plan*. It identified as a crucial issue the fact that “the Ohio Riverfront is everyone’s front yard but no one’s responsibility” and called for an independent authority to execute the waterfront development strategy. By then a major freeway had been constructed between downtown and the river, cutting off the historical connection between the two.

In 1985, the mayor called for implementation of the waterfront strategy and, in 1986, the Waterfront Development Corporation (WDC) was created to revitalize the area. It was not initially charged with the creation of a park or any other particular use or set of uses. The notion to make the majority of the land area into a park grew out of a public input process.

The vision this time around, as described in WDC documents, revolved around a number of goals:

- **To reconnect the city to the river and provide public access.**
This had been eroding since the early 1900s with industrial development and was exacerbated in the 1960’s by the construction of the elevated highway along the river. Visual and physical connections were seen as also providing a reconnection to the city’s history.



Site prior to park construction

- **To involve the community in planning**, to foster a feeling of ownership, and to create a central gathering place for people from all parts of the community.
- **To ensure that the development is unique to Louisville** and reflects the community and its heritage (WDC had observed in visiting other waterfronts that “many of them could have been anywhere”).
- **To overcome the challenges of an elevated highway and surface road** running through the development and to incorporate flood protection that didn’t rely on a barrier such as a floodwall.

Urban Context

Louisville Metro (merged city and county) had a population of 741,096 as of the 2010 census while the greater metropolitan region (MSA) had about 1.3 million people, of whom about 75% were White, 22% Black or African-American and 3% Hispanic or Latino, of any race. Louisville considers itself to be a mixture of the South and Mid-West. Many project participants described it as being racially separated, with blacks and whites finding relatively few opportunities to interact.

Like many older American cities, Louisville began to experience a movement of people and businesses to the suburbs in the 1960's and 1970's. Middle class residents used newly-built interstate highways to commute to work in the city, moving into ever more distant, newer housing. The site of Waterfront Park is dramatically affected by these highways that separate it from the rest of the city, and there are plans to expand them, most notably a new bridge that greatly impacts a central section of the park that began construction in 2013.

Because of tax incentives, businesses found it cheaper to build new rather than renovate older buildings. Economic changes included a decline in local manufacturing. The West End and older areas of the South End, in particular, began to decline economically as many local factories closed. These factors contributed to the decline of the waterfront area, setting the stage for the founding of the WDC in the mid-1980s.

Organization History and Leadership

WDC was formed in 1986 by the City of Louisville, Jefferson County and the State of Kentucky – each of which appointed equal numbers of board members and contributed to its budget. The mayor serves ex-officio on the board. When the city and county merged into Louisville Metro Government, the new entity continued to appoint two-thirds of the board members, though it now contributes only about forty percent of the budget.

Aerial Photos: Waterfront Development Corporation



Clockwise from top: Aerial views of the site prior to park development (top and left); David Karem

When it was “spun-off” from direct government control in 2011, WDC became a quasi-independent, non-governmental entity, although its board is still appointed by governmental entities that also provide much of its budget. WDC’s degree of independence, particularly its continuity across administrations and jurisdictional boundaries, is seen as crucial to its success, allowing it to act without undue political pressure or influence. Though allowed by statute, this form of organization was unprecedented in Kentucky at the time it was created.

WDC’s executive director, David Karem, has a unique blend of experience and capabilities. His undergraduate study was in community planning, he has a degree in law, and he spent well over thirty years as an elected state representative and served as both minority and majority leader in the state senate. He provides charisma, vision, political acumen and connectivity, and appears to be an effective leader.

Twenty-five years after the first phase of construction, WDC is a mature organization, with the original leadership still intact and some younger members holding responsible positions. WDC claims that this is their succession plan, but whether these individuals can succeed David Karem’s is a matter of speculation. Future management of a successful on-going operation may not require the same skills Karem provided in getting WDC off the ground.

THE PARK AND ITS DESIGN

The 85-acre park stretches along the Ohio River for a distance of over a mile, and 500 to 800 feet from shore to its land-ward boundary. The park’s design is based on a number of guiding principles:

Provide an attractive approach to the city

The area that became the park is the first part of the city and state that is visible as people cross the river into Kentucky from Indiana. The patchwork of industrial uses along the river created visual and environmental pollution. Cleaning up the highly unattractive approach to the city was one of the major motivators for this project. Remediation of the site posed many challenges – some of which were dealt with in creative ways. There was a tremendous volume of degraded soil which would have been very costly to haul away. Instead, it was cleaned and used to create landforms that define separate areas of the park, while at the same time creating retention basins for drainage control and collecting water for irrigation.

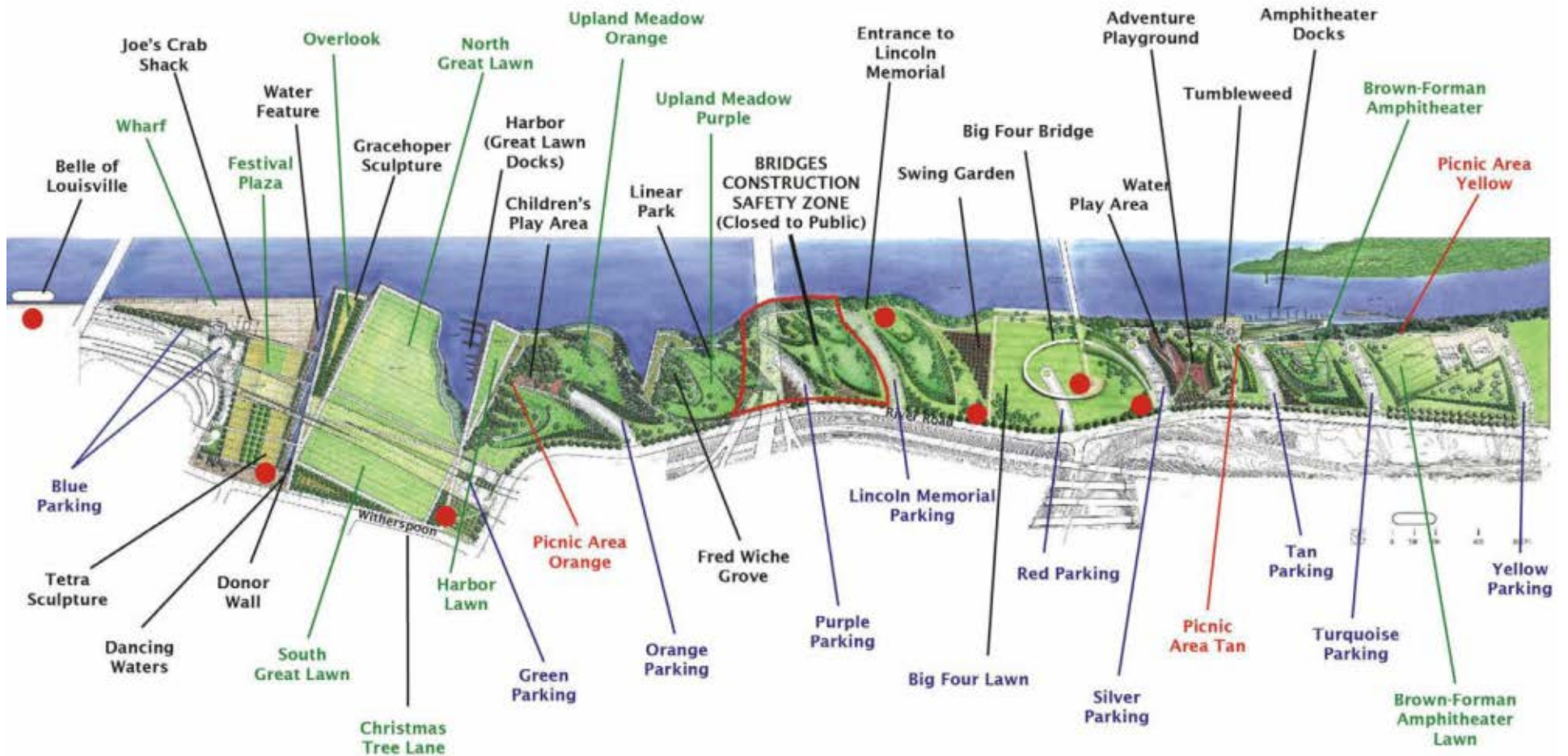


Aerial view of Great Lawn, Harbor Lawn and Meadow

Louisville Waterfront Park

(www.louisvillewaterfront.com)

- PARK FEATURES
- EVENT VENUES
- PICNIC AREAS
- PARKING



PARK HOURS:

6:00 a.m.—11:00 p.m.

Adventure Playground: 6:00 a.m.—11:00 p.m.

Waterplay Area: 11:00 a.m.—8:00 p.m.

● Accessible sign locations

The three interstate highways (“spaghetti junction”) formed a visually dominant barrier between downtown and the river. As is readily observed, the park now provides an attractive green space that sets off the view of downtown in the approach to the city from Indiana to the south or from up-river to the east.

Connect the river and the park to the city

In addition to removing the industrial barriers between downtown and the river, the park also had to deal with the interstate highways. While WDC did not take on the interstate issue itself – although some in Louisville proposed removing it from the site – WDC did negotiate relocation of an on-ramp that created a major barrier toward the eastern end and blocked access at a critical location; this allowed the park to provide frontage to some of the adjacent development parcels. Once the ramp was removed, the designers found a creative way to allow the park to flow under the elevated highway: they graded the land downward toward the river, lowering it as it passed under the highway, and raising the inland edge in to open views of the river from adjacent parcels, River Road, and downtown. The design makes use of lighting and tree systems placed perpendicularly between downtown and the river to attract the eye towards the water, reducing the visual impact of the highway and extending the park up under the interstate into the city grid to provide visual and physical connections. This not only places primary activity areas out of the flood plain but provides added flood protection to downtown.

The grading provides flood protection without obtrusive flood walls or gates, in part by creating “breathing room” for the Ohio River to expand during flood stages. This was a challenging process as negotiations were required with the Army Corps of Engineers and the



Photos & map opposite: Waterfront Development Corporation

Looking towards downtown (top), landscaped mounds



This photo & map above: Waterfront Development Corporation

Coast Guard which have jurisdiction over the river and navigation. The process included rides with barge captains to assure them that the park design would not negatively affect navigation. The Ohio River is reported to be the busiest in the country and flow restrictions limited the area available for the park. Thus, in several areas the park edge is constructed so that water can flow under the landscaping, which is supported on a hidden structure.

River Road, which bisected the park along its main axis, was relocated to the inland edge to take surface traffic out of the park. Finally, the realignment of local streets connected the park to the city grid, improving access for both cars and pedestrians and opening views into the park.

Create defined areas for a variety of activities

The park is organized along its length as a series of settings for diverse activities and group sizes. These settings range from very large to intimate, with differing geometries, surfaces, plantings and supporting facilities.

Appropriately for a waterfront park, and contributing strongly to reestablishing the city's connection to the river, there are a number of water-based activity areas. The "Belle of Louisville", a working steam-powered paddle wheel riverboat is docked at the wharf on the western edge of the park. The boat is a National Historic Landmark that WDC operates on behalf of the city. The steamer is an important attraction for both tourists and locals. A harbor was created near the Great Lawn with first-come, first-served docks for over 100 power boats and two kayak launches. Further up the river, there are two boathouses, one for the Louisville Rowing Club and another for the University of

*Clockwise from top: Site section illustrating change in grading, rows of trees draw the eye towards the river, flood conditions, river level gauge
Next page clockwise from top: Water feature connecting downtown with the river, Louisville Rowing Club, natural inlet, waterside walkway and lawn, Belle of Louisville*

Louisville. At the far eastern end of the park, there is a new marina with commercially-operated docks and facilities. "Dancing Waters", an 800-foot-long water feature near the Great Lawn that recalls the Falls of the Ohio just down the river from the park, links the city to the river. An inlet suggests riparian ecologies that appear to be in a natural state. The entire park system is linked together by a continuous public riverfront walkway with many places to stop and watch the river. They provide ever-changing views of the bridges and commercial barge traffic.

In addition to water-related features, the park offers many kinds of activity venues and other amenities. One of the two park concessions, Joe's Crab Shack, is located on the wharf at the western edge of the park. Running from the water to the inland edge of the park is Festival Plaza, with the Tetra sculpture, one of the park's many pieces of public art. Between the plaza and the Great Lawn is the Dancing Waters feature and above this on the Overlook is the Gracehoper sculpture. The Great Lawn provides the setting for both informal and scheduled events. As the largest gathering space, it hosts major concerts and festivals. The approximately rectangular shape of the lawn is cut with a wedge of water for a small boat harbor.



Moving east, one comes to a series of more intimate spaces including the first children's play area, picnic facilities, a meadow and a memorial grove. The play area, constructed in phase one, proved to be so wildly popular that it was inadequate to support the level of use. Phase two included construction of a much larger play area further east. Passing through Linear Park – a series of areas defined or enclosed with plantings, one comes to an area which was closed to the public shortly following the site visit for construction of a new highway bridge. The work temporarily interrupts the continuity of the walkway, which is rerouted along River Road. The bridge location was anticipated, so that only passive activities are supported in the area and little infrastructure was lost; however, it is a substantial intrusion into the park and undermines the connectivity between downtown and the river.

Continuing east, the next element is the Lincoln Memorial then, passing what is referred to as the "Swing Garden," one arrives at another large lawn area dominated by the spiral ramp that leads up to the Big Four Bridge. The bridge once served as the main route across the river for four merged railways, but was abandoned a number of years ago. WDC determined that it would make an attractive pedestrian and bicycle bridge and completed the repurposing and construction of the spiral ramp in spring 2013. The ramp is elevated rather than ground-supported, as originally designed, due to geotechnical conditions. Although this results in a different appearance, it allows visitors to look under and beyond the ramp. The bridge is the last major piece of the park to be completed and appears to be very popular and well-used. Visitors suggested it was one of the only places in Louisville where one could have a truly urban experience. In this general area is the second children's play area – much larger than the first one, with a water play section and adventure playground as well as picnic facilities.



Clockwise from top: Pedestrians on Big Four Bridge, Festival Plaza, Big Four Bridge ramp, playground, Great Lawn

The second concession, Tumbleweed restaurant, is also nearby.

At the far eastern end of the park is the Brown-Forman Amphitheater – an open theater where music and other performances are held, the boathouses, and their related docks. Capping the east end of the park is a privately developed project, including the first phase of rental housing and a marina.

Attract the entire range of citizens

WDC wanted the park to belong to everyone and be welcoming to all. The variety of settings, events and activities make the park attractive to a wide range of people. Representatives of all age groups, races, ability levels (and presumably incomes) were observed during the site visit. WDC is committed to universal access and even provides braille signage and business cards.



Waterfront Development Corporation; Photo below by Rick Bell



Clockwise from top: Water play area, Brown-Forman Amphitheater, braille signage, Swing Garden, Big Four Bridge

Spur redevelopment of adjacent land

While the park consists of 85 acres, WDC's planning and design review influences a total of 120 acres including about 35 acres of development sites in the so-called Downtown Waterfront District. The single largest parcel has been used for the Louisville Slugger field, a minor league baseball stadium that incorporates an abandoned railway station. Other major projects are residential. On the blocks that surround WDC sites, a considerable amount of development has taken place or is planned. RiverPark Place, discussed in some detail below, was not part of the park or the district. While much has been accomplished, it has taken 25 years and there are still many gaps in the fabric waiting for development.

CONCESSIONS AND DESIGN REVIEW

There are two concessions in the park – Joe's Crab Shack, part of a national chain, and Tumbleweed, a local restaurant with a southwestern menu. WDC had two purposes in granting the concessions: (1) to provide food service amenities at the waterfront to attract and serve park visitors and (2) to generate revenue to support park maintenance and other operations. Leaving the restaurants' design to their private developers – albeit with review by WDC – resulted in some compromises. Joe's was the first one built and thus the first to go through the design review process. While WDC reports that it was able to require some changes from the owners, it was clear that some members of the design review panel were not satisfied with the result, suggesting that its appearance is inconsistent with the balance of the park and their overall esthetic goals. The master plan consultant argued in favor of much more stringent design standards and controls, but concern for revenue generation and risk avoidance appear to have prevailed



Clockwise from top: Louisville Slugger Field, Joe's Crab Shack, adjacent retail development

over more thorough project review. Tumbleweed was part of phase two and is neither offensive nor particularly attractive. Both restaurants are reported to be successful and utilized by a range of park visitors.

Another example of the limits of WDC's design review is a small commercial strip development across River Road from the boathouse area of the park. Though privately developed, it was subject to WDC's review. It is not obvious from looking at its design, materials, landscaping or signage what impact design review might or might not have had since it looks like a typical strip mall found anywhere.

WDC's design review process is now highly codified (and available on their website) and applies to all development within the Waterfront Review Overlay District. When businesses in the district decide



Waterfront Development Corporation

to build new or renovate existing structures, change their signage or landscaping, or undertake any other exterior changes, those projects must gain approval. WDC provides a guide that outlines the process and lists the information and drawings that must be submitted. The actual reviews are done by WDC staff and representatives of the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects. It will be interesting to see how effective this process becomes as it engages new projects.

PUBLIC ART

Waterfront Park incorporates four main pieces of public art.

- The Lincoln Memorial, by local sculptor Ed Hamilton, occupies a special part of the park. Lincoln had deep roots in the area and Mary Todd was a Louisville native. The town played a special role in the evolution of his thinking about slavery. It was on Louisville's waterfront that Lincoln watched slaves being loaded on to barges and riverboats and later wrote that the sight tormented him throughout his life. Hamilton created an accessible, 12-foot high seated version of Lincoln that invites many visitors to sit on



Clockwise from top left: Lincoln Memorial, Gracehopper sculpture, Lincoln Memorial interpretive panels, Marvin Finn sculptures

his lap to be photographed. He also made four bas relief panels that illustrate Lincoln's early years in Kentucky, his leadership of a divided house, and his hatred of slavery. The panels lead up to an amphitheater with Lincoln seated on rocks in the center and famous quotations inscribed on the seat risers. The \$2.3 million Memorial was funded by the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the family of Harry S. Frazier, Jr., and the Kentucky Historical Society/ Kentucky Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission.

- Gracehoper, by nationally famous sculptor Tony Smith, was donated to the Kentucky Center for the Arts by the Humana Corporation and is on long-term loan to Waterfront Park.
- Tetra by Charles O. Perry on the Festival Plaza at Waterfront Park was donated to the park by the children and grandchildren of Sally Brown, a long-time Waterfront Park benefactor.
- There are 32 whimsical metal sculptures by the local African-American folk artist, Marvin Finn, depicting imaginary birds installed in an area near the Great Lawn. Originally constructed of wood for a variety of owners, in 2001 WDC had them enlarged and recreated in painted steel. Children appear to enjoy interacting with them.

It is interesting to note that WDC did not choose to adapt or incorporate any of the remnants of its industrial past into the art works or park design, as some other parks in the United States – such as the contemporaneous Gassworks in Seattle or more recent Bronx River Parkway's Cement Plant Park, or European ones like Duisburg-Nord Industrial Landscape Park in Germany.



New bridge construction

THE CONTROVERSY ABOUT I-64

Although WDC planners and designers worked to mitigate the impact of the elevated highway on the park, a local movement arose in favor of eliminating the section of I-64 that runs between downtown and the river, including the area that has become the park. This group, calling itself "8664" proposes alternatives, including directing thru-traffic to a ring-road to bypass downtown. One of its founders, Tyler Allen, a businessman who has educated himself about urban design and transportation issues, expounds a well-constructed set of arguments in favor of removal of the highway. Allen cites a number of other cities – including Baltimore, Portland (Oregon), San Francisco, and others – that have successfully accomplished these goals. While there appeared

to be latent support for the idea in a number circles, it apparently did not gain real traction and came to be viewed as a political liability – a fight that would require significant resources and still be unlikely to win. Instead, the state is moving forward with the expansion of the system and started construction on the new downtown bridge adjacent to I-65 in summer 2013.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

For many reasons, planning and development of this project stretched over 25 years. These include the scale, complexity, and particularly the financing that dictated incremental construction. The protracted schedule is not necessarily a negative, however, since it allowed adjustments over time and afforded the opportunity to learn as the project evolved. In addition, by opening sections of park as they were completed, establishing popular annual events, and keeping the public well informed, WDC was able to maintain community interest and enthusiasm.

Elements of the process (paraphrased or quoted from the project application) include:

- Creating an independent entity to guide planning and development.
- Garnering public input to determine the community's wishes for what the project should be, including 10 public forums that were held over two years; covering all areas of the community.
- Developing the "wish list" into a program of components for use by the project designer.
- Fundraising for the master plan and property acquisition.
- Acquiring 85 acres of property from numerous owners.

- Rezoning the project and surrounding areas into the Waterfront District and creating a design review process.
- Conducting an international search for a master planner/park designer.
- Continuing to garner feedback and inform the public.
- Developing a park maintenance program, phased in as portions of the park opened.
- Splitting construction into manageable phases, with portions of each phase opening as they were completed.
- Scheduling public celebrations for groundbreakings and dedications to keep public support and interest high.
- Developing an event policy for park rental and managing the booking of events.

Planning Phase – 1986 to 1991

A hallmark of WDC has been its commitment to community outreach. Soon after it was established, with a mandate to improve the waterfront, WDC hosted a series of public forums to find out what the community wanted. It was the strong expression of interest in green space that led to the commitment to construct a park. Prior to the forums a park was not necessarily WDC's focus; its original mandate was broadly to improve and clean up the area. Following the initial forums, and for a number of years, WDC staff averaged more than 85 public presentations per year to keep the community updated on construction and they currently average 30 to 40 per year.

WDC representatives visited a number of other cities to study their waterfronts and learn about what worked and what didn't. As the project has evolved, they found other cities coming to them. For example, Memphis, Tennessee apparently created a development

organization for their riverfront closely modeled on WDC's corporate structure.

In 1990, once it had been determined that a park would be the focus of waterfront development, an international search was held for a designer that generated 85 responses. From this pool, four firms were short-listed and invited to come to Louisville and discuss their planning approach and concepts for the park. Based on their presentation, Hargreaves Associates – at the time a young, “up-and-coming” landscape architecture firm – was selected to develop the master plan and design for the park.

As the master plan was being developed, another series of forums was held to gather input on park design. The following goals and aspirations were expressed at the forums and informed the park plan and design, as interpreted by the designers and rendered into an almost biblical vernacular. The following is quoted directly from the Master Plan.

- Let the river be a river.
- Let the people of Louisville have a green space by the river.
- Let the Waterfront design come from the natural ecology of the river's shore, and find its way into the city.
- Let the city edge be redesigned to preserve, enhance and respect the classic grid and density established in the early years of the city as it grew out of the wilderness.
- Let the urban force on the one side meet the natural continuum of the Ohio River on the other, in a people-oriented place that attracts active participation.
- Let the evolution of Louisville meld the natural setting of the Waterfront with the development needs of a large city.

Construction Phase I – 1994 to 1999

Phase I included much of the park from the western edge up to, but not including, the Big Four Bridge. The ground breaking for Waterfront Park took place in 1994. Mass excavations were completed in 1995 and the wharf in 1996. The first concert series held there in 1997, the same year that plans were announced for Louisville Slugger Field and Joe's Crab Shack, Linear Park and the first children's play area opened. In 1998, the Great Lawn, Harbor Lawn and Harbor were dedicated and on July 4, 1999, the entire Phase I was dedicated.

Construction Phase II – 1999 to 2004

Phase II, covering 34 acres, completed the east end of the park. Key components include the second children's play area, a café, the amphitheater, a boathouse, additional parking, continuation of the riverfront walking path, and more picnic areas, meadows, and groves. In 2000, docks were installed at the eastern end of the park and River Road was widened. In June 2004, the balance of Phase II opened. However it did not include the spiral ramp up to the Big Four Bridge as originally intended; the ramp required redesign due to geotechnical and flood control issues and was postponed to Phase III.

Construction Phase III – 2005 to 2012

Phase III filled in the last important piece – the Big Four Bridge and completed the middle of the park. It also included the announcement of an agreement to develop Riverview Park and RiverPark Place by Poe Development and WDC. The Lincoln Memorial was completed in 2009. In 2010 the Big Four Lawn opened and the ramp was completed, although the bridge was not refurbished until the next year and opened in early 2013, essentially completing the main elements of the park. The landing on the Indiana side is projected to be completed in 2014.

By summer of 2013, construction began on the new highway bridge over the river. The new bridge will land squarely in the middle of the park, eliminating some portions of park green space and making it more difficult – and temporarily impossible – to walk the length of the park along the river.

While the project may be “complete” in terms of building out of the master plan, it is not really “finished” (as of the time of this publication). An architect is studying the further development of the unutilized land under the ramp up to the Big Four Bridge, and the development at Riverview Park and RiverPark Place is only partially completed, with the first phase of what may be as many as four underway as of early 2013.

ACTIVITIES, EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

The park attracts more than 1.5 million visitors every year who engage in a wide variety of informal and scheduled activities. There are paths for walking and biking as well as tables, swings and seating areas for picnics, people- and river-watching and general relaxation. There are two playgrounds and a water play area. The park is also used as a venue for private activities such as weddings and family reunions, as well as corporate gatherings. The lawns provide space for pickup games of football or soccer.

The recently opened Big Four Bridge appears to be enticing large numbers of people to make the trek across the river. This will likely increase when it becomes possible to complete the trip to the Indiana side, pending completion of the northern bridge landing. Even before the northern landing opened, there were thousands of pedestrians

and hundreds of cyclists on the bridge each day. Usage is, of course, higher during the summer and on weekends.

Riverboat tours are offered by WDC, which operates the Belle of Louisville – the oldest, operating steam-powered paddle wheelers in the nation. The Friends of the Waterfront, a group of citizens who raise money and offer a range of volunteer services, developed curriculum guides for elementary, middle school and high school levels that are used by teachers and students to learn about the park including, Lincoln, local ecology, and history.

The park is host to a substantial number and variety of scheduled events including festivals, concerts, and fireworks shows – a total of about 120 to 150 annually. While scheduled events occur year-round, the majority take place from spring through fall. Although little or nothing happens in January, there are a surprising number of events in December as well as some in February; by March the park is quite busy. Water play activities are offered at one of the playgrounds from April through October.

The official dedication ceremony for the first 55 acres of the park took place on July 4th, 1999, and an Independence Day festival occurs every year, drawing large crowds. The largest annual event is *Thunder Over Louisville*, marking the start of the Kentucky Derby festivities, which draws up to 700,000 people and requires that surrounding streets be closed.

Other major draws include the *Waterfront Wednesday* concerts offered once a month during the summer. They were started in 2002, intended to attract young people who come to the park after work.

The local public radio station, WFPK, co-sponsors the concerts and identifies and invites a variety of bands, mostly emerging artists who agree to perform for free in return for the exposure. This event became so successful that it has been moved from Harbor Lawn to the larger Big Four Lawn.

According to events coordinator Ashley Smith, WDC consciously encourages events and works hard and flexibly to help organizations carry them out. Smith, who has been with the organization since 1998 when the first portions of the park opened, and her small staff have developed a detailed process for holding an event in the park, including an eight-page application form and a twelve-page contract which resembles a short-term lease for one or more defined portions of the park. Sponsors are required to clean up after their event in a specific period of time and must post large deposits for damage and mess, with additional punitive charges if WDC has to clean up after them, although these are rarely needed. Examples of events include the Iron-man Triathlon, sand volleyball, and a fashion week. Many not-for-profits use park for fund-raisers and pay a set fee based on expected attendance.

Some of the organizations that sponsor major events include:

- The *Forecastle Festival*, a summer music/culture/environmental festival that draws fans from across the United States (half of attendees come from outside Kentucky) – up to 25,000 of them per day for three days. Founder J.K. McKnight claims that this is one of top festivals in the country. As his festival grew, he wanted to move it to the park and now uses the Great Lawn, the Harbor Lawn, and the wharf area for as many as six performance stages. Event partners include Patagonia, Brown-Forman and others,

and the proceeds support not-for-profit ecological projects.

J.K. McKnight considers the park and river setting to be important and claims he would never leave it for another venue. The festival pays WDC \$25,000 to use park for nine days, including set up, the three day festival, and take down/clean up. McKnight praises WDC's flexibility and accommodating attitude – for example, the first time they ran the festival, WDC let them use their offices.

- The Louisville Sports Commission (LSC) has brought the Ironman Triathlon to Waterfront Park every year since 2007, and it is scheduled to continue at least through 2016. LSC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed to bring sports events to Louisville in order to attract tourists and improve the quality of life for locals who might attend or participate in an event. It also aims to contribute to defining the "brand" of the community, which does indeed seem to be very sports-oriented. While LSC utilizes a variety of venues, Waterfront Park hosts their key event – the Ironman Triathlon. This is the largest full-distance triathlon in United States. 3,000 people swim 2.4 miles downstream then transition onto the Great Lawn where there are 3,000 bikes (typically worth \$10,000 each) waiting for them. Upon completing the bike ride at the park, they run on a defined course. The park provides the essential transition spaces – from swim-to-bike and bike-to-run. The safety of swimmers in what is normally the river's shipping channel is a critical concern and LSC works with the Army Corps of Engineers to close it to traffic. There are also 100 kayaks and 15 trained boat crews in the water. When the World Triathlon organization looked at the park for the first time, they are reported to have "gone gaga". The event brings in \$5 million per year, generating 14,000 hotel-nights and other expenditures.



Clockwise from top left: Waterfront Wednesday, Ironman Triathlon, HappyTail Hour, bicycle rentals

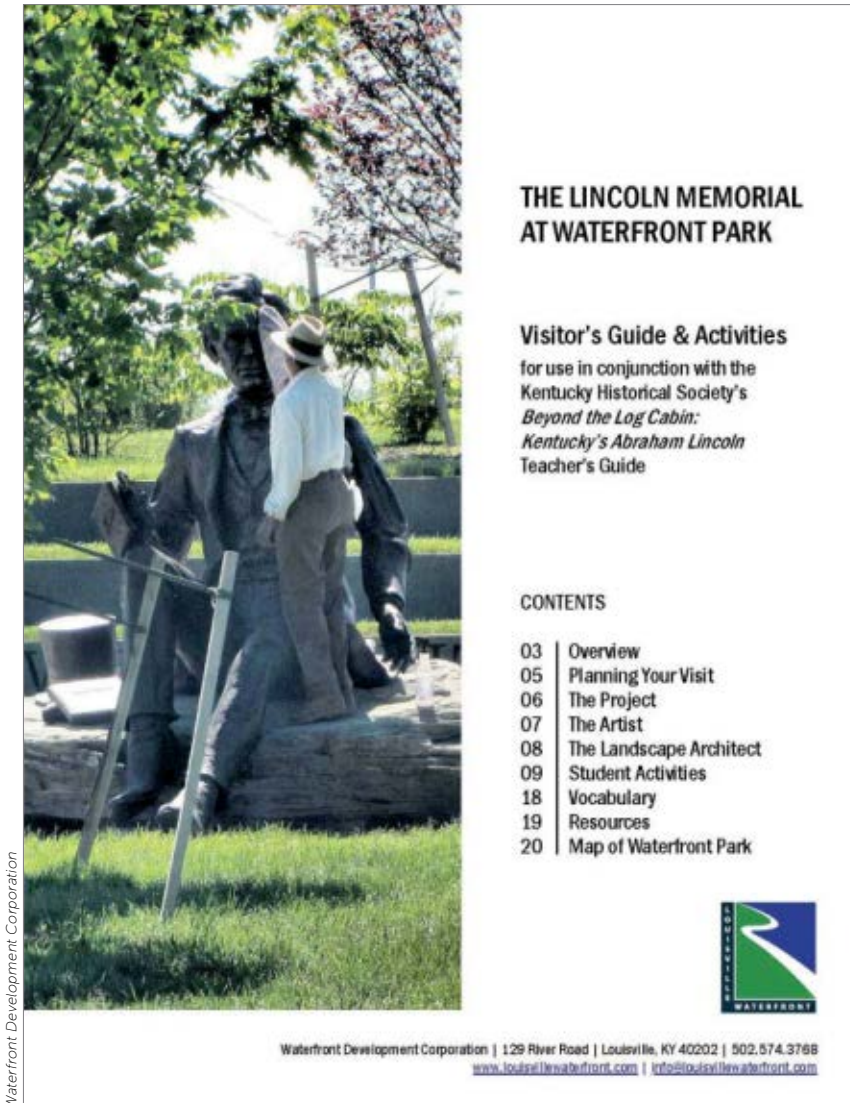
Local businesses have opened that relate to it, for example selling and servicing bikes. There are 500 Kentucky participants and many more local triathlons now take place. The park rental fee is paid directly by the World Triathlon organization and LSC partners with them. For three years (2006-2008), LSC also put on a beach volleyball exhibition tournament – with Olympic stars Misty May Treanor and Kerri Walsh – for which they set up a 5,000 seat temporary stadium in the park. LSC director Greg Fante indicated



Event photos: Waterfront Development Corporation

that WDC wants to keep the park pristine and characterizes the organization as being “persnickety” – but indicated that they never say “no” and he praised WDC for carrying out the “complete transformation” of an industrial wasteland.

- The Kentucky Derby Festival, a civic non-profit organization independent of the race, has 75 directors and 22 full-time staff, with a total annual budget of \$10 million. The organization is 58 years old and started with a parade. It sponsors 70 events over the two weeks before the race and the two major events take place in the park. The first is *Thunder Over Louisville* and features Zambelli fireworks and an air show. It has a \$1.5 to \$2 million budget and draws up to 700,000 people to both sides of the river. The Kentucky Derby Festival is the largest event in the park, utilizing the entire area, and even involves the interstate highway and bridge. Their second event is called *Fest-a-Ville* – a family-oriented festival with multiple attractions, including a *Chow Wagon* area with adult-oriented food and alcohol. *Fest-a-Ville* takes up the Great Lawn for the 10-day event and attracts 15,000



to 25,000 per day. The organizers find the park rental charge to be modest and report that WDC tries hard to accommodate every need. The festival contributed \$125,000 to initial capital campaign for the park and also installed permanent underground telephone lines.

- WFPK Public Radio partners with Waterfront Park to put on the *Waterfront Wednesdays* concert series, now in its 11th year. There are six free concerts each year on the last Wednesday of the months of April through September. They started at the Harbor Lawn triangle but outgrew it three years ago. The notion of putting on the concerts grew out of public radio's pondering what it could do to better reflect the community. Program director Stacy Owen books the bands that play for free, and schedules a local act to open each concert. The emphasis is on new music; they also have upscale food and bar. WDC provides park for free since it co-sponsors the events.

These event sponsors find the Waterfront Park facilities to be very good and meet their needs as well as and usually better than any other local options. For example, there are docks along the river that some attendees utilize if they arrive by boat. If the event uses the river – such as for the swimming leg of the triathlon or for fireworks, the Coast Guard is right there, which is very convenient for coordination and approvals. There is a wide variety of kinds and sizes of settings and venues. Access is good and there are about 1,400 parking spaces adjacent to the park. While the infrastructure is generally good, it has been suggested that more power would be useful for various events.



PARK MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY

At the time of the site visit, Gary Pepper from WDC had been responsible for park maintenance for 17 years. The maintenance program has evolved as the park developed and now has eight staff that are able to cover most trades, including mechanical. Their top priority is trash removal and keeping the park clean.

In April 2013 the park was just beginning to show its spring season growth – leaves were starting to emerge and grass was beginning to turn green. There appeared to be some potential for increased attention and maintenance. Turf had not yet filled in, some trees still showed damage from winter storms, and the “naturalized” river bank was showing signs of erosion – for example, the mesh intended to stabilize it was exposed. The natural inlet looked rather untidy at the time of the site visit, with driftwood and other flotsam collects along the banks. However, we subsequently learned that the vegetation in the inlet is cut down once a year. While George Hargreaves, the park designer, indicated that plantings continued to generally follow the original plan, he had not visited for some years and it appeared to the site visitors that the plantings and paving could have benefited from additional attention. Hargreaves did mention that WDC had, early in the process, required replacement of some natural meadow grass areas with turf grass and the reduction to a single naturalized inlet.

WDC contracts for toilet cleaning, which is done every morning, and for locking the toilets at night (toilets are open from April to November). These efforts are supplemented by the “Clean Team” – 8 to 12 young people who work in the summer and are paid with corporate sponsorships.

Clockwise from top left: Maintenance vehicle, riverbank erosion, rest rooms, planting beds, WDC offices

The only other contracted service is for supplemental security. From 7:30 am to 4:30 pm, the maintenance staff has primary responsibility. All of the staff wear shirts with a logo ID and are trained to interact with the public, providing information as well as security. Should there be an incident, they call the city police. Private security patrols the park from around 5 pm until about 11 pm, on flexible hours. City police patrol the park as well, intermittently using all-terrain vehicles, horses, bikes, and boats on the river; these alternative means are intended to be less intimidating than a squad car. The most common types of security incidents are graffiti and disruptive behavior – for example from an occasional belligerent homeless person. Park design followed CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles, employing the notion that the greatest security derives from high levels of use and good visibility.

FINANCING

Almost two-thirds of the funding for the park's development was provided by the city, county and state, with more than one-third coming from local corporations, foundations and individuals (Table 1). Today, WDC continues to receive the majority of its operational funding from Louisville Metro government and the state, while generating the balance of its income from event rentals and business leases. (All figures were provided by WDC.)

Another other way of accounting for what was spent on the park, including infrastructure that was not WDC's responsibility, breaks the costs down by phase – and adds almost \$20 million to the above figures (Table 2).

TABLE 1: SOURCES OF ORIGINAL CAPITAL FUNDING

Source	Amount
Private donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations	\$33,500,000
State funding for general construction	\$25,000,000
City funding	\$10,500,000
Federal funding	\$9,400,000
State Transportation Department funding for renovation of Big Four Bridge	\$12,000,000
State Funding for Lincoln Memorial	\$2,000,000
Federal EPA Grant for River Bank Stabilization	\$2,300,000
Total	\$94,700,000

Note – these are the amounts that paid for WDC's portion of the project; see also the next table.

TABLE 2: DEVELOPMENT COSTS BY PHASE

Development Costs By Phase <i>(including infrastructure)</i>	
	Amount
Waterfront Park (Infrastructure & Phase I)	\$58,000,000
Waterfront Park (Phase II)	\$15,000,000
Waterfront Park (Phase III)	\$22,000,000
Waterfront Park Big Four Bridge & Ramp	\$18,000,000
Total	\$112,870,000

The table is excerpted from WDC's "Economic Report: the impact of Louisville's Waterfront Park," Fall 2011.

WDC's annual operating budget of \$2.24 million is allocated approximately 60% to personnel and labor, 23% to maintenance and 17% for events. In terms of sources, 43% of the budget is contributed by Louisville Metro Government, which has nine seats on the WDC board of directors, and 19% from the state, which has six seats on board. Thirty-eight percent comes from park-generated revenue, which includes 3.5% of gross sales from restaurants and 4% for the marina – their rent for the land they occupy. WDC is somewhat flexible on the rents and when Tumbleweed had a rough patch gave them a temporary discount, now expired. WDC also raises revenue from events, but only enough to cover the actual costs.

WDC also raises money for specific capital expenditures. These average \$80,000 per year, but always for specific projects, not general operations. In early 2013 WDC was in the process of raising \$1.4 million for the installation of LED lighting on the Big Four Bridge.

WDC also benefits from a foundation with an \$11 million endowment funded from earned interest and lease payments. The income is exclusively dedicated to paying for major repairs and improvements, not operations. WDC draws only from the interest, spending about \$80,000 per year, or the equivalent of less than 1% of the capital, which they consider low or conservative.

IMPACT – DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT

Since its inception over 25 years ago, Waterfront Park transformed a derelict and degraded waterfront into a new town commons for the city, attracting over 1.5 million visitors a year. The park has drawn attention from other waterfront cities and is one of five from around

the world featured in the *Reclaiming the Edge: Urban Waterways and Civic Engagement* exhibit at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, DC (on display October 15, 2012 – November 3, 2013).

The park project also catalyzed an estimated \$1.3 billion investment in the Waterfront District including its own construction, residential apartments and condominiums, Louisville Slugger Field and the 22,000 seat Yum! Center – a sports and concert arena (Table 3). While it may be worth questioning how much would have happened without WDC, some development appears to be a direct outcome of the project, while other projects are probably part of an overall synergy of progress that includes the refurbishing of the former Galleria into an entertainment complex on Fourth Street, a few blocks inland from the river.

The Yum! Center accounts for \$450 million of investment in the Waterfront District. While not directly related to the park, it probably would have been constructed elsewhere if the park had not been built. Other projects were directly sponsored by WDC. Generally, these are projects that were built on land WDC owned or controlled, like RiverPark Place, and others that the organization encouraged or facilitated. However, WDC was adamant that public money should not be spent on the developments that should be funded privately. Examples of private projects include Waterfront Park Place, a high-rise residential development facing the Great Lawn. Another adjacent development is Preston Pointe, a mixed-use residential and office building.

Key developers and related projects include:

- **Nicki Sibley, Poe Properties, RiverPark Place.** This project is being developed in cooperation with WDC, which selected Poe after a series of failed attempts to conclude a deal with other developers due, in substantial part, to unfortunate timing in the real estate and financial markets. It was important to WDC to have people living next to the park, to stimulate use and to develop a strong constituency of supporters. The project includes a commercial marina, extensions of the park and its walkways, and several phases of housing, starting with 167 units just completing construction and rent-up at the time of the site visit.

The land was contributed by WDC, which receives ground rent plus 4% of gross receipts from the marina. The developers reported that generally available tax rebates also subsidized the project, which rents the apartments at market rates. The project was designed by a local architect, assisted in master planning by Goody-Clancy and landscape design by Halvorson Design Partnership, both Boston-based firms. Later phases are planned that include high-rise condos and additional low-rise apartments. The master plan shows that the later phase of towers will block river views for some of the apartments, but the developer did not think this would be a problem.

Rents currently range from \$700 per month for a studio to \$1,900 for a two-bedroom unit. Infrastructure costs were high due to flood protection measures. The apartments are built above a garage so they are raised above the 100-year flood plain. This required an expenditure of \$2 million for excavation,

approvals, and pile foundations. The developer constructed pathways that extend the trails from the park and are owned by WDC. The developer was required to construct the marina at a cost of \$7 million, which received tax credits and grants that offset some of the costs. It includes a floating dock shop and pump out station. The developer claims to have put in about \$5 million of the total of \$12 million up-front costs. It appears that this will be a commercially successful project. Rent-up was 95% completed as of April 2013 when the last apartments were not yet finished, and was the fastest the developer had ever experienced. Renters are mainly young professionals who work downtown, medical students, and empty nesters. There are limited housing alternatives in the downtown area, and the amenities of park access and river are a plus. Not including the expensive



RiverPark Place

infrastructure, this project cost around \$60,000 per unit, which is typical for Louisville. Poe is reviewing its plans for the first condo tower and plaza, which may proceed in the near future. The developer is concerned that the condo market is saturated as some downtown projects still have unsold units that were built before the recession. The master plan calls for a 16-story tower, but they are now planning to start with eight stories in the next phase.

- **Valle Jones, Whiskey Row Lofts.** The Jones family invested in this property long before the creation of the park. Valle Jones' father was a corporate lawyer and an amateur magician who bought some buildings about two blocks from what is now the park. He built a theater for his performances and a restaurant



Waterfront Park Place

that utilized only a portion of the available space in his buildings, which occupied almost half the block. Whiskey Row Lofts, which totals about 120,000 square feet, thrived through the 1960's and 70's as a live music venue on Washington Street, but there was not much happening above the ground floor. Its popularity tapered off by 1980's and 90's, but by then plans for the park were starting to emerge.

The Jones family had a vision for the block that included 24/7 uses on the ground floor with apartments and offices above. Valle Jones worked on the project for her father while she was in business school, at which time they wanted to entice an out-of-area developer for what would have been a 500,000 square foot project. However, in 1984 the developers said "look at what's between you and the river. Until someone does something with the river you can't do the project." The creation of Waterfront Park was absolutely critical for this development to go forward. As the park emerged, the Jones family began to work on phase one of their development with a local co-developer, Bill Weyland. In April 2013, the lofts were 98% complete along with five restaurants. All 36 apartments were leased. The development includes 17 parking spaces and three special event venues including a gallery and theater. Total project cost was \$19 million and the financing was supported with \$7.3 million in tax credit equities, as well as new and historic tax credits. They received three mortgages, all from Stockyards, a local bank.

The Jones family considers this initial phase successful and they are working on phase two, which consists of new construction behind reinforced historic storefronts. Phase two will have a

different group of investors but similar financing as phase one. It will be more entertainment-oriented with double the area for restaurants and live entertainment, with some offices and apartments. Because the site slopes down toward the river, the buildings will have ground floor access on both on Washington and Main Streets. Valle Jones believes that the river and the park are important amenities and that the Yum! Center is also a great draw. She observes that there are many potential development sites downtown in the form of surface parking lots. In her opinion, current financing constraints are what limit development, not lack of demand.

- **Dave Steinbrecher, The Ice House.** Dave Steinbrecher is a contractor who owns the former ice house, which was built in the early 1900s. The property is located two blocks east of Whiskey Row, and has similar dual ground floor exposures. He bought the project in 2007, and gutted and rebuilt it as a reception hall facing Washington Street which is used for events like weddings concerts. The structure includes an onsite catering company as well as the Main Street Café facing the other street. Steinbrecher is now considering finishing out the upper floors for housing. He thought about condos but is now leaning towards rental housing. The challenge is financing. Steinbrecher bought the property before the Yum! Center was announced when he considered it to be a considerable risk. However the environment changed as the Yum! Center and Louisville Slugger Field drew a lot of people to the area. In his opinion, while Waterfront Park was very important to the improved business climate in the area, it was not enough. Rather, he felt, the downtown and waterfront improvements should be seen as whole with the park tying them together.



Main Street

The revitalization of areas surrounding the park has also resulted in a huge jump in local employment. According to a 2011 survey by WDC (*Economic Report: the Impact of Louisville's Waterfront Park, Fall 2011*), employment in the Waterfront district – the area from the river to the north side of Market Street, including Main Street and between the Clark Memorial and Kennedy Bridge – has increased from about 400 to nearly 6,700 jobs, despite the fact that many of the original businesses were displaced by the park.

Table 3 lists investments in Waterfront Park and the surrounding area (source: WDC, *Economic Report: the impact of Louisville's Waterfront Park, Fall 2011*).

Overall, it appears fair to say that Waterfront Park has contributed to making downtown Louisville a more attractive, vital and energized place.

TABLE 3: PROJECT INVESTMENTS

Project Investments <i>(as of 2011; completed unless noted otherwise)</i>	
	Amount in millions
Catalyst Corner (r)	\$0.80
Clock Tower Building (r)	\$5.70
Cressman Center	\$1.00
Cobalt 301 East Main Building (r)	\$3.00
Cobalt Marketplace (r)	\$4.00
First and Main Garage	\$8.90
First and Main Redevelopment	\$19.20
Fleur-de-Lis LLC Redevelopment	\$22.50
Haymarket Project (underway)	\$300.00
Humana Waterside Garage	\$8.50
Icehouse (underway)	\$10.00
Joe's Crab Shack	\$1.70
Louisville Ballet	\$2.30
Louisville Extreme Park	\$2.50
Louisville RiverWalk	\$3.50
Louisville Slugger Field	\$26.30
Louisville Wharf	\$1.40
Marriott Residence Inn	\$13.50
Park Place Lofts	\$5.00
Petrus Restaurant and Nightclub	\$1.00
Preston Pointe	\$11.10
River Park Place (underway)	\$200.00
Romano L. Mazzoli Belvedere Connector	\$5.30
Sea Ray of Louisville	\$0.80
The Hub Apartments (announced)	\$3.50
Mercantile Lofts	\$7.00
Tumbleweed Southwest Grill	\$2.00
U of L Rowing Center	\$2.65
Waterfront Infrastructure	\$17.43
Waterfront Park (Phase I)	\$58.00
Waterfront Park (Phase II)	\$15.00
Waterfront Park (Phase III)	\$22.00
Waterfront Park Big Four Bridge & Ramp	\$18.00
Waterfront Park Place	\$48.00
Waterside Building	\$28.00
Whiskey Row Lofts (underway)	\$20.00
YUM! Center	\$450.00
Total	\$1,384.10



Waterfront Development Corporation

PROJECT IMPACT – COMMUNITY

According to WDC, the park provides a central gathering place for people from all parts of the community and daily users include people from every ethnic and social background and from every neighborhood or community in the city. In essence, the park may be the unique place in Louisville where people from every neighborhood, race and class feel comfortable sharing space. This was an explicit intention of the park planners. Many of the board members we interviewed emphasized the importance of the park as the city's central space and that the people feel a sense of ownership in it. They believe that, in fact, it is working even better than they hoped. This assertion is consistent with site visit observations over three days where park visitors appeared to be highly diverse.

Another measure of connection to the community is the fact that the park gets substantial support from local private and corporate philanthropists, who contributed substantially to initial construction and continue to fund projects when called upon.

CURRENT PROJECTS AND FUTURE PLANS

The last portion of the master plan, the Big Four Bridge, was completed in early 2013, although the ramp and landing on the Indiana side was still under construction. At the same time, WDC is in the process of seeking funds for LED lighting of the bridge, and the redesigning the area under the main ramp, which was to have been a land-form but is instead raised on columns.

WDC appears to be a trusted advocate for open space in the city and has been asked to advise on the design of a project to refurbish River View park to the south and west – a project which is only partially complete. WDC would also like to expand Waterfront Park toward the west past 9th Street into a largely African American community. There is a gap of six to eight blocks that has a river walk but does not offer a



Big Four Bridge Indiana landing under construction

river front park. The plan would be to extend River Road to the west. WDC's role is as an advocate for the project and they would help in its design and perhaps operations if it came to fruition.

WDC also has a connection (the vice president of WDC is on the board) to the planning for a botanical garden called Botanica just east of Waterfront Park that is moving forward with feasibility studies, fundraising and site acquisition.

Another related effort is the 21st Century Parks, a legacy project of the Olmstead Parks Conservancy that is sponsored by, among others, David Jones – founder of Humana – and his son Dan Jones. Both are park enthusiasts who were strong supporters of Waterfront Park. Their current project is The Parklands of Floyds Fork, planned for eastern and southern Louisville. It will be one of the largest new urban park systems in the nation, encompassing nearly 4,000 acres of preserved land, some of which is developed for recreational activities.

Assessing Success

This section assesses Waterfront Park's degree of success in terms of meeting WDC's goals, the Selection Committee's questions and discussion, and other factors that emerged during the site visit.

- Reconnect the city to the Ohio River, its very reason for being, providing public access and a reminder of the city's history

The park succeeds in meeting this goal – it offers visual and physical connections – and functions as a magnet drawing people to the river, strengthening the urban fabric. Once there, it provides interpretive

plaques and teaching curricula explaining local and site-specific history, ecology, and other topics.

- [Involve the community in planning for the new park and foster a feeling of ownership](#)

WDC was exemplary in its outreach program and responsive to what participants expressed. In fact, the site might not have become a park without the “overwhelming” request for open space.

- [Make a place where all races, ages and social classes feel comfortable together](#)

The park draws lots of people and provides a unique venue for bringing diverse parts of the community together by offering facilities and activities that appeal to a very wide range of interests.

- [Clean up the industrial wasteland along the river and make a more attractive approach to the city](#)

Waterfront Park has transformed a derelict river front and created an attractive gateway to the city. Before the park, the approach was described as an embarrassment. Now it is considered an icon, transforming the image of the city.

- [Tailor the park to unique features of Louisville – its history and sense of place](#)

The park design responds to local needs and desires, incorporating features such as playgrounds, riverfront walkways, landscaped areas for active and passive recreation, boat launches and marinas, and plazas for events – amenities commonly found in comparable parks. It includes some references to aspects of the site’s ecological and cultural history, including a new inlet intended to resemble natural conditions, public

art – such as the Lincoln Memorial – created by local artists, and an operable National Historic Landmark Mississippi River-style steamboat. The design does not respond to the site’s more recent industrial past by incorporating elements of industrial archeology, as some similarly situated parks do, such as Gas Works Park in Seattle or Concrete Plant Park in the Bronx. Likewise, the limited presence of native plantings and materials, such as locally sourced stone or recycled building materials, does little to root the park to its setting.

- [Overcome key challenges of the site – especially elevated and surface roads and flood control – in an unobtrusive manner](#)

Given the context in which planning for the park began in the early 1990’s, including the decision to accept the existing elevated highway and design the park around it, the initial park design and implementation should be considered successful. The flood control strategy is both clever and effective – tilting the park down under the highway and constructing the river-edge portions so that water flows underneath. WDC was able to negotiate relocation of a highway on-ramp that blocked the main connection between the park and downtown. Short of removing the highway – which WDC chose not to attempt – this was, in its time, an effective approach. However, this success will be undermined by the addition of the new six-lane highway bridge running through the center of the park, significantly adding to the impact of the car on park visitors. Given changing attitudes towards the impact of urban highways – including the removal of existing highways in cities like Boston, Chattanooga, Milwaukee, Portland (Oregon), and San Francisco – it is disappointing that WDC chose not to engage in discussions that considered the impact of the new bridge and alternative approaches, especially when other voices in the community – such as the “8664” initiative – were doing so. WDC

determined that they could not succeed and chose not to risk valuable political capital.

- [Reuse the abandoned rail bridge over the Ohio River to create a pedestrian and bicycle link to Southern Indiana](#)

This is complete, except for the ramp that is Indiana's responsibility and it is under construction. The bridge is a popular destination and offers views of the park and downtown Louisville that were not previously available.

- [Be a catalyst for the revitalization of the areas of downtown adjacent to the waterfront](#)

There is no question that the transformation of downtown over the past 25 years has been remarkable – or that the park has contributed greatly to it – directly and indirectly. It has not been the sole factor, but rather a very important piece of a more general synergy.

Other Considerations:

- [Organization and leadership](#)

WDC was intelligently organized as a quasi-independent entity that included representation from all levels of government (city, county and state) and provided continuity that transcended any single administration. David Karem appears to have been a capable leader, whose political background fit well the needs of the nascent organization. Some thought has been given to succession, but it is not clear what qualifications would best move the organization and park into the next phase of evolution.

- [Quality of planning](#)

WDC had a very solid process of outreach and involvement of community. The organization sought – and received – real input to define the project's goals. For example: when the people of Louisville were asked what they wanted, they said open space, and that's what they got. Outreach continues, including presentations to and cultivation of future supporters and philanthropists.

WDC was astute in their phasing, biting off chunks they could finance, getting some areas done quickly so that people could start using the park, and celebrating each phase to keep the progress in the public's eye. The middle section was left for Phase III, when it would more or less have to be done to complete the park, with the pedestrian bridge the last element to be finished.

- [Quality of park design and maintenance](#)

WDC hired George Hargreaves, a strong-willed landscape architect with a relatively new design firm who presented ideas that they liked. In turn, he and his firm created a bold master plan that introduced a new landscape on a site that had been significantly altered and degraded by decades of industrial use. The overall approach works well, offering a variety of settings for different types and scales of activities and facilitating a phased construction process. Additionally, the design employs the brilliant gesture of tilting the plane of the great lawn down under the highway to open up views to the river and physically reconnect the city with the waterfront. The park was and continues to be an important, early example of what has now become more common in current park design – the transformation of former industrial land into parkland through the creation of a new landscape and plantings.

While the overall design is strong, its implementation was less successful in respect to some details. The large, unrelieved areas of lawn and concrete pavement – while practical and economical to install and maintain, and providing venues for large gatherings – looked barren in early spring. Light fixtures, benches and railings seem rather institutional and generic. It appears that some of the design details have been compromised for ease of maintenance. For the most part, except for the planting beds adjacent to downtown, landscaped areas appear sparse. Given the evolution of landscape architecture and urban park design over the past thirty years, the absence of attention to native plants and habitats, sustainable landscapes and maintenance practices, and detailing of fixtures and hardscapes is notable. Now that the park and WDC are well established and valued within the community, it might be appropriate to invest time and resources in changes and improvements to the park and maintenance that reflect best practices and aspirations of leading twenty-first century parks.

- [Effectiveness of design review process](#)

The design review process appears to have been compromised by a reticence to impact potential development. Some of the reviewers expressed dissatisfaction with the limits on their powers, particularly with respect to the development projects within the park – including the two restaurant concessions (especially Joe's Crab Shack) and the new apartments at the east end. The designs range from inappropriate (Joe's Crab Shack) to undistinguished (RiverPlace Place apartments). Perhaps WDC has been too "hungry" to get projects moving or did not build enough "teeth" into its mandate to be able to insist on better design.

- [WDC and the park as a model for other cities](#)

While unique to Louisville, a number of aspects of the project could be adapted to other cities. Many urban waterfront communities seek information about the project and express particular interest in WDC's organizational structure and funding. Other lessons include the importance of being an informed, involved client and putting in place a public process that gains significant input from the community and keeps them involved. Design features such as the tilted planes to connect to the river (if you can't get rid of an elevated highway) and infrastructure that allows flooding to occur "naturally" could all be applied elsewhere.

Communities that have consulted with WDC include Atlanta, Baton Rouge, Birmingham, Buffalo, Chattanooga, Cincinnati, Davenport, Detroit, Memphis, Owensboro, Paducah, Philadelphia, Richmond and Tulsa. International delegations have come from Nepal, Russia, Turkmenistan, the Yangtze River Basin, and Wakayama. Academic architecture and design programs have come from or invited them to Ball State University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Harvard University, Louisiana State University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and University of Kentucky. At the time of the visit, Louisville's waterfront was one of five cities featured in a year-long exhibit at the Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, DC.

- The park and its relationship to evolving concepts in landscape design

The master plan for the park was created over 25 years ago. While some modifications and updates were incorporated in the later phases, the original plan was followed quite closely. The design incorporates a range of formal, geometric aspects as well as more pastoral, romantic ones – in effect representing or reconciling what could be opposing trends in landscape design. While substantial ecological design concepts of the day were incorporated – such as naturalized river banks allowing for periodic flooding, landscape design practices have evolved considerably since Louisville Waterfront Park was designed. A park designed today would likely include more naturalized areas – and

less turf grass, and possibly some recognition of the Louisville's more recent industrial past. Given the decades-long process of creating the park, it is surprising that some of these current concepts didn't find their way into the site.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Selection Committee recognized Louisville Waterfront Park for its success in reclaiming the waterfront, and creating a new public space that brings the community together and reconnects the City of Louisville with its historic origins along the Ohio River. The Park created a new gateway to the city and a source of civic pride that has



become a magnet for public life, becoming the primary place in the city that draws people of many ages and from a diversity of incomes and cultural backgrounds for activities and events. The recent opening of the Big Four Bridge significantly adds to the park's value, not only for Louisville, but also for communities on the Indiana side of the Ohio River.

The Selection Committee acknowledged the significant scope, scale and challenges addressed by the project over the 25 years of its planning, design and development. These included ecological issues in remediating and redeveloping former industrial land, tackling a complex network of transportation infrastructure, and planning for river navigation and flood control. The design cleverly solved the challenge of re-connecting downtown with the riverfront in spite of the looming presence of an elevated interstate, in the process making the river visible and accessible from downtown while providing protection from 100-year floods.

The Committee commended the park for its role as an early model for urban waterfront redevelopment. The City of Louisville not only figured out a way to reclaim its waterfront for people, but was also among the earliest to do so. Its success inspired efforts in other cities across the world, and the park continues to serve as a model strategy that makes a commitment to public space and repurposes the land without privatizing the waterfront.

Additionally, the Committee recognized the Park for its economic impact on downtown Louisville, spurring new commercial, residential and institutional development on adjacent land. They acknowledged the significance of the design overlay district and design review process

overseen by Waterfront Development Corporation as a step towards fostering better development, but questioned the overall impact on the quality of the design.

The Selection Committee did not feel that the park was as successful in meeting its expressed goal of creating a design that was unique to Louisville. In particular, they expressed disappointment at the lack of references in the park design to the industrial legacy of the site, noting that as a nation "we can't ignore it anymore; we're losing too many connections to who we were." They observed that the park design could have done more to respond to the site's unique ecological and cultural context and history, considering what was special about this river, landscape and setting. The Committee also noted that over the long period of the park's development and operation, relatively little appeared to have been modified or changed in response to experience, or changing ideas, needs and practices in landscape architecture – such as the current focus on the benefits of using native plantings as a part of sustainable design and maintenance. The Selection Committee also questioned whether the ongoing quality of the maintenance could be improved, especially given the existence of a generous endowment.

Finally, the Committee suggested that the lack of willingness to take on the issue of the new highway bridge may have been a lost opportunity, particularly in light of the increasing number of efforts in cities elsewhere in the country and the world to dismantle, relocate or bury waterfront highways.

Resources

INTERVIEWS*

Waterfront Development Corporation:

David Karem, President
Mike Kimmel, Vice President/Deputy Director
Cordell Lawrence, Finance Director
Ashley Cox, Director of Events
Gary Pepper, Park Manager
Marlene Grissom, Director of Special Projects
Margaret Walker, Information Officer
Linda Harris, CEO of the Belle of Louisville

Designers:

George Hargreaves, Hargreaves Associates
Steve Wiser, Architect, WDC design review committee
Ross Primmer, Architect, De Leon & Primmer Architecture
Nicole Walton, Brown-Forman, WDC and
Friends of the Waterfront board member

Economic Development:

Nicki Sibley, Poe Properties
Valle Jones, Whiskey Row Lofts
Dave Steinbrecher, Ice House
Ollie Barber, Barber Banaszynski & Hiatt, WDC Board Member

Events/Park Use:

J.K. McKnight, Forecastle Festival Founder
Greg Fante, Louisville Sports Commission
Matt Gibson, Kentucky Derby Festival
Stacy Owen, WFPK Public Radio

Louisville Metro Government:

Ellen Hesen, Mayor's Chief of Staff
Chris Poynter, Mayor's Director of Communication
(Mayor Greg Fischer was not available as he was attending the Final Four basketball game in Atlanta to watch Louisville win the national championship).

Others:

Ed Hamilton, artist
Rick Bell, historian
Clinton Deckard, Construction Solutions
Tyler Allen, 8664
Leadership Louisville – Class of 2013



Big Four Bridge

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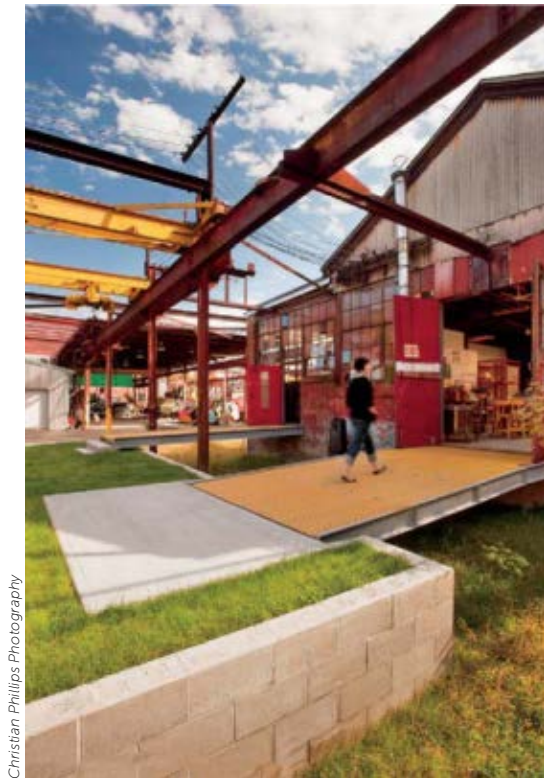
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Silver Medal Winner
The Steel Yard
Providence, Rhode Island



Christian Phillips Photography





Christian Phillips Photography

Overview

Submitted by: Klopfer Martin Design Group

Completed: 2010

Total Development Cost: \$1.2 million

Located in Providence's "Industrial Valley" along the Woonasquatucket River just west of downtown, The Steel Yard occupies the former site of the Providence Iron and Steel Company, a 100-year old business that closed in 2001. The property was purchased by two recent graduates of Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and Brown University who had participated in the redevelopment of the adjoining Monohasset Mill property into artist housing. The 3.5-acre site, with its gantry cranes and rough brick and metal buildings, became an ad hoc community and gathering space for people interested in creative, industrial arts.

The Steel Yard was incorporated into a nonprofit organization and subsequently hired an executive director to oversee expansion of the organization and the redevelopment of the site. Landscape architecture firm Klopfer Martin Design Group was engaged to develop a master plan that retained the wild, industrial character of the site while addressing the cleanup of the significant contamination generated by the former business. Remediation required compliance with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's (DEM) regulations, and months of negotiation with numerous environmental agencies including the Narragansett Bay Commission.

"AN EXEMPLARY MODEL OF REUSE AND TRANSFORMATION THAT IS BUILT ON THE COMMUNITY'S LOCAL HISTORY AND TALENT, AND PRESERVES INDUSTRIAL HISTORY AND CULTURE IN AN AUTHENTIC WAY." —2013 Selection Committee

The resulting design, completed in 2010, is a creative response to strict regulatory requirements and the Steel Yard's commitment to utilize the best sustainable practices possible, even within a tight budget. A minimal amount of the most contaminated soil was removed. The remainder was treated with a binder, consolidated, capped and covered with clean soil, creating nine different landforms in the process. Permeable paving reduces runoff, and the site is graded to create a moat that collects storm water, 90 percent of which remains on site. The project's landforms and variety of paving materials create visual interest and allow for a variety of activities including tractor-trailer deliveries, product fabrication, and display and gathering spaces for events. Scrap metal is incorporated into retaining walls and railings. Native, easily colonized plants were selected to recreate the untended, "urban wild" look of the site prior to remediation. Hook-ups for future power and plumbing have been provided throughout the property to allow for future expansion of programming and facilities.

The Steel Yard seeks to foster the industrial arts and incubate small business within a creative environment of experimentation. Today, the campus offers industrial arts classes for adults and area youth, a workforce training program, and fabrication space used by the organization and area artists. Through its Public Projects program, the Steel Yard works with local artists to design and produce custom-made street furniture—bike racks, fencing and gates, trashcans, and tree guards—placed downtown and in city neighborhoods, recognized by the Steel Yard logo. The Steel Yard is host to numerous public events, including an annual Halloween Iron Pour, classic car shows, movie nights, and private weddings and events.

Funding for the \$1.2 million development included two EPA brownfield redevelopment grants. Ongoing operating and program support for the organization is provided by Public Projects commissions, earned income from classes, site rentals, private donors, foundations, partnerships with local businesses, and the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts.

The Steel Yard has become a center for creative activity, bridging Providence's traditional arts community with manufacturing businesses and the city's industrial, lower-income West Side. The project has received recognition for its innovative approach to site remediation, including a 2011 Honor Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and documentation as a case study for brownfield regeneration by the EPA and others. Investment in and redevelopment of the property and surrounding mill buildings reflect the city's growing interest and pride in its industrial heritage and creative community.



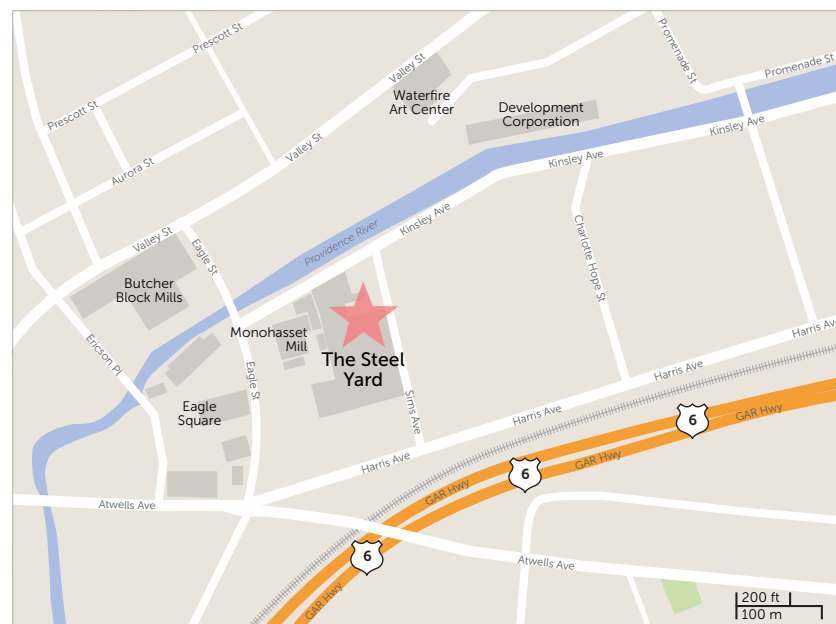
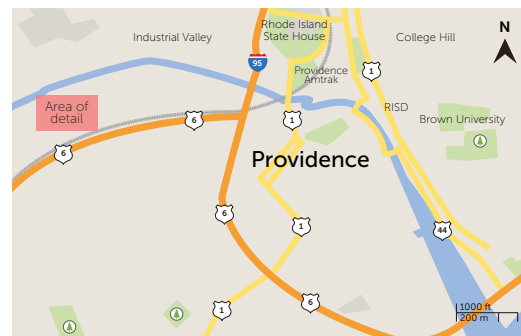
Right photo: Christian Phillips Photography





Project at-a-Glance

- The redevelopment of a historic steel fabrication facility into a campus for arts education, workforce training and small-scale manufacturing in Providence's Industrial Valley.
- Extensive environmental remediation of the 3.5-acre property that addressed The Steel Yard's desire to utilize the best sustainable practices possible and retain the industrial and "urban wild" character of the site while meeting strict local, state and federal regulatory requirements.
- An industrial arts and small business incubator that offers classes, workforce training and fabrication space used by the organization and area artists, including The Steel Yard's Public Projects program that designs and fabricates custom-made street furniture.
- A center for creative activity and events that bridge the traditional arts community on Providence's East Side with manufacturing businesses and the industrial, lower-income West Side, and reflects the city's growing interest and pride in its industrial heritage and its "Creative Capital" identity.







Project Goals

- Create a memorable and flexible space that embodies the organization's mission.
- Engage the site's unique existing structures.
- Utilize best sustainable practices within a constrained budget.
- Provide a public landscape to an underserved neighborhood of Providence.
- Serve as an example to others of the potential for local properties to be revitalized in nontraditional ways.

Chronology



Board of Trade Journal 1902



Klopfer Martin Design Group



1822 Builders Iron Foundry (BIF), precursor to the Providence Steel and Iron Company (PSI), is founded.

1850-60s Industry grows in Valley with introduction of rail service and channeling of Woonasquatucket River.

1902 BIF begins construction of structural steel shop complex at 27 Sims Avenue.

1920-60s Industrial manufacturing declines, followed by businesses and population loss, and deterioration of neighborhoods and downtown.

2000 Controversy erupts over proposal to replace Eagle Square mill building complex occupied by artist "squatters" with shopping center.

Clay Rockefeller partners with three Valley residents to develop Monohasset Mill artist live/work space.

2001 Nick Bauta and Clay Rockefeller initiate purchase of former Providence Steel and Iron (PSI) complex as Milhaus LLC.

Phase I and II Environmental Assessments.

2002 Woonasquatucket Valley Community Build (WVCB) is incorporated as 501(c)3 nonprofit organization under the leadership of founding Executive Director Peter Eiermann.

Property sale is completed.

Welding space is offered.

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and Milhaus LLC negotiate Settlement Agreement.

2003 Jacques Witford Company develops Remedial Action Work Plan which is approved by RIDEM.

Initial groundwater investigation is conducted.

Landscape cap design begins.

Studio rentals begin.

2004 Open enrollment classes and Public Projects program begin.

2005 Drake Patten is hired as executive director and begins work in 2006.

Percolation tests are completed.

Site placed on National Register of Historic Places.

Camp Metalhead launched.



Annali Kiers



Klopfert Martin Design Group



AS220 Youth

2006 First phase of cap design is put out to bid.

EPA awards brownfield redevelopment funds.

"Yard by the Foot" campaign is launched.

WVCB registers "The Steel Yard" doing business as (DBA) name with IRS.

First Halloween Iron Pour is held.

2007 The Steel Yard purchases property from Milhaus LLC with RIDEM approval (May).

Klopfert Martin Design Group begins design of Master Plan (July).

2008 RIDEM provides partial match to EPA grant.

2009 City of Providence rebrands itself as Creative Capital.

Second phase of cap design is put out to bid.

The Steel Yard negotiates loan with Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.

Site remediation construction begins.

Workforce Training Program (now called Weld to Work) starts.

2010 Site remediation is completed.

Ribbon cutting ceremony is held.

Site rentals available.

2011 Project featured in January "Game Changers 2011" issue of Metropolis Magazine.

Project receives awards from the Association of Landscape Architects, Boston Society of Landscape Architects, and Providence Preservation Society.

Project highlighted with case study in EPA's August issue of Brownfields Success in New England.

2012 The Steel Yard honored as Senator John H. Chafee Conservation Leadership Project by the Environmental Council of Rhode Island.

2013 Drake Patten steps down as executive director (February).

Helen Lang hired as new executive director (March).

10th anniversary events commence at the site (October).

Helen Lang resigns; Public Projects director Howie Sneider named Executive Director.

Project Description

The Steel Yard is the redevelopment of a historic steel fabrication facility into a campus offering arts education, workforce training and small-scale manufacturing in Providence's Industrial Valley. The design of the 3.5 acre property reflects a creative response to extensive environmental remediation that utilized the best sustainable practices possible while retaining the industrial and "urban wild" character of the site. The Steel Yard has become a valued community space and center for creative activity that reflects the city's growing interest and pride in its industrial heritage and its "Creative Capital" identity.



CONTEXT

Providence

Situated on the Providence River at the head of Narragansett Bay, Providence, Rhode Island was founded in 1636 by Roger Williams as a place for religious freedom and separation of church and state. The National Park Service's Roger Williams National Memorial in downtown Providence, the smallest park in the national system, recognizes his contributions to the principles of religious freedom in the United States.

By the time of the American Revolution, Providence was an established Colonial port with an economy supported by maritime trade, artisans and merchants, and small industries. Over the next century, it grew into a significant port and industrial and financial center, and became chartered as a city in 1832.

Railroads, the Blackstone Canal and proximity to Narragansett Bay contributed to the city's growth as an industrial center in the nineteenth century. The city's diverse manufacturing base included factories that produced jewelry, screws, silverware, steam engines, textiles and tools. Manufacturing declined in the twentieth century, beginning with the textile industry in the 1920's and continuing in succeeding decades as businesses and people moved out to suburbs and city population declined. In the 1970's and 1980's investment focused on downtown as residential neighborhoods and the city's "Industrial Valley" and West End languished.

Downtown investment included the Providence River Relocation Project (which received the 2003 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence Silver Medal), a major infrastructure program designed to



Barnaby Evans

improve traffic flows in and through downtown. The project entailed rail relocation and construction of a new train station, realignment of downtown streets and highway connections, uncovering and relocating two rivers, creation of a new urban park and special development district, and public programming including the popular "Waterfire" events.

Today the city has a population of 178,042¹ (compared to about 250,000 at its peak) and is the third largest city in New England (2010 Census). Education, healthcare and tourism are the major economic drivers and institutions like Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and Brown University are dominant in the community as is the revitalized downtown.

The city of Providence recently rebranded itself as "the Creative Capital" to promote its educational resources and growing arts community. In 2009 Mayor David Cicilline and the Department of Art, Culture + Tourism launched *Creative Providence: A Cultural Plan for the Creative*

Sector to examine the economic potential of the city's creative community. For the purpose of the initiative, the creative community included the arts, humanities and cultural heritage; media tourism and entertainment industries; and creative business-to-business services and designed-based businesses. The Steel Yard founders and staff participated in the project.

At the time of our site visit in April 2013, Providence and its mayor, Angel Taveras, were drawing national interest. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership named the Mayor to its 2011-2012 Daniel Rose Fellowship class. During the fall of 2012 the mayor and his team worked with Rose Center experts to focus on job creation and urban revitalization in Olneyville Square. In March 2013



Manufacturing buildings along the Woonasquatucket River

Providence received Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayors Challenge Grand Prize for Innovation and a \$5 million implementation award for its early education initiative.

While the city has gained attention for its successful downtown revitalization, creative community and institutions, there are challenges. Like many older American cities, Providence is struggling to maintain a healthy fiscal status. There was a sense among several people we interviewed that prior mayors focused on downtown at the cost of neighborhoods, like those on the West Side, and left the city saddled with unsustainable debt.

The Industrial Valley and Olneyville Community

The Steel Yard is located in Providence's Valley neighborhood on the city's West Side. The area includes a mix of residential, commercial, industrial and institutional uses. Industrial development began to occur along the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket River valleys beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and continued into the early twentieth, generating a series of large brick mill complexes that lend the area its "Industrial Valley" name. The businesses declined after World War II and the buildings began to fall vacant until being reclaimed by artists, housing developers and small businesses.

The district is adjacent to Olneyville, among the oldest and poorest of Providence's neighborhoods, and has suffered 40 to 50 years disinvestment. According to the Providence Plan, in 2000 the majority (57%) of its 6,495 residents were Hispanic (compared to 30% in the city as a whole). The median family income was \$17,538 (compared to \$32,058 in Providence). In 2004 the median residential home price was \$190,500, 13 percent lower than the citywide median.



In 2000 controversy erupted over a proposal for redevelopment of mill buildings in the Valley near the current Steel Yard site. Known as Fort Thunder, the collection of historic mill buildings was home to a community of informal artist “squatters,” who had become known and popular in the neighborhood. The original proposal for the development called for the demolition of the entire complex and construction of a new, suburban style strip shopping center. Protest from the community – over 300 artists reportedly stormed city hall – didn’t succeed in stopping the development, but was able to cause changes to be made to the design which included saving four of the sixteen original buildings, revising the design of the new buildings to be more contextual with the mill structures, and creating a mixed-use development of retail and housing. The current development, known as Eagle Square, includes neighborhood retail serving businesses like a supermarket, dry cleaner and coffee shop.

The experience also sparked a preservation movement that focused on the area’s historic mill buildings and precipitated a comprehensive inventory of historic structures by the City of Providence. The Steel Yard is now part of the city’s Industrial & Commercial Buildings Historic District. This noncontiguous district includes 275 properties containing 19th and 20th century industrial and commercial buildings throughout the city.

Providence Steel and Iron Company (PSI)

The Steel Yard is located in the historic Providence Steel and Iron Company (PSI) complex along the Woonasquatucket River in the heart of Providence’s “Industrial Valley” district. PSI was formed as a subsidiary of Builders Iron Foundry (BIF), a Providence company established in 1822 that produced iron castings, water meters and

Clockwise from top: Butcher Block Mill, Eagle Square, Sims Avenue

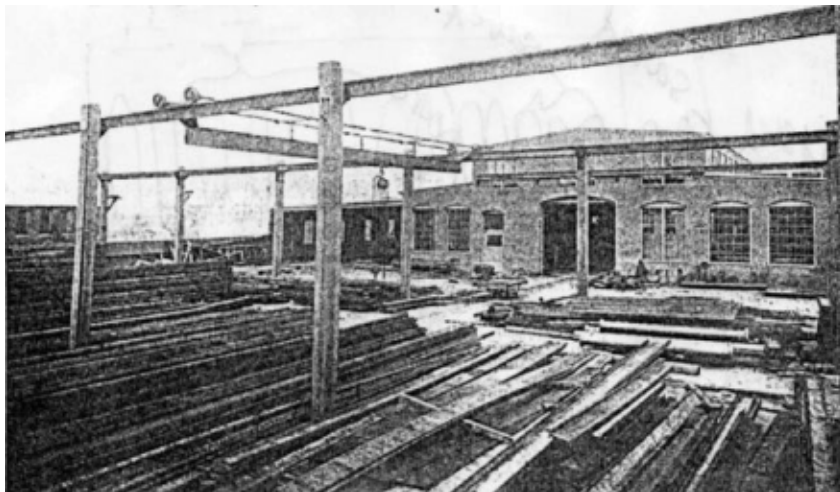
architectural iron work including the iron and marble stairs for the Library of Congress (according to the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form). BIF purchased the property at the corner of Sims and Kinsley Avenues for construction of a structural steel shop in 1902. The business was incorporated as Providence Steel and Iron Company (PSI) in 1905.

Between 1902 and 1937 the company acquired additional land and constructed a complex of buildings including one-story and two-story

brick buildings, an ornamental iron works shop (with extensions), a brick office building, a bar shop and a stockyard crane. Over the next decades the company produced steel shapes and products for bridges and buildings. The business continued to operate as a steel fabrication plant on a limited scale until it was purchased by the founders of The Steel Yard. The former owner was very supportive of the purchase, knowing that the site would remain in the industrial arts.

PROJECT HISTORY

The Steel Yard was founded by Clay Rockefeller and Nick Bauta, artists and “makers” who envisioned the former Providence Steel and Iron Company property as “the yard” where artists could come together in a creative “playground” to share ideas and resources and make things. Graduates of local universities, they developed a strong connection to Providence and appreciation for the industrial buildings in the Valley and Olneyville neighborhoods on the city’s West Side. They were inspired by seeing Jane Jacobs speak at a conference in Toronto and shared lunch with her afterwards. Both came from wealthy families – Bauta is the grandson of Canadian food magnate W. Garfield Weston and Rockefeller is the great-great-grandson of John D. Rockefeller –

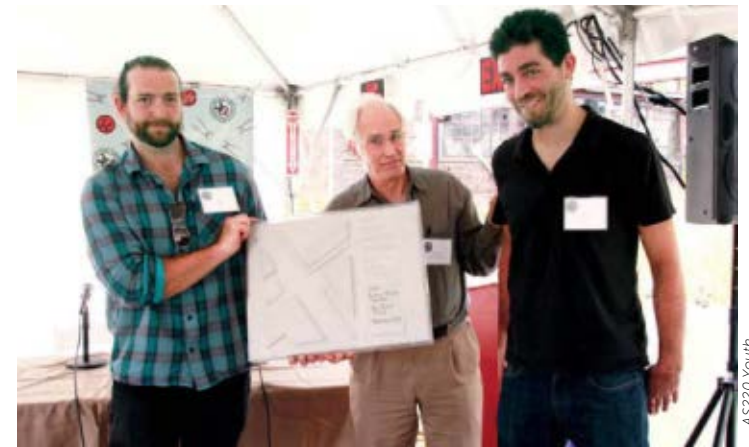


Board of Trade Journal, 1902

Clockwise from top:
Providence Iron and Steel,
Clay Rockefeller and Nick Bauta
(with Simeon Bruner),
the site prior to remediation



Klopfier Martin Design Group



AS220 Youth



Above: Monohasset Mill; Below: The site prior to remediation

and had access to financial resources to invest in a project that realized their vision.

A Rhode Island School of Design graduate, Nick Bauta is an artist and entrepreneur who designs and fabricates leather jewelry and clothes, urban furniture and metal sculpture, and develops arts-related properties and businesses. He is the owner and developer of Fête and Firehouse 13, arts incubator spaces housing two of Providence's live performance venues. Bauta lives in Monohasset Mill and has a studio in the building he and Rockefeller own adjacent to The Steel Yard. He is active in the Providence arts community, and continues to serve as an advisor to The Steel Yard.

Clay Rockefeller is an artist/entrepreneur and graduate of Brown University. Prior to co-founding The Steel Yard, he partnered with three other developers to renovate the former Armington & Sims Engine Company, a historic four-story brick mill building across from Eagle Square and bordering The Steel Yard property, in 2002 into 39 artist live/work spaces now known as Monohasset Mill, where he lives with his family. Rockefeller served as a board member and volunteer at The Steel Yard and, like Bauta, has remained involved. He is also active in several local and national nonprofits including the David Rockefeller Fund and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Bauta and Rockefeller were living in Monohasset Mill when the former Providence Steel & Iron (PSI) came on the market. They paid \$1.5 million for the 3.5-acre property, which included several buildings, equipment and trucks. The two founders established a nonprofit organization in conjunction with the purchase of the building and began offering classes and workshop space to area artists.





Photos by Klopfer Martin Design Group



Now doing business as The Steel Yard, the 501(c)3 non-profit organization was incorporated in 2002 as the Woonasquatucket Valley Community Build (WVCB). According to its documentation:

The WVCB Inc. acts as a catalyst in the creative revitalization of the industrial valley district of Providence, Rhode Island. In fostering the industrial arts and incubating small business, the Corporation seeks to cultivate an environment of experimentation and a community strengthened by creative networks.

According to former Executive Director Drake Patten, in the early years the organization and its founders operated on hope and faith in their vision of what The Steel Yard could become. They learned as they

The site before and during remediation

went along with advice from a number of mentors, including architect and current board chair Peter Case, local developers, and others in the Providence's tightly networked community. The personal contacts that were available because of the small scale of Providence's artist and non-profit community contributed to making this project possible. The Crucible in Oakland, California and Sloss Furnaces in Birmingham, Alabama provided inspiration and models for building a creative community focused on the industrial arts.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Today the organization offers educational programs, workforce training, fabrication space and events that provide opportunities for people to engage in and continue the legacy of the industrial arts. With over 9,000 square feet of workshop and studio space, including a foundry, metalworking shop, ceramics studio, and blacksmithing department, The Steel Yard serves as an incubator for the development of new ideas, projects, and partnerships.

The Steel Yard founders hired Peter Eiermann as the organization's first executive director. Eiermann, characterized as a "chronic entrepreneur," was brought in to get the earliest programs going on the site with the understanding that he would serve for about three years. He oversaw an initial series of design charrettes that solicited input from The Steel Yard's growing community of "yardies."

Over time the founders realized that they needed an executive director who could help the organization grow and expand its programming in quality and offerings, which led to hiring Drake Patten in 2006. Rockefeller first met Patten when he approached the Rhode Island

Council on the Humanities for funding. He was familiar with her work at the Millay Colony and sensed she would bring the necessary blend of determination and experience with nonprofit management and arts organizations, so he invited her to join the organization.

Patten, who has a background in anthropology and archeology, enjoys "turning things around." Her initial task was to bring order to the organization's "wild west" culture and manage brownfield cleanup of the site. Some remediation work had already been completed in 2002 and planning for the environmental cap was underway. When it became apparent that the organization needed a "master plan" to inform the development of the site, Patten led the staff through a strategic planning process.



The Steel Yard staff

After succeeding in helping the organization grow and complete its site improvements, Patten resigned in early 2013 to pursue new endeavors. She left The Steel Yard in the capable hands of the board of directors and staff. Her successor, Helen Lang, was in place in April 2013.

At the time of our site visit, the Steel Yard employed four full-time and two part-time staff. In addition to the executive director, the full-time staff included an associate director, a director of Public Projects and a program director. Part-time personnel included an art production manager and a communications director/volunteer coordinator. The Steel Yard has a way of involving and keeping interesting and creative people. Most of the staff are practicing artists and several first became involved with the organization as program participants or class instructors. At least three had worked for the organization for five years or more, progressing from prior positions into their current ones. Paul Iannelli, a former employee of PSI, who worked on the site for over 50 years, was asked to stay on to become a groundskeeper for the new owners. The organization has also employed AmeriCorps VISTA members. At the time of the writing of this report, sixteen additional people were listed as instructors for classes.

The Steel Yard is governed by a "working" board of directors that includes ten people and meets monthly. The two founders served as board members in the early years. Members at the time of our visit included an architect and practicing artists. Each board member contributes financially to the organization. The organization has received support from the Rhode Island Foundation for board development.

PROGRAMS, EVENTS AND PARTNERS

The Steel Yard hosts a variety of activities that help people access the industrial arts, including classes, events and workshop space for artists. In its relatively short life span, the organization has developed a number of popular programs and events that offer opportunities for area businesses, families, individuals and youth from across the Providence area to engage with The Steel Yard site and its art, educational and workforce development resources.

Camp Metalhead

Launched in 2005, Camp Metalhead provides a two-week intensive introduction to creative metal fabrication for 14- to 18-year-olds. The program culminates with the students designing and implementing a commissioned public art project. In 2011 Camp Metalhead participants, sponsored by Groundwork Providence in collaboration with the National Park Service, designed and produced recycling receptacles and a "Speaker's Corner" for Roger Williams National Memorial. 78 students have participated in the program since its inception.



Speakers' Corner in Roger Williams National Memorial



Clockwise from top left: products designed and produced at The Steel Yard including Kennedy Plaza railings, trash cans, and bike racks

Public Projects

The Public Projects program started in 2004 as Urban Furniture. According to a detailed business plan completed in 2007, it is “an earned income initiative designed to unite the educational and creative aspects of The Steel Yard’s mission.” Through it Steel Yard staff collaborate with local artists, industry and vendors to produce site-specific public sculpture and street furniture.

The program produces practical yet individually designed products like benches, bike racks, fencing and trash cans in quantity, as well as one-of-a-kind objects like community bulletin boards, narrative fence panels and decorative gates. The products, identified by The Steel Yard logo, are visible throughout the city. Recent installations include railings in an Olneyville housing project and Kennedy Plaza downtown. The Steel Yard targets organizations that serve as stewards of public space for commissions and clients have included the City of Providence, neighborhood organizations, and nonprofits.

Between 2004 and 2013 The Steel Yard collaborated with over 200 individual artists and students, generating over \$250,000 in commissions to community artists, and producing 333 receptacles, 105 tree guards, 124 bike racks, 25 benches, 111 planters and 14 fences. Gross program revenues have increased steadily, from \$25,000 in 2004 to \$250,000 in 2013.

Recent clients have included The City of Providence (bike racks and playground gate), Roger Williams National Memorial (recycling bins), RiverzEdge Art Center (skateboard press), Smith Hill Community Development Corporation (fencing), West Broadway Neighborhood Association (community kiosks) and William D’Abate Elementary School (fencing and bike racks).

Weld to Work

The Weld to Work program began in 2009 as the Workforce Training Program. It is a three-week course for low-income 18 to 24 year-olds that provides an introduction to the field of metalworking and fabrication as well as professional work experience. Classes are small – no more than five to eight students – and provide hands-on training



Welding and ceramics classes



in metalworking and fabrication as well as tours of local galleries, museums and fabrication businesses. At the conclusion of the program each student designs and fabricates a unique bike rack.

There were 81 participants in the Weld-to-Work/Workforce Development program between 2009 and April 2013, 75 of whom graduated. Steel Yard staff note the high retention rate as an accomplishment, although graduation from the program does not necessarily result in a job. Nor is it intended to, as staff and partners see the program as more about creativity, interest, and developing skills than as formal job training. Even so, the organization is looking into opportunities to strengthen connections with area nonprofits – including the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence, Open Doors and Youth Build Rhode Island – and businesses to better tap into potential students and connect future graduates with job opportunities. They are also discussing the value of offering a professional certification.

Classes

The Steel Yard first started offering classes in 2004 and listed blacksmithing, ceramics, jewelry, metalworking, foundry and blacksmithing, and welding courses on its web site in 2013. Classes are offered from March through November (they are discontinued in the winter due to unheated buildings) and take the form of weekend workshops targeted for beginners and corporate groups and four- to ten- week courses for students seeking more opportunity for instruction. Participation has been steadily growing. 321 people participated in open enrollment classes in 2012, and The Steel Yard also offered Youth Open Studios approximately 25 times, free of charge for attendees. Students come from Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts.



Photos by Annal Kiers



Events include the Halloween Iron Pour and Cruise Night

WORKS IN PROGRESS 2012
FUNDRAISER at THE STEEL YARD

CRUISE NIGHT
CAR ENTRY FEE IS \$5 SUGGESTED DONATION \$5
FRIDAY, JULY 13th



GREASY GROOVES · THE COLONEL
FOOD VENDOR · HAVEN BROTHERS

OUR 7TH ANNUAL CLASSIC CAR, CUSTOM, AND BICYCLE SHOW.
BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY FOR AN EVENING OF POLISHED CHROME, MUSIC, RAFFLE PRIZES AND STUDIO TOURS.

RAIN DATE: JULY 14th
ST DMS KENNEBEC, PORTLAND ME 04101-1001 CONTACT@THESTEELYARD.ORG WWW.THESTEELYARD.ORG

The Steel Yard

Events

In recent years the site has been host to four large, programmed events from March through November as well as occasional movie nights. These events include:

Halloween Iron Pour – Initiated in 2007, this annual performance event draws 1000 to 2000 people to The Steel Yard. Hosted with the Iron Guild, it features regional artists, live music and the pouring of molten iron.

Iron Chef – First held in 2008, this competitive, judged event was modeled on the “Iron Chef” cooking show. Teams of artists were given scrap metal and a fixed amount of time to design and fabricate a piece of sculpture. The popular, fall event was held for five years in a row but has been discontinued due to the staff time required to coordinate.

Wooly Festival – This annual DIY (do-it-yourself) art festival or “urban country fair” is organized by artist and Former Steel Yard board member Sam White and took place for the first time in 2007. According to the event website, “the Woolies are dedicated to developing a society of brave interaction and aesthetics through a progression of surreal, spectacular, people-driven events.”

Cruise Night – Held every year since 2006, The Steel Yard’s Cruise Night brings together custom and classic vehicle car and motorcycle enthusiasts from the region and supports the organization’s Works in Progress fundraising program. The events are organized by ground-keeper Paul Iannelli.

Rentals

The organization derives revenue from renting its facilities and outdoors spaces on a short-term and more permanent basis to artists, businesses, and private individuals and events.

Studio Rentals – Open studios are offered weekly and classroom and studio space is available for rent for on a pay-as-you-go hourly basis and as negotiated for longer terms. The campus includes a ceramics cooperative that offers memberships that provide access to studio space and kilns. Workshop space is often rented to artists needing space to fabricate large projects.

Event Rentals – The most recent program addition and revenue generator is rental of the property – including the Movie Platform, Commons and Back Forty – for private events including weddings and performances between April and October.

Tenants – The Steel Yard leases space in the office building to several businesses. In 2013 these included Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Fire Tower Engineered Timber and West Side Sewing Studio.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Steel Yard partners with artists, businesses, nonprofits and public agencies to connect its programs with other resources and opportunities in the community. These partnerships reflect the organization's commitment to Providence, sense of social responsibility, and standing as a community resource.



Sims Avenue office building

Artists

Artists are vital to The Steel Yard's mission and work. The organization engages local artists as board members, class instructors, designers for its Public Projects, staff and tenants. It also offers referrals to projects commissioned by private individuals (The Steel Yard will only take commissions from nonprofit and public clients). For local artists, the organization and its campus offer access to fabrication facilities and tools, events and networking that support their craft.

Businesses/Corporations

The Steel Yard enjoys enthusiastic support from a cohort of local manufacturing businesses including Bullard Abrasives, Industrial Welder's Supply and Mid City Steel. These businesses provide a combination of cash and in-kind support in the form of donated equipment and materials including space heaters, tools and accessories, gas and steel.

The Steel Yard has done an excellent job of helping their corporate partners feel connected to and involved with the organization. These partners indicated that they appreciate the aspects of The Steel Yard that relate to their own industrial business operations, including its reuse and extensive remediation of this historic site, as well as its role as resource for the community. The corporate partners admire the organization's youthful, passionate staff and their earnest, responsible approach to doing business. They particularly noted the attention that Steel Yard staff pay to personal relationships, such as inviting corporate partners to join them for special occasions at the Yard, bringing Weld-to-Work classes to their places of business, and even taking the time to acknowledge personal events like a death in their family. One businessman cited 200 to 300 personal interactions with Steel Yard staff over seven to eight years.

These partners showed a palpable enthusiasm for The Steel Yard; one even referred to falling in love with the "charm of the place." He encourages his coworkers to take classes there and his customers to contribute tools and finishing products. Another noted that his 120 employees love the organization. All spoke with pride at the extent to which the organization has touched the city with its Public Project street furniture with The Steel Yard logo.

Foundations & Public Agencies

The Steel Yard has received financial support from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts for the past ten to twelve years. The agency admires the way the organization does business and considers the volume of Public Projects commissions and products installed throughout the city to be a reflection of the organization's value in the community. The Steel Yard's work is viewed by peers as exemplary.

Nonprofits/Social Service Agencies

The Steel Yard is partnering with local organizations like the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence, Open Doors and Groundwork Providence to connect their programs and products with other resources in the community. The organization is considering offering the program to other demographic audiences and is seeking more sustainable funding streams.

The Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence works with formerly incarcerated and gang involved youth. Forty percent of people in Rhode Island prisons are from Providence and most return when they are released. Manufacturing is one of few industries where a criminal record isn't necessarily a barrier and the organization has sent seven or eight individuals to The Steel Yard's *Weld to Work* program over the past two to three years. The organization pays for the participant's tuition and provides case management and support. They credit The Steel Yard for its willingness to work with high-risk individuals, and for bringing art into a community where it hasn't been accessible in the past.

Open Doors, a nonprofit social service agency that works with adult population from the criminal justice system, approached The Steel Yard when it wanted to include art in a housing project it was developing and to learn more about its programs. The Steel Yard produced a bike rack for their site and the relationship deepened to include discussions about using Steel Yard programs for Open Door clients, although only one person has been referred to the Weld to Work program to date. The organization wants to be able to offer its clients exposure to different fields, including metal work and welding, but most of their clients don't fit the age group for this program and are seeking immediate employment.

Groundwork Providence provides environmental training for area youth. The organization has partnered with The Steel Yard on several of its summer youth "Green Teams" programs. Teens in the program have planted trees on The Steel Yard property and worked with Steel Yard through its Camp MetalHead program and National Park Service staff to design and build recycling containers and a Speakers' Corner at Roger Williams National Monument. Partnering provides an opportunity to expose area youth to art and help them learn how it is possible to bring design to functional items. Overall, over 30 area youth have participated in Groundwork Providence programs that involved a partnership with The Steel Yard.

SITE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The 3.5-acre Steel Yard property includes two clusters of modest brick and metal buildings that total approximately 10,000 square feet of interior space and about 12,000 square feet of outdoor space. The buildings are designated historic landmarks by the Rhode Island

Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission and the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the historic structures, the site includes gantry cranes dating from the property's use by a steel fabricator.

According to the Providence Steel and Iron Company National Register of Historic Places nomination form, the property's historic significance is derived from being an example of "a surviving, relatively intact example of a local structural steel and ornamental iron works as it evolved physically over an approximately fifty-year period," and its early use of electrical lighting and power.

Remediation

Remediation of the brownfield site was the major hurdle The Steel Yard had to overcome in order to move from its informal beginnings to an organization with a mission, ongoing programs and staff. It is also the theme that dominated Patten's tenure as executive director.

After first expressing interest in the purchase of the property Rockefeller and Bauta hired a local environmental engineering consultant to conduct an initial investigation, including Phase I and II environmental assessments, of potential contamination on the site.

The investigation was completed in 2001 and found arsenic contamination and very high concentrations of lead, exceeding 10,000 parts per million (ppm) – an order of magnitude higher than the 400 ppm level considered sufficient to be of concern for health or the 1000 ppm level commonly found in steel yards. These hazardous concentrations triggered notification to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). While RIDEM was aware of manufacturing

in the area, it was not aware of the very high levels of contamination on the property. The high concentrations suggested to RIDEM officials that lead was used in industrial processes and/or storage.

Clay and Bauta created a new legal entity, Milhaus LLC, which purchased the site in late 2001 with the buildings and much of the existing equipment, including the gantry cranes that contribute to the site's distinctive industrial character. With their assessment in hand, they signed a nondisclosure agreement taking responsibility for and acknowledging the environmental contamination on the site.

RIDEM subsequently required Milhaus LLC to prepare a remedial action work plan that addressed cleanup and reduction of contaminated materials on the site to meet requirements for the proposed educational use. The agency also required testing of ground water for contamination.

At this point Milhaus LLC engaged Jacques Whitford, an environmental consulting services firm (since acquired by Stantec), to conduct additional testing and develop the remedial action work plan required by the RIDEM. A plan was completed and approved by RIDEM and provided the guide and parameters for remediation.

An initial phase of remediation, completed in 2002, included removal of the most contaminated material and stabilizing the rest. Stabilization entailed treating the remainder of the contaminated soil with FESI-BOND™, a chemical binder that prevents lead from leaching out of the soil. This approach was new to Rhode Island and required special research and approval by RIDEM.

The remedial action work plan required an environmental cap for the entire site. Jacques Whitford completed a design and the project was put out to bid, but when the cost came in higher than expected the project was put on hold until additional resources could be secured.

Under Patten's leadership in 2007, planning for the site cap resumed with more focused attention. The organization clarified its vision and goals for the project and expanded the scope of services for environmental planning beyond the design for the cap to include a more comprehensive approach that considered the site and buildings within the context of the organization's long-term vision. It addressed current needs as well as potential expansion of programming and facilities.

At this point the ownership of the property was restructured. The property was divided into three lots, with Millhaus LLC selling two to The Steel Yard, with Bauta and Rockefeller retaining the remaining lot with the corner building for themselves. This change in ownership allowed The Steel Yard, as a nonprofit, to seek federal EPA Brownfield Cleanup grants and other funding to support the remediation of its two lots.

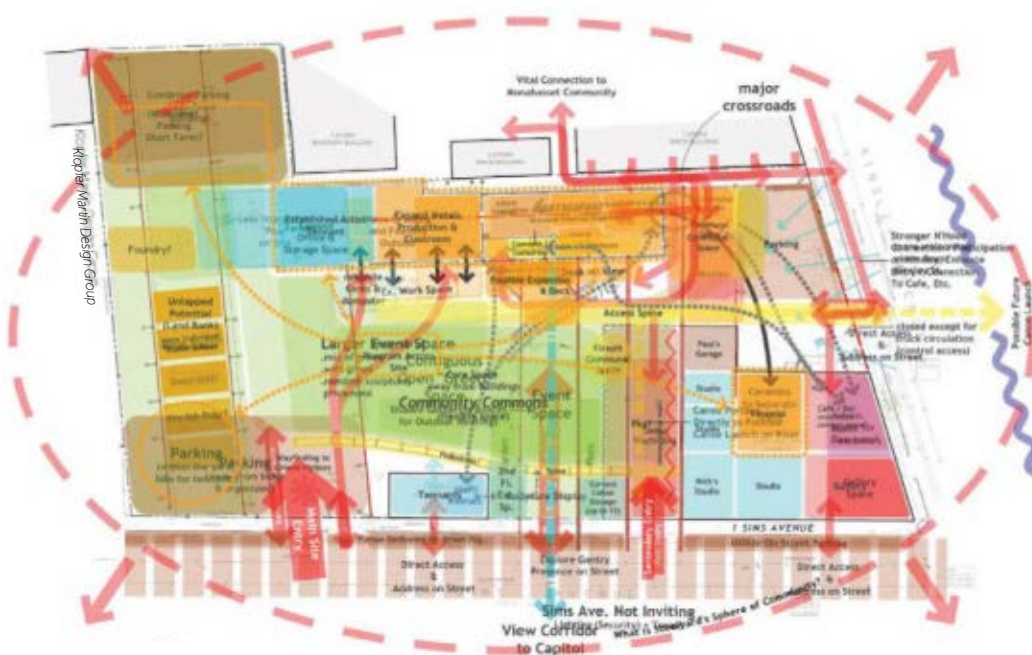


Founders' building

Design

The Steel Yard engaged Klopfer Martin Design Group (KMDG) – a Boston architecture, landscape architecture and planning firm – to develop a master plan for the site. Mark Klopfer, one of the firm's principals, had worked on The Steel Yard cap design while employed with Jacques Whitford, and proposed a planning process that incorporated input from people within the organization and surrounding community.

KMDG and Patten met with Steel Yard staff, board members, teachers and students as well as neighboring businesses and residents, including Monohasset Mills, to solicit input and ideas for the site. They translated all the information they gathered from these discussions into a single diagram that illustrates the complexity of and overlaps between existing and anticipated activities taking place on the site.



Overall, the discussions yielded the sense that The Steel Yard was and should continue to serve as the community's "yard". Some of the people involved feared that the capped, cleaned and redesigned space would not retain the quality of an urban wild and chaotic space that everyone loved. There was a strong desire for the new design to reflect the site's historic use as a steel fabrication facility.

Key design ideas that emerged from the planning process include:

- Creating a central green zone or community commons
- Addressing entrance and access needs for pedestrians and vehicles, retaining the historic entrance, and providing paving and clearances required for tractor trailer deliveries
- Recognizing the untapped potential of site as an arts campus
- Retaining the un-kept, "urban wild" character of the site
- Recognizing that much building and creating occurred out-of-doors – considering the landscape as a place to work
- Allowing room for growth and change

Key design objectives for the master plan included reducing soil disturbance, reconciling grade displacement caused by removal of contaminated soil and introduction of clean fill, and reintroducing "urban wild" native vegetation and habitat. From the beginning, it was important to The Steel Yard and its founders that they retain as much of the contaminated material on site as possible rather than moving it elsewhere. They believed it would be unethical to solve their local environmental problem by dumping contaminated soil elsewhere. This was fundamental to the goal of reducing soil disturbance. It also helped to reduce the overall cost of remediation and contributed to the creative approach to the site's design.

*Diagram illustrating consolidation of ideas generated through community input
Opposite: Existing conditions and master plan*





The completed design reflects the property's history as a steel fabrication facility. Three large fabrication shops enclosed with corrugated metal siding remain and form the back edge of the site. Existing onsite railroad tracks that served the site and gantry cranes had to be removed, though the cranes were retained. Salvaged steel from the site and elsewhere has been recycled into the corrugated sheet pile and bales of scrap metal that form retaining walls along the edges of the landforms.

KMDG, along with sub-consultants Beacon Morris Design and EA Engineering, developed a master plan for the site and design for the environmental cap. It addressed the site design as well as the buildings, taking into account the current footprints of structures as well as conceptual designs for additions. This master plan informed the locations of utilities, including conduit and stubs for future plumbing and wiring and paving so that future expansion of enclosed workshop space could be accommodated without disturbing the soil.

Working with a budget under \$1 million (\$8-8.50/sf) KMDG and its team of consultants developed the cap design for the site. Excavation represented the major cost of the first round of work.



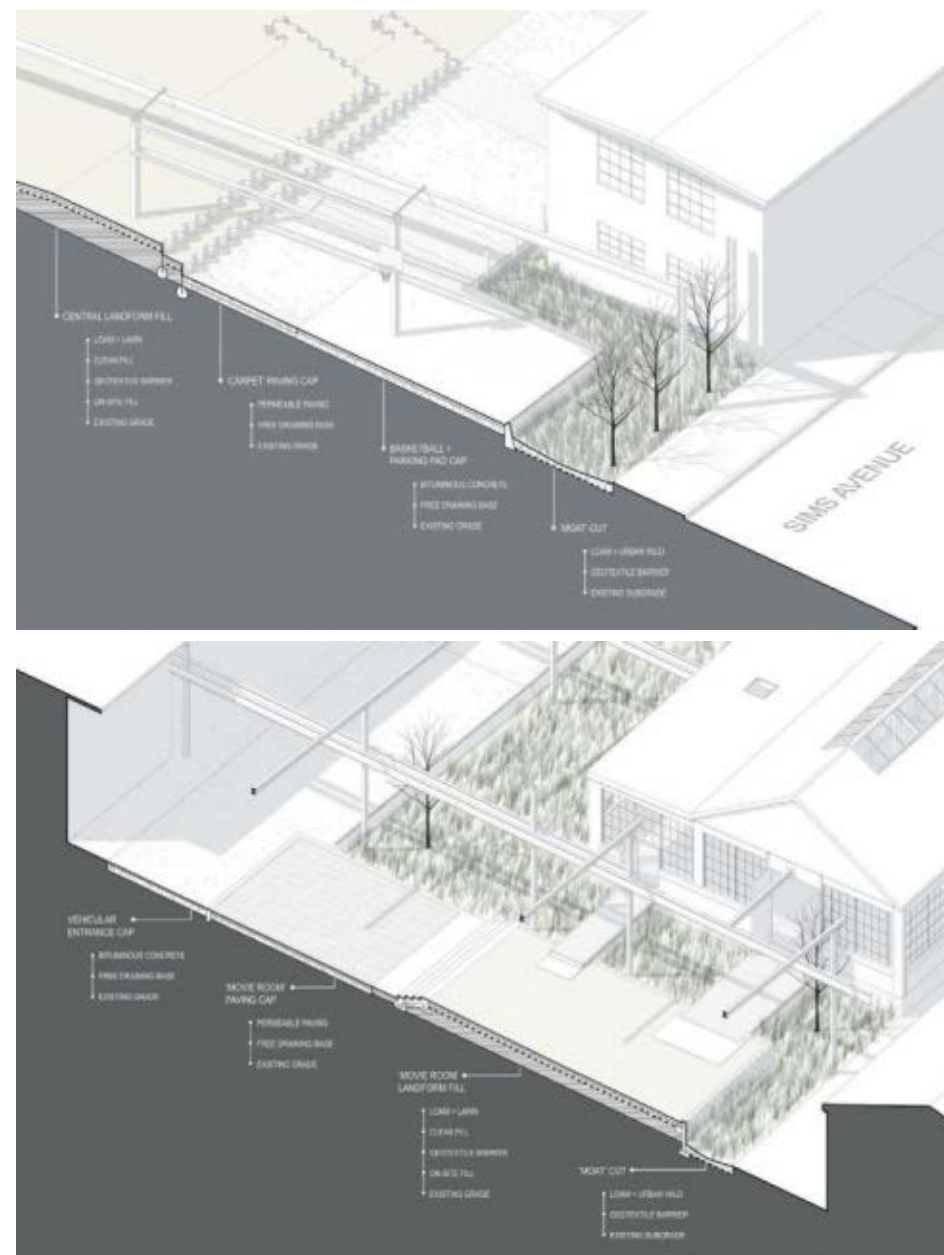
*Clockwise from top left: Scrap metal bales, sheet pile, utility hook-ups and concrete pads for future expansion
Photos top left and middle by Christian Phillips Photography*

The design includes moats that separate the paved areas from buildings and help to mitigate the changes in grade between finish floors in buildings and higher pavement grades due to capping. Moats direct stormwater into a bio swale that captures, stores and filters the water before it percolates into the soil. The contaminated soil was organized into several landforms including the central lawn or “Commons”, “Back Forty” and “Movie Platform”. These earthworks were important to the strategy for reducing export of contaminated soil.

The site today includes a central open space capable of hosting large events surrounded by secondary spaces suitable for indoor/outdoor fabrication and smaller events. The property also includes areas for storing materials and finished pieces as well as displaying artwork. The spaces are designed to be flexible, allowing “anything” to happen and support ad hoc creative activities.

Landscaped and paved areas are interspersed throughout the site. Paved areas serve as driveways, outdoor workspaces, walkways and places for parking cars. The design team worked with the City to interpret the zoning code with respect to site use and parking requirements. They negotiated a solution that minimized the number of required on-site spaces to 20 by taking advantage of available on-street parking and allowing cars to park informally throughout the paved areas rather than in one designated “parking lot”.

The remediation plan required a “cap” or layer of twelve inches of clean fill or pavement across the site to contain and limit exposure to contaminated soil on the site. The site design includes nine different kinds of environmental “caps”. These include “hard” paving such as concrete and bituminous asphalt; porous paving materials including



Diagrams illustrating environmental caps



permeable concrete, concrete pavers, grasscrete and crushed stone; and "soft" landscaped areas such as bio swales and lawns. In the case of planted areas, geotextile fabric separates the contaminated soil from clean fill. Each cap responds to the programmed use, and the variety provides visual interest and texture across the site.

Plants were selected to retain the desired "urban wild" look that existed before remediation. An "urban seed" mixture suitable for the environment was created using plants that spread and colonize easily. Plants suitable for moist and wet locations were selected for the moats. Turf suitable for outdoor seating was used on the "Commons" and "Movie Room", while sumac and tall grasses were chosen to screen the Yard from adjacent properties and provide visual interest and color. The Steel Yard hosted a volunteer planting event on Arbor Day in April 2010 drawing support from 192 volunteers including youth participating in a Groundwork Providence program.

Negotiating the Environmental Remediation

Negotiating the process of acquiring approvals for the site design was complex and time consuming. requiring negotiations with the EPA, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and other environmental organizations, including the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (RICRMC) and Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC). In the end it took about a year to obtain approval for them all.

The Steel Yard applied to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for funding for the cleanup and received two grants totaling \$400,000 – one for each parcel of land. As is typical, EPA officials assigned management of the grants to the local environmental agency – in this case RIDEM.

The site incorporates historic gantry cranes, recycled steel, a variety of paving materials and native planting materials.

RIDEM holds final authority for approving environmental remediation plans, identifying other affected agencies and requiring them to sign off and/or approve before issuing approval for the plan. The agency holds joint application meetings for new projects under the office of customer technical assistance that bring together agencies involved in the approvals process. However working on this project with NBC and RICRMC, which are concerned with discharge into the river and bay, was new for RIDEM.

The most challenging aspect involved the treatment of stormwater from the site. Like many public agencies concerned with aging, overwhelmed combined stormwater and sewage systems, RIDEM wanted to reduce stormwater discharge into the sewer system yet didn't want to allow contaminated storm water to remain on site. NBC and RICRMC on the other hand, were primarily concerned with stormwater carrying contaminants from the site leaching into the neighboring Woonasquatucket River and Narragansett Bay.

According to the environmental engineer, the project was initially designed so that the water runoff from the site would tie into the city's storm water system. When the design was ninety percent complete, however, RIDEM modified its position to require seventy-five percent of the storm water to remain on site, requiring significant reworking of plans.

Adding to the challenge was the lack of communication and coordination between state agencies involved in the process. The Steel Yard convened meetings with representatives in an effort to broker conversation and support the negotiations. Patten turned to The Steel Yard's team of consultants, the EPA, and other environmental

engineers and projects to find data on remediation that could inform their approach and negotiations. For example, The Steel Yard and its consultants were able to convince RIDEM to allow the use of permeable paving on the site.

Although The Steel Yard eventually succeeded in getting the necessary agency approvals, the process was slow and frustrating. The organization and its consultants armed themselves with research and examples of other projects that they used to convince public agencies to try new approaches, such as the use of a binder to address the lead problem, environmental caps and stormwater management.



"The Movie Room"

Although they became more knowledgeable about the process and technical aspects of remediation over time, they were frustrated by the perceived lack of action on the part of the public agencies. Patten employed increasingly aggressive tactics to get responses from RIDEM, including contacting supervisors and asking then Mayor David Cicilline for help. RIDEM staff, however, indicated that the nature and length of the process were not atypical for a federally funded project because of a prescribed series of steps and approvals.

The Steel Yard, consultants and RIDEM representatives all attest to the value of the project as a model for remediating urban sites and the EPA has documented it as a valuable case study. For example, the number and variety of environmental caps utilized on the site is unusual and illustrates alternatives to the more typical approach to capping which would have been to add a two foot layer of clean fill and cover it with asphalt paving. The Steel Yard staff, consultants and RIDEM representatives acknowledge having learned a lot through this process, including the approach to storm water management, and working with NBC and CRM.

The environmental caps will require regular maintenance to ensure that the remedy remains intact and there is not exposure to contaminated materials. RIDEM required the attachment of an environmental land use restriction to all three lots as well as annual reports from inspections of the caps.

Site construction began in August 2009 and The Steel Yard remained open through completion of construction one year later. Patten served as the onsite project manager during construction, negotiating with environmental agencies and contractors. The Steel Yard was able

to reduce overall construction cost by providing prompt payments to Catalano, the contractor, and by convincing them to accept substitutions and in-kind contribution of materials.

Given the chance to do it again, The Steel Yard and their design team indicated that they would be more savvy about what exactly was needed from each party in regard to expertise and process and how to better coordinate efforts. For example, Klopfer Martin has a better understanding of what they needed in an environmental engineer. At the time the firm worked with several before identifying one that completed the design and they acknowledge that an engineer more connected to DEM might have helped. Also, addressing stormwater management and recharge is a relatively new issue for cities and planning for The Steel Yard remediation took place while RIDEM was developing new policies that changed the requirements during the development process. There was consensus among the group that the complexity and time-consuming process of negotiating with state agencies can be a deterrent to adaptive reuse of brownfield sites and that prescriptive approaches do not work for urban infill sites.



Sims Avenue entrance

Buildings

The property includes two buildings – a two-story brick structure on Sims Avenue that houses The Steel Yard offices and three tenants and a series of connected brick and metal structures that house fabrication and studio space. All exterior improvements are subject to state historic review.

The master plan completed by KMDG considered improvements to the buildings as well as the site, including relocating activities within existing buildings and constructing new additions and structures. However, environmental remediation has been the organization's primary focus to date. Other than renovation of the Sims Avenue structure, improvements and changes to the original PSI structures have been modest.

The founders completed renovations to the Sims Avenue building soon after the property was purchased to provide finished space for classrooms and offices. The unheated workshop structures remain largely untouched from the days when the property functioned as a steel fabricator and retain a rustic, functional industrial look. Modest improvements have been made to accommodate studio and classroom use. These include installation of a jewelry studio and re-glazing of broken or missing window glass. A new roof and galvanized metal façade on the center workshop was installed after the existing ones were peeled off in a storm. The new roof was constructed using a structurally insulated panel system (SIPS) and includes framed openings for future skylights. Spray-in insulation was added to the new façade and other areas. Puddles of water on the floor of the adjoining workshop building were evidence of continued roof leaks.

Views of the workshop



CURRENT AND FUTURE PLANS

As it celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2013, The Steel Yard entered a new phase of its development. Two years after the completion of the remediation of the site, the organization looked to the future as it welcomed a new executive director and considers how it can do more with its campus and programs while, like many nonprofits, seeking to ensure its long-term financial sustainability.

When Patten announced her intention to resign, the board initiated a national search, seeking a community-minded leader with knowledge of the arts and experienced in building fiscal strength, which resulted in hiring Helen Lang as the new Executive Director in early 2013.

Lang has held a variety of positions in the arts and nonprofit management, including the Tribeca Film Institute and the Trisha Brown Dance Company. While she brought enthusiasm and substantial, relevant experience and skills to her role, Lang had the challenging task of following a charismatic, well-liked leader. The board encouraged her to increase The Steel Yard's presence in the national arts scene while keeping its existing constituents and community engaged. During her tenure, Lang built upon the strong organizational base and programs, making the most of the completed site and increasing site rentals, expanding educational programs with Program Director Islay Taylor, and starting new artist-led initiatives with Public Projects.

In late 2013 Lang resigned for personal reasons, leaving The Steel Yard in the hands of a capable, committed and enthusiastic staff, many of whom had been part of the organization's evolution and start-up and growth of key programs. At the request of the board, long-time staff member and Public Projects Director Howie Sneider stepped in to be-

come the Executive Director. Sneider first came to The Steel Yard in 2004 as an artist renting studio space and instructor of the first week-end welding workshop class. He became Public Project Director in 2005, more than tripling the growth of the program. Sneider assumes the role of Director as The Steel Yard looks to strengthen connections with supporters in the arts and design community and launch a new a strategic planning process.

Small business incubation has been core to The Steel Yard's mission. There is interest in expanding its programs, including Weld to Work and Public Projects. The organization conducts program evaluation using entrance and exit surveys taken by students and instructors that ask what works and doesn't, and constantly checks in with the community and artists. These efforts and discussions with existing and prospective partners suggest that there is potential to strengthen and the expand work force program. There is an unmet demand for welders in the state and The Steel Yard is considering ways to connect its graduates to other local welding programs that offer additional training and certification.

Increasing and maintaining financial sustainability will be critical. The board and its executive director are anxious to increase revenue by maximizing production and income from earned income ventures. Making better use of the property, now that site improvements are completed, will be a focus. The Steel Yard is currently negotiating with a dance company that is interested in using the site for performances. Repairs and capital improvements to the structures – including, at a minimum, new insulation, sheathing, roofing, windows, doors, lighting and heating – will be needed to allow increased, year-round use of indoor spaces and maximize the potential for programming and revenue generation.

October 2013 marked the tenth anniversary of The Steel Yard. The organization used the occasion to highlight its accomplishments, involve its community of “yardies” and increase its impact in Providence and elsewhere.

FINANCING

Property

The Steel Yard property was initially purchased for \$1.5 million by the founders as Milhaus LLC. They invested an additional \$300,000 in environmental testing and site remediation and \$80,000 in renovating the Sims Avenue structure into office space.

It was always part of the plan to sell the property to nonprofit ownership, which occurred in 2007, allowing the property to be eligible for EPA funding. The founders subdivided the property into three lots, selling two to The Steel Yard for \$1.5 million and retaining the corner property and building for themselves which they have since converted into office and studio space.

The Steel Yard was unable to secure a conventional bank mortgage until the brownfield remediation was completed. The initial mortgage was held by Milhaus LLC and later, after its dissolution, by the two founders. The organization finally secured a 20-year, \$250,000 mortgage at 3.87% for the property from Bank Rhode Island in 2012.

When the founders purchased the property they negotiated tax stabilization with the City of Providence that froze the annual property tax for ten years at time of purchase. The stabilization has been conveyed to the nonprofit ownership and was renewed for an

additional five years, ending in 2016. The Steel Yard has discussed the possibility of applying for tax-exempt status in the future.

As a National Register listed site, the entire property is eligible for historic tax credits. The founders utilized historic and New Markets tax credits to finance development of the corner building.

Capital Improvements

Site development costs, including brownfield cleanup, totaled \$1.2 million. Funding for the project included two EPA Brownfield Cleanup grants totaling \$400,000; \$199,000 from Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (RIEDC)-managed EPA funds; a \$100,000 RIEDC Revolving Loan Program loan; \$100,000 from private fundraising; and \$300,000 invested by the founders when they first purchased the property (Table 1). Each EPA grant required a match of \$40,000 or a total of \$80,000 for funds that could only be used for contracting work. This \$80,000 match was generated by a “Yard by the Foot” campaign which “sold” one square foot sections of the Yard to donors for \$25 each and paid for professional consulting fees. This campaign reflected the organization’s commitment to operate as a donor centric organization. The EPA RIEDC grant paid construction fees. The RIEDC loan was used as needed to close the financing for the project.

By utilizing donated and recycled materials, employing community efforts for obtaining and planting trees and vegetation, and minimizing the extent of civil engineering systems for storm water drainage and base course excavation of pavement, landscape construction costs were held to \$8 per foot for the two acres of site work. Donated materials used in construction had an estimated market value of to \$40,000 to \$50,000. In-kind labor included volunteer Arbor Day tree

planting and volunteer labor throughout the course of the project to assist The Steel Yard with “staging” that allowed the organization to remain open during construction.

The organization planned a capital campaign to raise money for renovating the workshop buildings but elected to put it on hold in 2008 due to the challenging economic climate. Since then, the organization has fundraised on a project by project basis which they see as a more immediate way to engage donors. The Steel Yard implemented a special “Raise the Roof” campaign that, along with insurance money, funded the replacement of the roof on one of the workshop buildings.

TABLE 1: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUNDING SOURCES

Capital Improvement Funding Sources	
EPA Brownfield Cleanup Grants	\$400,000
Millhaus LLC	\$300,000
RIEDC	\$199,000
RIEDC Revolving Loan Program	\$100,000
Private Fundraising	\$100,000
Yard by the Foot Campaign	\$80,000
Inkind Contributions (estimated)	\$40,000
	\$1,219,000

Operating

The Steel Yard has an annual operating budget of approximately \$400,000 (Table 2). Forty percent of the organization’s revenue is earned income (net cost of goods sold), the majority of which is generated by the Public Projects program commissions, which grosses \$250,000. The balance is comprised of tuition fees, rentals (site, studio and tenants) and product sales. Additional revenue includes foundations (25%), individual contributions (15%), corporate contributions and grants (10%), in-kind contributions (5%), special events (3%) and government grants (2%). The majority of expenses are attributed to personnel (60%), followed by occupancy (15%), programs (15%), and general (10%). Occupancy costs include mortgage interest and repayment of the EPA EDC loan.

After the financial crisis of 2008 The Steel Yard, like other nonprofits and businesses, needed to reduce expenses. The organization instituted a staff furlough during the month of January while the campus is closed for the winter. Initially the time off was unpaid. Later, after finances stabilized, full salaries were restored but the furlough continued on an annual basis as paid time off in lieu of salary raises. Initiated as a cost savings measure for the organization, the time is also viewed as an opportunity for staff to focus on personal artistic work.

The families of both founders have been important financial supporters of The Steel Yard’s development and operations. The Steel Yard received a \$1 million gift to support mortgage reduction and capital improvements and \$30,000 a year in unrestricted funds from foundations connected to Nick Bauta’s family, including the October Hill Foundation. Clay Rockefeller’s family has contributed through its DR Fund and The Philanthropic Collaborative. His father

contributed \$250,000 to support capital improvements and several family members make regular gifts in response to the organization's annual appeal.

Funding to support Steel Yard programs is derived from a variety of sources. Funding for Weld to Work/Workforce Development includes support from the City of Providence, through the Department of Art, Culture and Tourism; corporate sources like Bank of America, Bank Rhode Island, Millennium Communications, Textron Inc., Umicore and Wal-Mart; local businesses and rotaries; and Otto H York Foundation.

The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts provides \$10,000 a year in operating support. Additional, recurring support for The Steel Yard has come from AmeriCorps VISTA, Apple Lane Foundation, Champlin Foundation, Fabricators and Manufacturers Association, Fidelity Charities, Gateway Investments Limited, Ocean State Charter Trust and the Workforce Investment Act.

IMPACT

Remediation: A Creative Approach

The Steel Yard is considered by its designers to be an important, "shining" example of low-impact development. The project is a case study that illustrates that brownfield remediation doesn't need to be one size fits all – it can be context sensitive, "green", fit an urban context, and address post-industrial sites. The use of multiple "caps" illustrates a creative alternative to the more common method of brownfield remediation that employs a single cap such as grass or asphalt paving, providing a more diverse and interesting landscape. The project incorporates an inventive approach to minimizing stormwater with limited budget.

TABLE 2: 2013 OPERATING BUDGET

2013 Operating Budget

Sources

Foundation Grants (restricted and unrestricted)	\$114,600
Individuals (restricted and unrestricted)	\$67,000
Corporations	\$43,500
Inkind	\$20,000
Special Events Income	\$15,400
Government Grants	\$10,000
Earned Revenue (site use, public projects, courses)	\$388,000
	\$658,500

Uses

Personnel	\$294,197
Occupancy	\$118,056
Direct Costs (earned revenue)	\$197,530
General Expenses	\$54,918
	\$664,701
Earned Revenue - General Expenses	(\$6,201)

The project has been recognized with design awards from the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Boston Society of Landscape Architects. It has been cited as a case study by the EPA and in the book *Principles of Brownfield Regeneration: Cleanup, Design and Reuse of Derelict Land*. The project received a 2012 Social Impact award from Brownfield Renewal and the Environmental Council of Rhode Island's 2012 Senator John H. Chafee Award.

Artists and Industry: Connecting Creativity and History in Providence

The Steel Yard reflects many positive attributes of Providence, including the artistic, creative, entrepreneurial spirit that were as important to its industrial past as they are to the current economy. It offers a physical repository of buildings, equipment and skills that harken to the city's past and contribute to its future.

The Steel Yard generates objects of art and practical use that provide revenue for the organization and its artists, and add value to the city and its neighborhoods. More broadly, within the nonprofit sector, it is an example of social entrepreneurship, generating a high percentage of earned income.

The Steel Yard has diversified creative the forces in the city beyond the traditional institutions of Brown University and RISD and the city's east side. It brings people into parts of Providence that they otherwise wouldn't visit, and has reoriented the arts focus in the city westward, bridging the traditional arts community with the industrial west side.



"Urban wild"

Awards and Recognition

The Steel Yard's contributions to historic preservation have been recognized by the community. It has received historic preservation awards from Preserve Rhode Island, and Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (Rhody Award), and Providence Preservation Society (Reuse & Neighborhood Preservation Award). In 2011 the project received the Providence Mayor's Citation for Reuse and Neighborhood Revitalization.

"The Yard": Creating a Place for Community

From the beginning, The Steel Yard has been envisioned as an inter-generational community. While we do not have detailed information regarding demographics, the diversity of participants appears to have increased as the organization has evolved and expanded its programs to appeal to and engage a broader audience. Engaging the community has been an important aspect of the organization's operations.



The majority of the initial participants in the project were young artists and peers of The Steel Yard's founders, and they valued people like Paul Iannelli who lent their experience and wisdom. During the planning process for the site, the organization held community input meetings that were conducted in English and Spanish. Over time, the early "yardies" started families and their children now play on the site. People that use the site today and think of it as their "yard" include these children and families; area youth and others – including underemployed and ex-offenders – engaged in welding programs; neighboring business people and residents; artists of all ages; local businesses that make in-kind and financial contributions; nonprofit organizations that co-host events, commission work and sponsor program participants; and city officials that point to The Steel Yard and its products installed throughout the community with pride. In 2012 alone the organization served close to 4,500 people through programs, workforce training and free or low-cost events.

The site improvements have enabled The Steel Yard to do more as an organization. It replaced a dangerous, toxic site with useful, community space. Neighbors of The Steel Yard refer to it as an "urban oasis" where they walk their dogs, watch outdoor movies and participate in barbeques.

The Steel Yard is considered to be very inclusive, recognized by many as a place that invites, welcomes and fosters tolerance. Members of the "yardie" community have formed strong bonds. The organization itself has become a valued neighborhood organization that acts as a convener or hub for the community, with neighbors gathering there – one person suggested – like the way people come together around a barrel-fire to keep warm.

Catalyzing Change

The Steel Yard organization and its people – its founders, staff, board of directors and friends – embody a gritty, can-do attitude and culture in the midst of what has been characterized as a risk adverse city. In their purchase of the property and creation of The Steel Yard, Clay Rockefeller and Nick Bauta contributed to city's recognition of the value of its industrial past and creative future. The founders continue to be involved with the organization and occupy the corner property. They are active in the broader community and arts organizations. Bauta went on to develop another property into an arts venue and Rockefeller is considered to be a growing philanthropist.

The organization's success illustrates the power of leverage and networks to make change in a small city like Providence. The impact is evidenced by the organization's contributions to the city's physical and social fabric, especially its growing arts community. A number of



Annali Kiers





developments have followed The Steel Yard to this neighborhood, including Box Office (an office complex built of re-purposed shipping containers), Paul Cuffee School (a developing charter school campus), Butcher Block Mills (shops and studios), Umicore (a \$7 billion international company involved in sustainable technology) and Waterfire Art Center (a public art performance developing its first home on a brownfield).

Creativity and Risk Taking

The Steel Yard has opened eyes of many in the community to potential of creativity and risk taking. People involved in its development referred to it as a valuable experience. An overarching theme we heard in connection with The Steel Yard project was the notion that “there is always a way” and “there is no such thing as failure”. No matter what the challenge – addressing contaminated soil, working with metal, etc. – it is possible to overcome and “will” things to happen.

The Steel Yard made use of an interestingly creative, organic and somewhat free-wheeling process. They started with a committed, passionate group of creative people and expanded toward community service in ways consistent with their arts mission – doing so in a way that is an ad hoc, yet thoughtful. They made connections, tried out new ideas, allowed people to experiment, resulting in new projects. On the other hand, the organization periodically pauses to reflect on what they have accomplished, what it has meant and where they want to go, engaging in thoughtful planning that addressed organizational development, strategic planning, business planning and facilities design. Based on these reflections and strategic planning efforts, some activities and ideas were expanded and new projects planned while others were dropped.



A retail tenant occupies part of the Founder's property (top), Mark Klopfer and Kaki Martin (bottom)

For the Klopfer Martin Design Group team, The Steel Yard demonstrated that it's possible to do more with less and to design an award-winning project on a shoestring. KMDG partner Kaki Martin noted that being open to risk taking provided freedom to experiment with the project's design, such as pursuing an unusual "urban wild" approach to landscape and using permeable concrete, recycled steel, and locally fabricated materials. The project was challenging yet rewarding and has become a benchmark for the firm. The collaboration and teamwork that infused the project influenced the then relatively new firm's founders and has become integrated into their approach and philosophy towards practice.

Reflecting on The Steel Yard's success, Rockefeller acknowledged the value of taking a "slow growth" approach to development that permitted the project to evolve organically over time, allowing for learning by doing, taking risks, and not being "afraid of what you don't know." Through this approach as well as with help from the community, the project generated a groundswell of support from local people and businesses as well as city hall.



AS220 Youth

Lynn McCormack and Clay Rockefeller

Assessing Success

- Create a memorable and flexible space that embodies the organization's mission.

The resulting design creates a distinctive space that reflects the property's past as a steel fabrication site and present use as an industrial arts campus. It provides for flexible use for a variety of activities – including classes, events, and fabrication – that support The Steel Yard's mission as well as a community gathering spot. The use of recycled steel throughout speaks to the site's past and present use and the variety of open spaces promote opportunities for creativity and interaction.

- Engage the site's unique existing structures.

The design incorporates the property's historic features such as the workshops and gantry cranes. The landscape provides backdrops for onsite and adjacent buildings and connections with indoor classroom and production spaces.

- Utilize best sustainable practices within a constrained budget.

The site incorporates a variety of sustainable development techniques that address containment of contaminated soil and onsite storm-water collection and retention. The Steel Yard chose to retain as much contaminated material onsite as possible and to utilize a variety of methods to cap the site.

- Provide a public landscape to an underserved neighborhood of Providence.

When it is open, the site serves as a public space and is used by residents of the Valley and Olneyville neighborhoods. The fenced property is generally open 6am to 6pm, and as late as 10pm when evening classes are in session. Residents of Monohasset Mill have direct access to the property.

- Serve as an example to others as to the potential for other local properties to be revitalized in nontraditional ways.

The Steel Yard has been recognized as a model for the remediation of a small, urban site.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Selection Committee commended The Steel Yard as an exemplary model of reuse and transformation. The project was recognized for its great design, including the approach to environmental remediation, as well as its engagement of artists and the community, social entrepreneurship, and role as an economic development catalyst.

The Committee suggested that The Steel Yard is a metaphor for Providence, tapping into its history and creative community to create a place that engages local talent and preserves the City's industrial heritage and culture in an authentic way. Members noted that the project not only honors the Providence's industrial past, but also creates a connection with contemporary artisans, celebrating industrial arts as an integral part of the City's economy and identity. The passion and youthful enthusiasm of the founders and The Steel Yard staff resonated with the Committee. They also appreciated the idea of



"Before" and "after" views of site

a "working yard" that is a combination of social space with work space. Members recognized the importance of programs in bringing people to the site and engaging the community.

The Steel Yard was also recognized for the approach that was taken to environmental remediation, suggesting it serves as an important model for alternative approaches to remediation. Members commended the organization for its philosophy toward remediation of the contaminated site, including The Steel Yard's commitment to addressing contamination issues.

The Selection Committee praised The Steel Yard for its entrepreneurial approach and willingness to experiment and try new things. The Steel Yard, like 2013 RBA Gold Medalist Inspiration Kitchens – Garfield Park and Silver Medalist Congo Street Initiative, factored into the Selection Committee's discussion of the growing role of the "maker" culture in shaping places. They highlighted the role of hands-on involvement of artists and community members, rather than government, in driving development. They noted that The Steel Yard illustrates another way of approaching and accessing resources.

While enthusiastic about the project, the Selection Committee acknowledged that it is a work in progress, and there is more to be done. Although The Steel Yard is well known in “maker” circles, it is less so in the broader community. The Committee suggested that the organization and project would benefit from more publicity and better PR.

As the Selection Committee observed, The Steel Yard “is all about the place and engages the real possibilities of community” and provides inspiration for similar industrial sites and spaces that exist in so many American cities.



Christian Phillips Photography

Looking south across the center of the site

Resources

INTERVIEWS*

The Steel Yard:

Helen Lang, Executive Director
Alma Carrillo, Program Director
Brian Dowling, Associate Director
Paul Iannelli, Groundskeeper, The Steel Yard; former employee, Providence Steel and Iron Company
Howie Sneider, Public Projects Director
Tim Ferland, Art Production Manager
Islay Taylor, Communications Director and Volunteer Coordinator
Clay Rockefeller, Founder
Nick Bauta, Founder
Drake Patten, Former Executive Director
Jackson Morley, Former Volunteer and Communications Coordinator
Peter Case, Architect/Principal, Truth Box Inc.; Board Chair
Lee Corley, Artist and Instructor
Anna Shapiro, Artist, Instructor and Board Member

Design and Engineering:

Mark Klopfer, Principal, Klopfer Martin Design Group
Kaki Martin, Principal, Klopfer Martin Design Group
Jon Ford, Principal, Morris Beacon Design
Frank Postma, Client Manager, EA Engineering

Public Agencies:

Lynn McCormack, Director, Art, Culture & Tourism, City of Providence
Robert McMahon, Superintendent, City of Providence Parks Department
Bonnie Nickerson, Director of Long-Range Planning, City of Providence
John McNiff, Roger Williams Roger Williams National Monument
Jennifer Smith, Site Manager, Roger Williams National Monument
Randy Rosenbaum, Executive Director, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts
Kelly Owens, Associate Supervising Engineer, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Jeffrey Crawford, Principal Environmental Scientist, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Valerie Talmage, Executive Director, Preserve Rhode Island
Alan Peterson, Brownfields Project Director, Environmental Protection Agency

Community:

Andy Cutler, Founder, Cutler & Company
 Damien Ewens, former resident, Monohasset Mill
 Ronald Florence, resident, Monohasset Mill
 Julia Gold, resident, Monohasset Mill; author, Principles of Brownfield Remediation; former employee
 Heather Gaydos, Director of Youth Programs, Institute for the Study and Practice of Non-Violence
 Kari Lang, Executive Director, West Broadway Neighborhood Association
 Ray Perreault, Groundwork Providence
 Sol Rodriguez, Executive Director, OpenDoors
 Bryan Principe, Councilperson, Ward 13, City of Providence
 Frank Shea, Executive Director, Olneyville Housing Corporation
 John Jacobson, Founder, JTJ Investments
 Ken Conde, Owner, Industrial Welders Supply; corporate sponsor
 Louis Gitlin, President, Mid City Steel; corporate sponsor
 Craig Pickell, President, Bullard Abrasives; corporate sponsor
 Ed Rondeau, Artist and shop user at The Steel Yard
 Nick Scappaticci, Founder, Tellart; The Steel Yard tenant

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Silver Medal Winner

Via Verde–The Green Way

Bronx, New York





David Sundberg / Esto

Overview

Submitted by: Phipps Houses and Jonathan Rose Companies

Completed: 2012

Total Development Cost: \$98.8 million

Submitted by Phipps Houses and Jonathan Rose Companies, Via Verde (the “Green Way”) is a 222-unit affordable housing development in the Melrose section of the South Bronx. The project, completed in 2012, was designed as a model for healthy and sustainable urban living.

Via Verde grew out of two international design competitions that were part of the New Housing New York (NHNY) Legacy Project to create a new standard for affordable housing design. The 2004 NHNY Design Ideas Competition, sponsored by American Institute of Architects New York (AIANY) in partnership with New York City Council and the City University of New York, solicited design concepts for three sites. An exhibit and public programming supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, showcased selected entries at AIANY’s Center for Architecture.

Response to this initiative sparked the subsequent New Housing New York Legacy Project, the first juried architect-developer design competition for affordable housing and sustainable development in the city, which addressed a difficult 60,000 square-foot triangular

“THE PROJECT ADDRESSES THE SCALE OF URBAN HOUSING NEEDS WITH A LARGE-SCALE INTERVENTION ALONG WITH A COMMITMENT TO ACTIVE, HEALTHY LIVING.” – 2013 Selection Committee

brownfield site near the South Bronx’s Third Avenue commercial corridor. The NHNY steering committee—comprised of architects, developers, educators, and representatives of city agencies—led the project in partnership with AIANY, the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the New York State Energy Research Development Authority (NYSERDA), and Enterprise Community Partners. Of 32 submissions, five—including the eventual winning team of Phipps/Rose/Dattner/Grimshaw—were invited to submit more detailed designs. Criteria for final selection included innovative design, economic and environmental sustainability, replicable financing, and ownership models and effective public private partnerships.

The final design by Dattner Architects and Grimshaw Architects includes 222 units of affordable housing (151 rental units and 71 co-op units), and 7,500 square feet of ground level commercial retail and community space. Housing is divided into three linked structures that rise from two to twenty stories and wrap around a central, landscaped courtyard. An entrance on one side provides a secure point of access to the complex and gated courtyard.

The complex features 40,000 square feet of green roof space designed by Lee Weintraub Landscape Architects. A series of interconnected rooftop terraces step up from the courtyard and include a grove of evergreen trees, an apple orchard, and vegetable gardens. A resident-led gardening group managed by GrowNYC meets monthly and offers classes on healthy cooking using produce grown in the garden.

The LEED Gold certified project includes photovoltaic solar panels on the rooftops and south-facing facades. Residential units have large windows, ceiling fans, and multiple exposures for cross ventilation.

Day-lit stairways, created using NYC Active Design Guidelines, a fitness center, and exterior gardens encourage physical activity. A *Living Green Guide* with information on energy optimization and healthy living is given to residents when they move into the building.

Via Verde is part of Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s New Housing Marketplace Plan and complements other city investment along the Third Avenue commercial corridor. The city’s administration helped the development team overcome complex development challenges and fund construction costs. The city convened a joint review committee including key agency representatives that met monthly to address and resolve issues associated with development review and approvals.

Financing for the \$98.8 million project was provided by tax bonds and subsidies that enable the rental units to be affordable to households earning 30% to 80% of average median income (AMI) and the co-op units to be affordable to households earning 70% to 175% AMI.

Via Verde, with its cascading roof gardens and distinctive facade, stands out among the other brick buildings and towers in the neighborhood. It is also an example of a creative approach to the process of affordable housing design and development in New York, one that many hope will portend well for the future.

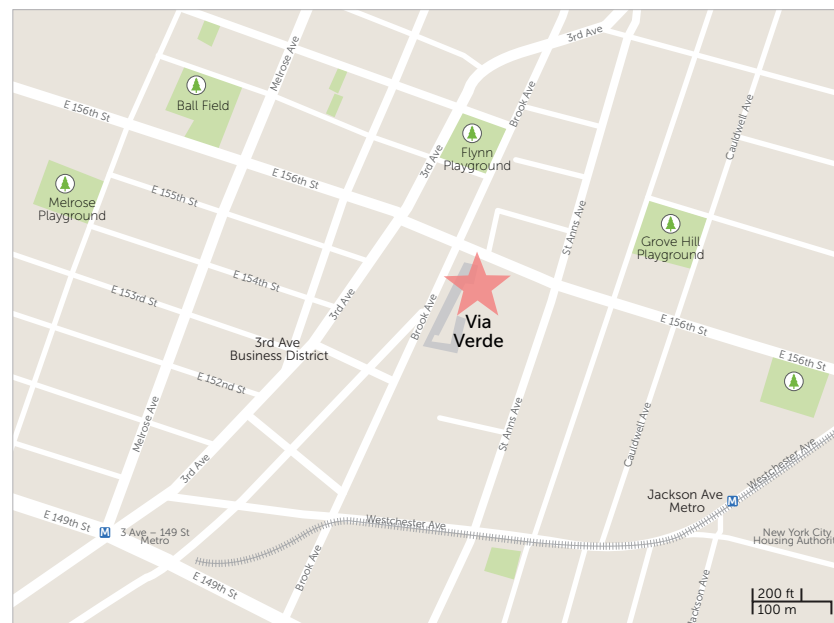
Photos: David Sundberg / Esio; Ruggero Vanni





Project-at-a-Glance

- The product of a design competition intended to change the way affordable housing is created and perceived in New York City and beyond, by producing housing that was “affordable, sustainable, and replicable.”
- A housing complex of 222 units in the Melrose section of the South Bronx that took a difficult parcel and created a series of open green spaces connecting multiple residential buildings.
- An attempt to provide sustainable design for affordable housing that supports and improves the social conditions and health of residents, by promoting physical activity.
- 277,000 square feet of affordable residential space housing an unusual mixture of owned and rental units (71 workforce housing co-operatives, and 151 low-income rentals) within a 20-story tower, 6- to 13-story mid-rise duplex apartments, and 2- to 4-story townhouses.
- Redevelopment of a brownfield site that required significant environmental remediation.
- 7,500 square feet of retail space that contains a Montefiore Medical Center and accompanying pharmacy.







David Sundberg / Esto

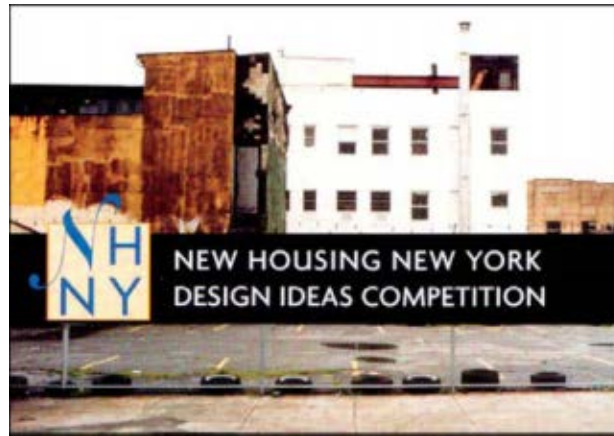
Project Goals

- Demonstrate the ability to provide creative, innovative design for affordable housing.
- Provide truly sustainable design within affordable housing budgetary constraints.
- Reintroduce urban density to this area of the South Bronx.
- Fill empty space in the local urban fabric, knitting together sections of the community.
- Demonstrate the ability of design competitions to raise the bar in affordable housing design.
- Show that city bureaucracies can work together to support development.

Chronology



Phipps/Rose/Dattner/Grimshaw



NHNY Steering Committee



1960s The Bronx, a historically strong middle, working class and immigrant community, suffers striking decline including abandonment, demolition and destruction of property, and loss of population.

1968 Melrose area designated as part of the original South Bronx Model Cities Urban Renewal Plan. The site is part of what is now the Bronxchester Urban Renewal Area.

1972 The triangular site at the intersection of Brook and 159th condemned as part of urban renewal plan.

2003 The New York Central rail line leading into triangular project site officially declared abandoned by the Surface Transportation Board.

City of New York announces the New Housing Marketplace Plan as part of Mayor Bloomberg's Housing Plan to create 165,000 units in response to severe shortage of affordable housing.

2004 New Housing New York (NHNY) Design Ideas Competition – sponsored by New York City Council, AIA New York and City University of New York - draws 160 entries, with winners announced on February 9, 2004.

2005 NHNY Steering Committee formed to develop a plan for follow-up to 2003 competition.

NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development offers Melrose site for follow-up competition.

Community meetings & workshops are held in the South Bronx (March-September) to discuss the development of the site identified for the NHNY Legacy competition, including preliminary public workshop sponsored by Bronx Community Board 1 (CB1).



NHNY Steering Committee



Phipps/Rose/Dattner/Grimshaw (tendril image courtesy PD Photo.org)



David Sundberg / Esto

2006 Group of organizations—including the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Enterprise, Citibank, JPMorgan Chase and AIA 150 Blueprint—provide support to AIANY for exhibition to showcase of the NHNY Legacy Project.

NHNY Legacy Project initiates two-step competition process starting with a Request For Qualifications (RFQ), officially launched at a press conference in June. A kick-off event held at the Center for Architecture is attended by more than 300 architects and developers.

Five finalists are chosen in July after detailed review of 32 responses and asked to submit more detailed proposals by December.

A second workshop is held in South Bronx in September, sponsored by CB1, shortly after the five finalist teams are selected.

2007 Phipps-Rose-Dattner-Grimshaw (PRDG) named winning architect-developer team. "POWERHOUSE: New Housing New York" exhibited at the Center for Architecture.

2010 Construction begins.

2011 Certificate of Completion (COC) issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for environmental remediation.

2012 Ribbon cutting with Mayor Bloomberg.

Tenants move in.

Project Description

"Via Verde (the "Green Way") is a 222-unit affordable housing development in South Bronx, New York, designed as a model for healthy, sustainable and affordable urban living. Via Verde grew out of two international design and combines subsidized and market rate housing in rental and coop-units, along with 7,500 square feet of ground level commercial retail and community space. Housing is divided into three linked structures that rise from 2 to 20 stories and wrap around a central, landscaped courtyard, with a series of interconnected, cascading rooftop terraces that step up from the courtyard and include a grove of evergreen trees, an apple orchard, and raised vegetable gardens. This LEED gold development was the first new site using NYC Active Design Guidelines for healthier living.

HISTORY AND VISION

At the turn of the 21st century the need for affordable housing in New York City was large and growing but there was little response from local architecture firms, in part because of their resistance to working within the City's convoluted development and approvals process, as well as the limited budgets that constrained creative designs. Via Verde is the product of a series of design competitions which attempted to bring creativity and innovation back into the process and provide a model for future designs. The vision was to create housing that fit its community and urban context, integrated sustainable features into affordable design, and was replicable in plan, construction and cost.

Via Verde's design was all the more difficult because of its site – a narrow, triangular lot incorporating a significant change in grade. The designers' vision was to wrap a series of buildings ascending in height around a central courtyard and to use the top of each building as a



Neighborhood context

green roof, providing a stepped path of outdoor space and living plant life leading a resident from the ground level up to the seventh floor.

Local political leaders and planners see Via Verde as a model for future development, particularly with its atypical mix of rental and co-op units in the same development. New ownership units are in short supply in the South Bronx. Moreover, Via Verde's density is seen as an important feature. Given the extreme shortage of affordable housing in New York City, public and private developers recognize the need to focus on larger and denser developments. Via Verde represents an attempt to demonstrate that such density can be accomplished in a mixed-income development, using high quality design to overcome some of the problems of the past.

CONTEXT

The Bronx

The Bronx, the northern-most of New York City's boroughs, has been a part of New York City since the middle of the 19th century. It is one of the most densely populated counties in the country, even though almost a quarter of it is open space, including places such as the Bronx Zoo and Botanical Gardens. Since its evolution from a rural area to an urban community in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Bronx has always been home to immigrant groups – first European, then African-American and Latino – especially Puerto Rican, Dominican and Jamaican. According to the 2000 census almost one third of the population of the Bronx was foreign born.

In the last three decades the Bronx, and the South Bronx in particular, has been viewed as a poster-child for urban problems and blight. It

was a site for many classic 1960's and '70's urban development and renewal projects, as it was sliced and segregated by highways and dotted with massive public housing projects. In the 1970's the Bronx was plagued by a wave of arson and the phrase "the Bronx is burning" was etched into the minds of many New Yorkers

While the Bronx has improved since those days, in many ways it is still in difficult shape. The Bronx has the lowest rate of homeownership of any of the five boroughs, or of any county in the state, and is one of the poorest counties in the country. Moreover, it is in many ways experiencing a public health disaster, named in 2010 the unhealthiest county in New York State, as it undergoes an epidemic of obesity, asthma and diabetes, especially among its youth.

Melrose

The Melrose area developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a working class enclave but suffered significantly during the borough's decline in the 1960's and '70's. Its population reached



Typical recent residential development in the area

50,000 in the 1920's but declined to 21,000 in the 1950's. During the fires and abandonment of 1960's and 70's, it dropped below 10,000. Population levels have grown along with the development of new housing units in the past ten years, reaching about 30,000 people by 2013. According to the New Housing New York Offering Package, residents are largely Hispanic (71%) and African-American (26%) with a median household income of \$17,050 – just over half that of the Bronx as a whole. The borough continues to be a popular site for immigrants, as about a quarter of its population is foreign born.

The neighborhood surrounding the Via Verde site is at the convergence of three urban renewal areas. Over the last ten years a significant number of affordable housing units have been constructed in and around Melrose – including some LEED certified projects – resulting in an increase of almost 4,000 units, mostly on properties that the city took over through tax defaults in the 1970's and 1980's. Additional sites are being considered for mixed-income developments. In their more optimistic moments, area leaders consider the last twenty years of development and gentrification in Harlem as a possible model. However, for the time being, no new housing is being built in the South Bronx without significant subsidies, other than a few small-scale exceptions, and almost all new housing developments include a significant affordable component.

While the neighborhood has experienced decades of deterioration and depression, it also has strengths. Yankee Stadium and the Bronx Courthouse are within walking distance. The HUB – a vibrant retail district that has remained strong for decades – is just a few blocks away. The city has made investments in reviving retail on 3rd Avenue, one block west of Via Verde. While a large number of new affordable

housing units have already been built nearby, land costs remain relatively inexpensive.

Overall the South Bronx, and Melrose in particular, have been among the areas most affected by the Bloomberg administration's New Housing Marketplace Plan. Introduced in 2003, the plan established a goal of preserving or creating 165,000 units of affordable housing by 2014 in response to the projected growth of city population, much of which consists of new immigrants.

The Site

The property on which Via Verde was built was originally developed with three buildings in 1908, and was part of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company's freight yard. It also had a gasoline station through the 1970's and a provisions facility. It was vacant for almost thirty years until cleanup and construction began for Via Verde. Brook Avenue is largely lined with buildings that are the back end of stores fronting on 3rd Avenue.



Looking towards Via Verde from 3rd Avenue (left), residential development



NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development

Clockwise from top: Brook Avenue, Sanborn map illustrating site, before/after photographs of site, map illustrating nearby businesses and transit stops

PROJECT HISTORY

Two Competitions

Via Verde is the product of two architectural competitions that were a response to declining federal support for housing at the onset of the 21st century, which contributed to a significant shortage of affordable units in New York City. The first New Housing New York (NHNY) Design Ideas Competition was sponsored by the NYC City Council, AIA NY and City University of New York (CUNY) in 2004. It sought ideas to raise the profile of affordable housing design, focusing on three sites in New York City. One hundred and sixty submissions were received and nine winners were selected (first, second and third place for each of the three sites), judged on quality, coherence, innovation, sustainability, transferability, viability and economic efficiency.

This competition was viewed as successful – perhaps too successful – in that it generated not only excitement but also expectations that these proposals would be built, followed by disappointment at the recognition that they were concepts not intended for construction. In response to the heightened interest in affordable housing that it generated, however, efforts began for a follow-up competition that would involve a real site and a serious intention for completion. In 2005 a NHNY (New Housing New York) Steering Committee formed, which developed plans for a Legacy project to carry forward ideas from the 2004 competition as criteria for affordable housing projects that would be implemented.

The process this committee created was considered innovative in several ways. To reduce the time and expense of competing, the committee instituted a two-step process for the competition, beginning with an open Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to allow many entries

to be submitted and reviewed at minimal cost and effort. A short list of finalists would be selected to receive a Request for Proposals (RFP) that required submission of a more detailed design proposal along with a \$10,000 stipend for each finalist team. The RFP was unusually flexible and non-prescriptive, to encourage the most creative responses.

The RFQ was issued in spring 2006. Thirty-two teams responded and a group of five finalists were selected to respond to the RFP. This process was made real by the availability of the Melrose site provided by NYC HPD. The site was seen as difficult, with environmental issues resulting from its past use by a manufacturing foundry, railroads and a gas station. Additionally, it had a significant slope down to a below grade abandoned rail site and a narrow triangular shape which, in the language of the committee “offered a variety of exciting design parameters.” The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) provided a Brownfield Assessment Grant to identify the level of environmental issues and remediation needed.

The goal of this competition was to not only develop a design that could be built, but also one that could fundamentally change expectations for affordable housing in the eyes of the general public and, more specifically, the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. They hoped that the winning project would have a design worthy of serving as a model for the next generation of social housing in New York City.

Once the five finalists were chosen in July 2006, Bronx Community Board 1 (CB1) organized community meetings that allowed the designers to hear from local residents about what they hoped to see in this significant new neighborhood project. CB1 managed this function in

an area that lacked community-based organizations and in lieu of an actual tenant group, since residents would likely come from all over New York City, and would not necessarily be from this neighborhood.

Nevertheless, the consensus of those involved – including CB1 – was that these meetings were thoughtful and valuable. Cedric Loftin, president of CB1, was excited by the level of sophistication of the comments, the cooperation among city agencies, and the communication with the developers and designers which, he said, continued throughout the project. Among the items noted by residents in these meetings was the need to provide ownership options so that young people who achieve success would not be forced to move away from the neighborhood, while at the same time noting a desire to make units available to very low income people. They also asked for mixed income housing that offered a variety of amenities and services, and for green and sustainable features, including alternate power generation and open, green space.

One focus of the Request for Proposal (RFP) was to create housing that had a density considered more appropriate for an urban site. Most recently completed HPD projects were of a much lower density, more like townhouses or brownstones in scale, and planners felt that low density ran counter to the urban character of New York City. Moreover, the majority of easily developed sites were already occupied, leaving the most challenging ones. The site in question was considered very difficult, even unworkable, in part because of a very narrow footprint, limited even further by setback rules, allowing very little space to work with.



Unlike most earlier housing RFP's issued by the city agencies which were highly prescriptive about design requirements, this competition only identified a specific site along with a general set of values and goals.

Final design proposals were evaluated by a jury that included architects, social scientists and city officials, two of whom, Shaun Donovan and Adolfo Carrion, went on to become cabinet members in the Obama administration. The criteria for selection included affordability, sustainability, design excellence and ability to be replicated. The jury discussed concerns such as the density and aesthetics of the design within the context of this neighborhood and community. Several sub-committees reviewed specific aspects of the design in more detail. The review process ultimately led to the selection of the architect/developer team of Phipps/Rose/Dattner/Grimshaw as the winning entry.

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

Via Verde is the product of an ad hoc collaboration of the Jonathan Rose Companies, a for-profit development company, and Phipps Houses, a 100-year old non-profit housing developer. These organizations responded to a design competition for the site that was sponsored by American Institute of Architects New York (AIA NY) and New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (NYC HPD), and had support from the highest levels of New York City's administration as well as from political leadership in the Bronx.

Jonathan Rose Companies was founded on the notion of merging green and affordable design. They describe their mission as one of leading "transformative change by creating green urban solutions as replicable models of environmentally, socially and economically responsible plans, communities, buildings and investments." Jonathan Rose Companies sought Phipps Houses as a partner in the development of the proposal for the competition because of the respect the organization engenders from decades of involvement in affordable housing as "the oldest and largest not-for-profit developer, owner, and manager of affordable housing in New York City." Jonathan Rose had a previous relationship with Dattner Architects and brought in Grimshaw Architects because of their reputation for innovative green design in Europe. Lee Weintraub Landscape Architecture was added to the design team because of the centrality of open space design to the project.

A key innovation aimed at easing the process by which the developers would work with city agencies was the creation of the Joint Review Committee (JRC). The JRC was made up of representatives of the Competition Steering Committee, developers, designers and a number



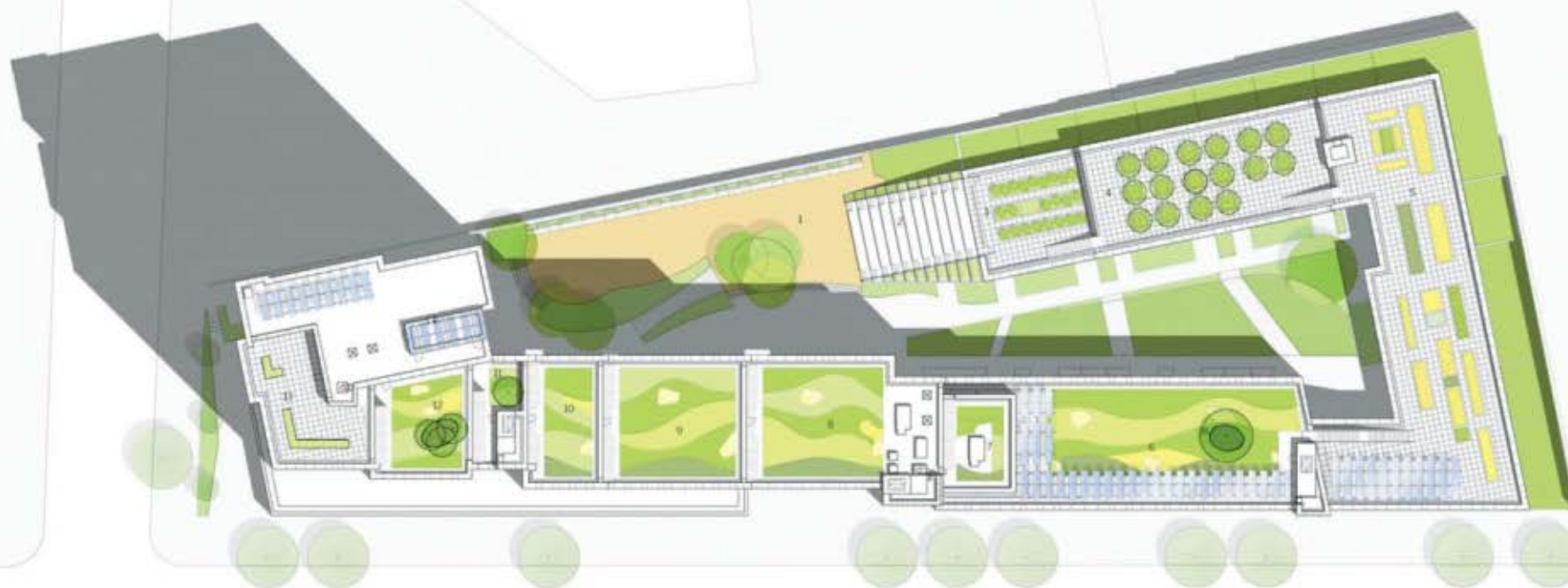
The concept of a plant "tendril" growing up towards the sun formed the basis for the design

of city agencies – including HPD, NYSEDA, and the Department of Buildings – so that needed approvals, variances, and interpretations could be reviewed and acted upon quickly. The JRC successfully lowered frustration levels and reduced turnaround times for decisions from city agencies from weeks or more to hours. This group has not continued to meet since Via Verde was completed, although people from some of the departments say that the personal relationships that were developed in these meetings have continued and have made communication easier among departments about similar issues.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Building and Site

The central design metaphor of the winning Rose/Phipps submission which resonated with the jury compared the building to a tendril of a living plant winding around and climbing upwards from the street towards the sun. That concept, which was largely maintained throughout the development of the design and construction of the project, was translated into a series of connected structures that wound around a central courtyard and stepped up from low- through mid-rise to high-rise buildings, with each step providing open space for a green roof.



- KEY**
- 1. PLAY AREA
 - 2. AMPHITHEATRE
 - 3. CONIFER GARDEN - FL 3
 - 4. ORCHARD GARDEN - FL4
 - 5. COMMUNITY GARDEN - FL5
 - 6. FITNESS GARDEN - FL7
 - 7. WAVE GARDEN - FL8.5
 - 8. WAVE GARDEN - FL10
 - 9. WAVE GARDEN - FL12
 - 10. WAVE GARDEN - FL14
 - 11. WAVE GARDEN - FL16
 - 12. WAVE GARDEN - FL18
 - 13. DINING TERRACE - FL20



BROOK AVE

BERGEN AVE



Via Verde – The Green Way

Phipps Rose Dattner Grimshaw

Floor Plan – Level 4



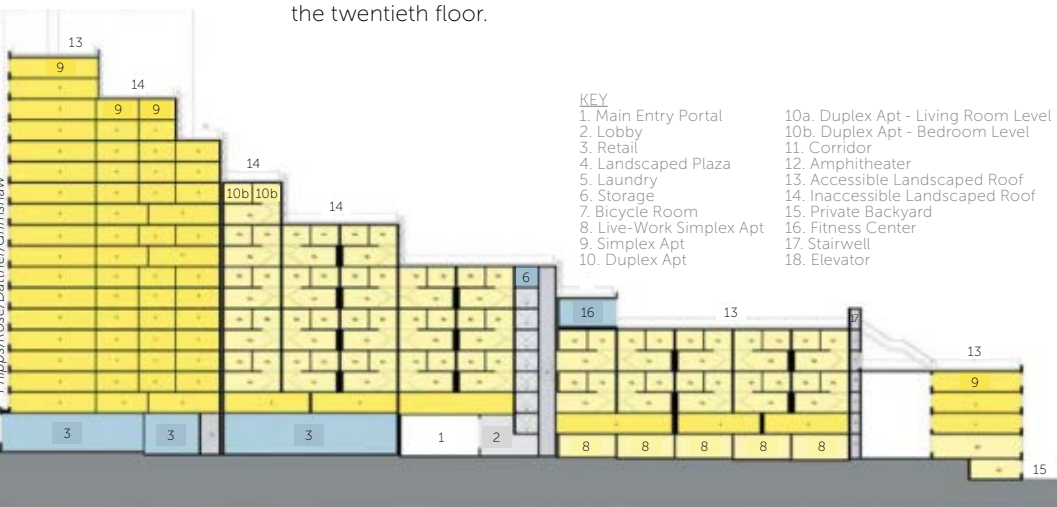
Via Verde – The Green Way

Phipps Rose Dattner Grimshaw

Floor Plan – Level 1

Via Verde was designed to increase overall density to a level seen as appropriate for an intensely urban neighborhood, while at the same time increasing the quantity and quality of outdoor spaces that would be available to residents. The massing of the project responds to the buildings surrounding the site, such as the low-rise buildings along Brook Avenue and 3rd Avenue and the 18-story tower of the New York City Housing Authority's Bronxchester Houses immediately to the east. Hence Via Verde's tower is similar in scale and placed closest to the tower at the north end of the site.

The green roofs incorporate a series of connected, habitable garden spaces that step up from the courtyard to the seventh floor and are designed and programmed for a variety of uses. They include an amphitheater, fir (evergreen) tree grove, an orchard with apple and pear trees, a vegetable garden and a landscaped terrace adjacent to the fitness room. An additional terrace provides outdoor access from the twentieth floor.



Clockwise from top: community garden, fir tree grove and fruit tree orchard, fitness garden, building section

Designers envisioned the rooftop gardens serving some of the same function as the traditional “tar beach” of roofs and older brownstones and apartments in the area, while the doorways and exterior stairs leading up to the second and third floor walkups of co-op units were seen as reminiscent of classic New York City apartments stoops. On some of the higher rooftop gardens railings were increased in height and pulled back from the building edge with a wide parapet to make users feel safer.

A paved, interior courtyard connects the buildings and includes a small play area for children with a rubberized surface and a terraced, outdoor amphitheater with steps leading to the first roof terrace that includes the evergreen grove.

The entry was placed at the midpoint in the building along Brook Avenue where it would serve both owners and renters. All residents enter through a common security office in the center of the block on Brook Avenue. Residents use security cards for entry, while guests need to register with the security guard. From there, rental tenants turn left, exiting the lobby to walk through a covered walkway to the tower lobby. Shareowners turn right to the elevators or walk outside through the courtyard to doors to their units or to exterior stairways leading up to entries.

The entrance and courtyard are designed to allow access for a ladder fire truck. A metal gate alongside the building lobby spans the broad open entry between Brook Avenue and the courtyard. The gate, which is kept locked, illustrates the conflict between the need for security in the South Bronx and the desire to provide visual and physical access to the surrounding community.

Clockwise from top: Courtyard view looking towards amphitheater, Brook Avenue building entrance, locked gate, view across courtyard to tower, building entrance



Unit Design

To make the most of the site's narrow footprint, the designers utilized a variety of unit types, including single floor apartments, two-story duplexes units and townhouses. Duplex units in the mid-rise building facing Brook Avenue are entered off an internal, double loaded corridor. The entry level floor of each unit has one exposure and contains an open living room/dining room/kitchen area and powder room. Stairs lead to the upper level that contains bedrooms and a full bathroom and spans the building block, providing two exposures. There are 74 two-bedroom and 17 three-bedroom apartments.

The residential units include several features that are unusual for HPD projects. These include open living areas, with no wall separating the kitchen from the living room. The open kitchen, which required approval by the JRC, is intended to make the room look larger and better fit modern expectations and living styles.

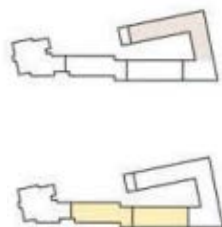
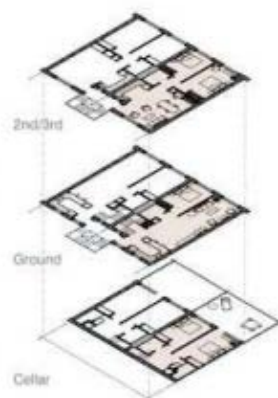
Most units have at least two exposures for natural ventilation; none contain air-conditioning units, per specifications in the RFP. The architects hoped to minimize the need for air-conditioning by providing improved ventilation, through the use of cross ventilation, higher than normal ceiling heights and ceiling fans. Trickle vents at the windows provide fresh make-up air during the heating season. Each unit is provided with a floor level opening in the living room wall where a window air conditioning unit can be installed. These openings are covered with interior insulated boxes to minimize heat loss.



Top: Living room and interior stair in co-op duplex unit
Next page: Co-op unit kitchen and bedroom
Floorplans by Phipps/Rose/Dattner/Grimshaw; Photos by Ruggero Vanni



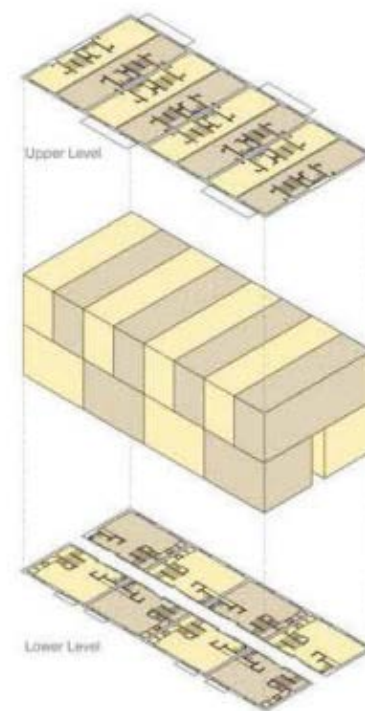
2 Bedroom Simplex
Upper Floors



Lower Floor Level
2 Bedroom Duplex



Upper Floor Level



Diagrammatic Axon

The larger rental units have washer/dryers in the unit. The remaining studio and 1-bedroom rental apartments make use of the first floor laundry room. All co-op units have washer/dryers as well as upgraded stainless steel appliances.

Construction

Via Verde incorporates a variety of construction methods. The high-rise residential tower uses conventional cast-in-place concrete construction. The low and mid-rise buildings use a block-and-plank structural system. In the mid-rise structure the masonry, load-bearing walls were turned ninety degrees so that they are perpendicular to the street, in order to create a more open façade with larger windows.

The aesthetics of the façade were important, given that one of the goals was to change the look and perception of what was possible in

public housing. Designers tout the exterior rain screen that clads all the buildings as innovative for affordable housing. The panelized system which includes insulation, moisture proofing and windows along with the cladding, was factory-built and delivered to the site in modular sections. Cladding is mostly metal, with subtle variations in color, which gives Via Verde a modern and reflective appearance. The brick base, horizontal bands of matte-finish concrete with colorful wood accents at the windows, further enliven the facade. Of the many thousands of units built and managed by Phipps, this is the only building without a brick façade. The rain screen façade lends an interesting and varied visual perspective that changes appearance depending on lighting conditions.

Additional façade features include balconies and sun screens. Balconies largely face the interior courtyard and in some cases were used to provide an additional egress as required by fire code. Additional street-facing balconies were included in the original design to provide sunshading, but these were eliminated in the final design, replaced by small projecting metal sunscreens to provide shading during the summer season.

Via Verde would not have been possible without variances and exclusions from codes and rules. The most critical variance provided relief from the required 30 foot setback to the next property line. The waiver allowed the designers to reduce this setback to 15 feet – requiring a 30 foot distance between Via Verde and the next adjacent structure instead of the property line. This provided the square footage needed for the building's unique footprint and tendril-like design. The developers also asked for and received a variance on the maximum density allowed, as the proposed design exceeded HPD rules. The JRC



Photos by Ruggero Vanni

Left to right: work space in living room/dining room/kitchen, insulated box for owner supplied air conditioning unit, bathroom (all co-op units)



David Sundberg / Esto



indicated early on that such an increase in density could be approved. In addition, Mayoral approval was provided to eliminate the requirement for on-site parking for residents, which was seen as a cost-saving and sustainability issue. No resident parking spaces are provided.

Developers and architects set themselves a goal of keeping the final plan as close as possible to that which was submitted and awarded in the competition. There were some changes, such as switching some roof space from actively programmed to holding photovoltaic panels, but the unique racking system helped them to increase the number of panels with little impact on usability of the roofs.

Other than some tradeoffs in materials due to costs—such as more use of metal and less of wood on the exterior panels, the designers feel that they accomplished most of their goals, particularly with respect to the major design decisions, and avoided the significant loss of design features that often come with value engineering, in part because of the strong support for this project from HPD.



David Sundberg / Esto

Clockwise from top: Brook Avenue entrance and facade, looking across building towards Manhattan, courtyard view

Sustainable Design

From the start, there was an intention to create a sustainability plan that was fully integrated into the design, rather than aimed at gaining LEED points. To that end Bright Power was brought in as an energy consultant early in the design process to help plan the photovoltaic systems, analyzing potential savings of design features, and assessing requirements for LEED, ASHRAE and Enterprise Green Community programs. Bright Power was impressed by the level of green features that were proposed within the budget constraints of an affordable housing project, and by the degree to which the final design adhered to those goals.

The project received LEED Gold certification and includes the following noteworthy features:

Brownfield remediation. The below grade site suffered environmental problems from its previous use as a gas station as well as from the immediately adjacent rail line. Analysis found “elevated concentrations of organic solvents and petroleum-related compounds... detected in the soil, soil vapor, and/or groundwater” related to its use as a gasoline station. There was also evidence of polychlorinated biphenyl (“PCB”), heavy metals, and semi-volatile organic compounds (“SVOCs”) that could be related to the rail yard usage. The remediation strategy entailed excavating and disposing of soil from the site; using clean fill, barriers and caps to keep other materials in place; and using chemicals to oxidize shallow ground water sites.

Green roofs. As noted earlier, the green roofs were core to the initial design concept and became a central organizing feature of Via Verde’s design. An important goal was to maximize open and green space on

site by creating a courtyard and by using the roofs of the building as green space. This approach provided the multiple benefits of added rooftop insulation, rainwater recapture, space for photovoltaic panels, green space for several kinds of plant life – including a grove of fir trees, an orchard with apple and pear trees and a vegetable garden – and outdoor walking and sitting space.

Photovoltaic panels. Mid- and high-rise towers are often poor choices for photovoltaic panels, since the available roof surface is relatively small compared to interior living space. Via Verde was able to maximize the number of panels installed by using the stepped, multiple roof design which added horizontal and vertical surfaces. Moreover, it made use of an innovative and custom built rack system for the panels that allowed them to be hung at angles that were optimal for electrical power generation while minimizing the degree to which the panels shaded each other. Several more panels were added late in the design process to reach the 2.5% of total power usage required for LEED points, accounting for 15 to 20% of all common area power needs. Use of solar energy is supported by the unobstructed views to the south, in the direction of a high school football field. There are 288 total panels on various horizontal and vertical surfaces producing a maximum 66 kw of electricity, which is estimated to save \$12,000 annually in electrical costs at 2013 rates.

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ). Improved IAQ relies on a smoke-free environment, extremely low use of VOC emitting materials, good ventilation, and tight seals in the building and individual residential units. Public spaces have active air exchange systems with heat recapture.



VIA VERDE—THE GREEN WAY

Rainwater Capture. Rainwater is channeled from roofs and harvested in barrels for use in rooftop plantings except for the vegetable garden.

Active Living by Design. Via Verde was one of the first buildings in New York to make use of the *Active Design Guidelines*, “a manual of strategies for creating healthier buildings, streets, and urban spaces, based on the latest academic research and best practices in the field,” published by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in 2010. The purpose is to use design to support increased levels of physical activity, in response to very high levels of related diseases including obesity and diabetes, both of which are a major problem in the South Bronx. These guidelines encourage the use of stairs over elevators by making stairways open, attractive and well-lit with electrical lights and daylight, and by placing them in prominent positions where they are encountered before elevators. They also encourage providing space and paths to increase walking. All of these techniques were put in place in Via Verde and secured LEED points for “innovation”. Examples include the paths up to and through the green roofs and courtyards, with the fitness room serving as an endpoint “punctuation” to the climb up to the seventh level of the roof gardens. The laundry room for the high-rise tower units was placed at ground level, rather than in the basement, specifically in response



Clockwise from top left: Rooftop photovoltaic panels, day-lit hallway, entrance lobby monitor displaying solar energy production and use, rain water collection

to community comments and suggestions, with direct access to the courtyard space, to encourage activity and socializing while clothes are washing and drying.

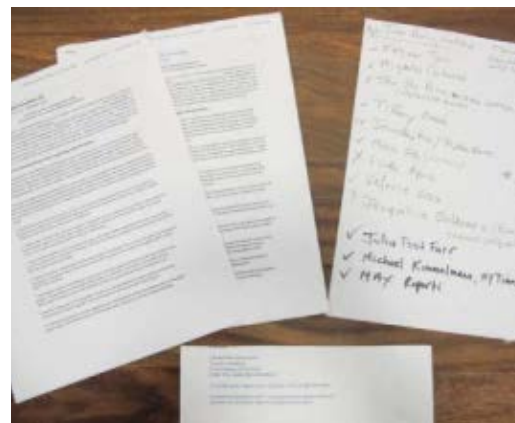
Temperature Sensors. All areas in the building, including each apartment, have temperature sensors that provide feedback to the heating system so that heat is supplied as a response to actual conditions and not just preset times, as is common in large housing projects. Residents do not pay for heat, which is supplied by a central, gas-fired hydronic system, but do pay for their own electricity use. Blower door tests showed the building enclosure to be very tight.

City officials see the green, sustainable development aspects of Via Verde as spectacular and believe they provide a welcome setting for residents of affordable housing. The usable interior stairways represent a positive demonstration of concept. The ability for people to move their way up the roofs, enjoying changing views and providing new perspectives, is unparalleled.

ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMING

The most significant community activity at Via Verde involves gardening. The gardens are envisioned as taking on the tradition of the classical community garden or casita that was common in this neighborhood, and are viewed as a place where people from the different kinds of housing can meet. The garden club, in its initial year, included 20 families – both parents and children – and participation is increasing. Gardening activities are managed by GrowNYC, which seeks to establish green spaces, provide social opportunities, and educate and interest residents in the benefits, joys, and techniques of gardening. Via Verde, with GrowNYC, manages a blog about the gardening club and coordinates a variety of activities and events that make use of the green roofs throughout the seasons. These include planning the vegetable garden, planting and harvesting, demonstrating ways to cook the harvested items (such as kale slaw), and trimming the evergreens in the fir tree grove in December. GrowNYC consultants plan to expand efforts to connect growing and cooking.

While not strictly organic, the gardens are meant to be sustainable. The managers demonstrate organic techniques and encourage the residents not to use pesticides. Plant materials that are not eaten are placed in a tumbler compost bin in order to return nutrients to the soil.



Clockwise from top left: community room, fitness center, bike storage, laundry room, tenant garden club sign-up forms and recipes

While most of the green spaces in Via Verde are watered with captured roof runoff, the gardens are watered with hoses using city water as per New York City health codes.

A thousand pounds of vegetables were harvested in the first growing season of 2012, which was seen as a significant success by the garden managers. They note that plantings have changed, and will continue to be modified in response to growing knowledge of the particular microclimate of the gardens. For instance, parts of the roof gardens are particularly hot and windy, affecting what can and will grow well. Peanut plants, a recent addition, have taken nicely to the setting. One aspect of the garden that was considered somewhat experimental was the decision to create community beds as opposed to allotting small plots to individuals. This was done because there was not enough space for individual plots for all or even most who would have wanted them. Gardeners seem to come from both the owner and the rental sides. Townhouse residents have begun asking if gardens could be set up on the small green patches in front of their units.

Original plans indicated that Via Verde's courtyard would be used for a green market or organic food co-operative. In its place GrowNYC is managing a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) that produces food boxes for residents for \$10, supplementing produce produced by the vegetable garden.

The involvement of GrowNYC has been intense in the first year but is expected to taper off as resident members of the gardening club take on more responsibility. The garden managers note that leaders from the resident community are emerging to take responsibility for the garden.

The exercise room, which opens out onto a green roof on the seventh floor, is available to all Via Verde tenants and shareholders for a \$25 per year fee. There is also fee for use of a bike storage room in the basement. The property managers argue that the fee is less important for the income generated than for helping create a sense of ownership and caretaking of the space. There has been very little difficulty or damage in either of the spaces in part, they believe, due to this policy.

There were some changes in community programming from the initial project proposal. Instead of ground floor community facilities there is a community room on the 20th floor of the tower. Original plans included a homework center on the second floor which was not included in the final design. The initial proposal also listed a primary care and health education center, case management and wellness services for seniors. There are no Via Verde offices or staff for these services, but developers expect some health services to emerge from the Montefiore Medical Center which opened in the onsite retail space in 2013.

COMMUNITY

Via Verde is considered to be a community in and of itself, organized around shared common spaces and activities taking place in the courtyard and green roofs (such as the Christmas Tree trimming event). However, it is also intended to support the external community, in part by generating foot traffic to activate Brook Avenue, providing street views to the interior courtyard and offering neighborhood-serving businesses –such as the Montefiore clinic– in retail space on the ground floor. The project is seen as filling an important gap in Melrose, in an area near the very busy Hub.

Via Verde was almost completely occupied by mid-2012. The rental side filled very quickly and there is a long waiting list. This is not surprising, given the shortage of affordable housing everywhere New York, but the demand may be even greater here because the units are so desirable. The co-op units took longer to fill because of the slow and difficult process of obtaining and processing banks loans at the time of the construction. The communal spaces—including the gardens, the fitness area and the courtyard, hallways and lobbies—are owned by Via Verde and managed by Phipps Houses.

The 151 rental tenants were chosen by lottery from a pool of over 7,000 applicants from all over New York City. As of spring 2013, the management received at least ten inquiries a day from people wanting to live in Via Verde, all of whom are referred to the waiting list. There has been no turnover in the initial two years since the building was open. The management reported that this is unusual for affordable units in which difficult and unstable personal situations often lead to change.

HPD is a principal partner (with Columbia University and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene) in a multi-million dollar, multi-year study of the health impacts of improved and sustainably designed housing. Via Verde is just one of a number of buildings involved in the study, which is comparing 1,500 residents of HPD housing with another 1,500 who are in a waiting list control group. This is a long-term study with significant funding from both federal and private sources. The study is not complete, but there are some early indications of positive effects on asthma and other outcome variables.

Via Verde received very strong support from two successive Bronx Borough Presidents, who provided \$1.5 million of Borough President discretionary funds. Borough Presidents also lent support through the long and often difficult local review known as the Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP). Via Verde is not the only LEED certified housing project to be built in the South Bronx in the last several years (a LEED platinum affordable housing complex was built in another neighborhood), but it is certainly the highest profile one. By building high density housing on this previously abandoned site, Via Verde was expected to knit together important pieces of the community.

FINANCING

Via Verde's unusual mix of rental and co-op units increased the number of available funding options while introducing a greater degree of complexity due to the number of entities involved. The nearly \$100 million project cost was divided as two-thirds rental (151 units at a cost of \$66.852 million) and one-third owned (71 units at a cost of \$31.963 million). Refer to Tables 1 and 2 for additional details.

Funds for the project came from a broad range of public and private sources. Rental unit financing made use of Low Income Tax Credits through New York State Homes and Community Renewal (NYS HCR) and HPD taxable bonds through New York State Housing Development Corporation (NYS HDC), as well as subsidies from New York City Housing Development Corporation (NYC HDC), New York City Housing Preservation and Development (NYC HPD), Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program (FHLBNY AHP), and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). The co-op units were financed through taxable bonds from NYC

TABLE 1: SOURCES AND USES – COOP UNITS

Sources

<i>Construction Sources</i>	Total	Percentage	PDU (Per Dwelling Unit)
HDC 1B:Taxable HDC Bonds w/ LOC	\$1,210,000	3.8%	\$17
HDC 1A:Taxable HDC Bonds w/ LOC	\$6,230,000	19.5%	\$87,746
HDC Subsidy	\$4,615,000	14.4%	\$65,000
Subordinate Financing	\$2,500,000	7.8%	\$35,211
Developer Loan	\$550,589	1.7%	\$7,755
AHC	\$2,117,500	6.6%	\$29,824
HPD Subsidy	\$9,093,470	25.4%	\$128,077
HPD HOME Funds	\$712,630	2.2%	\$10,037
Bronx BP/Council	\$1,500,000	4.7%	\$21,127
Developer Equity	\$1,675,000	5.2%	\$23,592
NYSERDA	\$187,331	0.6%	\$2,638
Deferred Developer Fees 100%	\$1,500,000	4.7%	\$21,127
Developer Dev Loan Interest (Placeholder)	\$71,576		
Total	\$31,963,096		\$449,176

<i>Permanent Sources</i>	Total	Percentage	PDU (Per Dwelling Unit)
HDC 1B:Taxable Bond Proceeds	\$1,210,000	3.8%	\$17,042
HDC 2nd HDC Subsidy	\$4,615,000	14.4%	\$65,000
AHC	\$2,117,500	6.6%	\$29,824
HPD Subsidy	\$9,093,470	28.4%	\$128,077
HPD Home Funds	\$712,630	2.2%	\$10,037
Bronx BP/Council	\$1,500,000	4.7%	\$21,127
Sales Proceeds - Tier 1	\$7,729,058	24.2%	\$108,860
Sales Proceeds - Tier 2	\$3,123,107	9.8%	\$43,987
Developer Equity (BCP)	\$1,675,000	5.2%	\$23,592
NYSERDA	\$187,331	0.6%	\$2,638
Developer Dev Loan Interest (Placeholder)			
Total	\$31,963,096		\$450,184

Uses

	Total	Percentage	PDU (Per Dwelling Unit)
Acquisition	\$48,873	0.2%	\$688
Hard Costs	\$24,261,401	75.9%	\$341,710
Soft Costs	\$6,152,822	19.2%	\$86,659
Development Fee	\$1,500,000	4.7%	\$21,127
Total	\$31,963,096		\$450,184

TABLE 2: SOURCES AND USES - RENTAL UNITS

Sources

<i>Construction Sources</i>	Percentage	Total	Per Unit	Per GSF
HDC First Mortgage \$29,320,000	50.4%	\$33,690,000	\$223,113	\$167.77
LIHC/SLIHC Equity	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0.00
HDC Subsidy	19.2%	\$12,835,000	\$85,000	\$64.68
HPD - NYC HTF	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0.00
HPD - MIRP - CAPITAL	14.6%	\$97,677,756	\$64,687	\$49.22
HPD - MIRP - HOME	3.8%	\$2,516,580	\$16,666	\$12.68
FHLB AHP	2.8%	\$1,900,000	\$12,583	\$9.57
Phipps Loan (NYSERDA MPP)	0.6%	\$380,000	\$2,517	\$1.91
Remediation Sources (TBD)	1.5%	\$1,000,000	\$6,623	\$5.04
156th St Bridge Sources (HPD)	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0.00
Deferred Developer Fee	7.1%	\$4,763,651	\$31,547	\$24.00
Total Construction Sources of Funds	100.0%	\$66,852,987	\$442,735	\$336.88
Financing Gap / (Surplus) - Construction	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0.00
<i>Permanent Sources</i>	Percentage	Total	Per Unit	Per GSF
HDC First Mortgage	6.5%	\$4,370,000	\$28,940	\$22.02
LIHC/SLIHC Equity	48.0%	\$32,083,651	\$212,475	\$161.67
HDC Subsidy \$27,399,336	19.2%	\$12,835,000	\$85,000	\$64.68
HPD - NYC HTF	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0.00
HPD - MIRP - CAPITAL	14.6%	\$9,767,756	\$64,687	\$49.22
HPD - MIRP - HOME	3.8%	\$2,516,580	\$16,666	\$12.68
FHLB AHP	2.8%	\$1,900,000	\$12,583	\$9.57
Phipps Loan (NYSERDA MPP)	0.6%	\$380,000	\$2,517	\$1.91
Remediation Sources (TBD)	1.5%	\$1,000,000	\$6,623	\$5.04
156th St Bridge Sources (HPD)	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0.00
Deferred Developer Fee	3.0%	\$2,000,000	\$13,245	\$10.08
Total Permanent Sources of Funds	100.0%	\$66,852,987	\$442,735	\$336.88
Financing Gap / (Surplus) - Construction	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0.00
Total HPD Subsidy	18.4%	\$12,284,336	\$81,353	\$61.90
Maximum HPD Subsidy - Approved CP	18.4%	\$12,284,336	\$81,353	\$61.90
Shortfall / (Excess) of Max HPD Subsidy		\$0		
<i>Uses</i>	Percentage	Total	Per Unit	Per GSF
Acquisition	0.3%	\$177,880	\$1,178	\$0.90
Remediation (Included In Hard Costs)	0.0%	\$0	\$0	\$0.00
Hard Costs (Including Contingency)	73.8%	\$49,364,599	\$325,918	\$248.75
Soft Costs	18.1%	\$12,110,508	\$80,202	\$61.03
Developer Fee	7.8%	\$5,200,000	\$34,437	\$26.20
Total Uses	100.0%	\$66,852,987	\$442,735	\$336.88

HDC, along with subsidies from the NYC HDC, NYC HPD, the Bronx Borough President's discretionary fund, New York City Council funds, New York State Affordable Housing Corporation (AHC) and NYSEDA (see Table 1). Tax credits represented \$32 million (or almost half) of the permanent financing for the rental units. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation provided a \$145,000 environmental remediation grant.

Seventeen of the rental units are reserved for the lowest level of income-vouchers for homeless at 30% to 60% Average Median Income (AMI) in the Bronx. While the AMI in 2011 for New York City was \$56,951 in 2011 and for a Bronx family was \$34,744, the Melrose-Morrisania section has the lowest AMI in the city at \$8,694, according to the 2010 census. The funding, which came from the affordable housing program, required units accepting people with as low as 30% of median income.

Monthly rents vary by AMI, ranging from as low as \$349/month for a one bedroom unit at 30% AMI, up to \$1087 for a three-bedroom unit at 60% AMI (see Table 4). The rental rates can be adjusted to market value after 30 years. Subsidies for the co-op units allow them to be sold at prices ranging from \$134,585 for a 1-bedroom unit on one floor up to \$192,750 for a 3-bedroom duplex. While these prices represent what the market will bear for purchases in Melrose, they cover only about half of the construction costs. Because of the range of subsidies from HDC and HPD that lower these costs to buyers, there are resale restrictions that require reimbursement of subsidies for sales in excess of the original purchase price, diminishing from 100% in the first years to zero over the term of the original mortgage.

The individual unit cost of building Via Verde is more expensive than that of most recent affordable housing projects in the area. The additional cost (estimated at about 5%) is justified by the city funders by its value as a model and demonstration project. Some public housing advocates have disagreed, suggesting all funds should go directly into creation of additional units. There are some ways in which Via Verde achieved efficiencies that reduced construction and operating costs, such as eliminating all on-site parking and its energy-efficient design which should reduce future operating expenses. HPD initially hoped to limit the subsidy to \$65,000 per unit, but eventually increased it up to \$100,000 per unit because the agency saw a special value in being able to get many more units than initially anticipated onto this site.

The integration of rental and owned units is unusual and may have, along with the recession, extended the time it took to close on the financing for Via Verde. Tax credits, which represented a large portion of the financing, were purchased by Chase Bank. It is the largest purchaser of such credits (and one of the few doing such deals in the years following the 2008 housing bubble collapse), although the value of the Via Verde credits was a particularly large amount even for Chase. Assuming this higher degree of risk, we were told, was made feasible by the history and strength of the players – including Phipps Houses, which has a long and solid reputation for building and managing nonprofit housing in the New York area, and Jonathan Rose Companies, which also has a long track record for developing quality projects and considerable resources. The bank's interest was reinforced by the quality of the design and intense pent-up demand for affordable units, as well as strong support from the city agency partners in the project. Chase Bank saw this project, with its green design and mix of owned and rented units, as transformative for affordable housing.

TABLE 3: ANNUAL MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING EXPENSES

Expenses	Amount	PER room (rm)/ dwelling unit (du)
Supplies/Cleaning/Exterminating	\$18,590	\$65/rm
Heating	\$85,800	\$300/rm
Gas & Electricity	\$24,310	\$85/rm
Cooking Gas	\$7,668	\$108/du
Repairs/Replacement	\$28,400	\$400/du
Legal	\$8,165	\$115/du
Accounting	\$10,000	\$10,000/project
Painting	\$11,440	\$40/rm
Doorman/Security	\$35,040	\$494/du
Maintenance Staff	\$130,204	\$1,834/du
Elevator Maintenance & Repairs	\$10,000	\$5,000/elev.
Management Fee	\$49,700	\$700/du
Water & Sewer	\$31,460	\$110/rm
Fire and Liability Insurance	\$49,700	\$700/du
Other Expenses		0
Franchise Taxes		0
M & O Before Taxes and Debt Service	\$500,477	\$7,049/du
Bldg Reserve	\$17,750	\$250/du
Real Estate Taxes 421a	\$17,000	\$35/rm
Total Expenses	\$535,227	\$7,538/du
		\$1,871/rm

The bank felt that their faith in the project as a safe investment was justified by the fact that by spring 2012 the co-op units were sold and all the rental units were full, and were not experiencing the kind of turnover that was common to affordable rentals.

A little more than half (51%) of Via Verde was financed with tax-free bonds. The \$32 million of tax credit financing was significant compared to other projects. Jonathan Rose Companies and Phipps Houses shared developer equity fifty-fifty, and deferred fees during construction and initial occupancy to support the viability of the project. Bridge funding came from the Calvert Foundation to fill the gap between construction and sale of the co-op units.

Sources for the financing of the rental portion of Via Verde were fairly typical, whereas the co-op financing was more difficult because of changes in state and city programs. One in particular, New York City's co-op program, ended several years prior to the project because of a minor scandal. Via Verde was one of the last projects to receive New York State AHC (Affordable Housing Corporation) funding which has since been discontinued. Via Verde received \$2.68 million in Brown-field Cleanup Program equity, from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Environmental remediation costs were 12% of the entire project costs.

IMPACT

Via Verde has clearly succeeded in transforming a site that might never have been seriously or intensely used, least of all for housing, into a desirable urban residential community. Moreover, it did so with an architectural style that is much admired, and in a way that inventively

TABLE 4: UNITS, AFFORDABILITY AND COSTS**Affordable Rental Units**

Number of Units	Income Restrictions	Income (Family of Four)	Monthly Rate			
			Studio	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom
17	<30% AMI	\$23,040		\$349	\$423	\$489
13	<40% AMI	\$30,720	\$461	\$493	\$596	\$688
120	<60% AMI	\$46,080	\$731	\$781	\$942	\$1,087

Cooperative Ownership Units

Number of Units	Income Restrictions	Income (Family of Four)	Purchase Price			
			Studio	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom
5	<80% AMI	\$61,450		\$134,585		
39	<150% AMI	\$115,200			\$146,032	
26	<175% AMI	\$134,400				\$192,750

Data taken from HUD Public Affairs Notice 12-105, 18 June 2012

created opportunities for open and green space. In that sense the project may have changed the conversation about the design of affordable housing in New York City. Shaun Donovan, Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, said that Via Verde will “serve as a prototype for future affordable housing developments built nationally and internationally.” Research is being conducted at Via Verde and other buildings to evaluate the degree to which new and green housing provides physical and psychological benefits to residents. Initial indicators are promising.

The way in which Via Verde came about, from the two competitions to the establishment of the Joint Review Committee (JRC), represented a different approach of doing business for affordable housing in New York. The JRC, in particular, provided a way to address some of the thorniest issues that plague developers and cost time, money and generate frustration. It is not clear to what degree this model served to change the way these city agencies will operate in the future. The JRC has not become institutionalized a permanent committee, and the personal and helpful relationships formed there among agency

staffers might not last beyond the Bloomberg administration or their respective terms of office. Competition sponsors, however, note that the fact that four of the five finalists went on to do work for HPD reflects the success of this effort in changing attitudes and approaches to affordable housing development in the city.

Via Verde has also succeeded in providing a more fully articulated set of sustainable design features than are present in most other affordable housing projects. As such, within the protected sphere of the building's perimeter, residents enjoy far greater access to open spaces, trees and plant life, and opportunities for walking and physical activity than is common in affordable housing.

HPD sees these sustainable features as a success and now requires all new construction to meet Enterprise Green Community standards, and demonstrate at least a 15% improvement in energy efficiency over a base case (ASHRAE 2007 standard) building, half of what Via Verde achieved. With high density, sustainable design, mixed income and the presence of rental and owned units, Via Verde is believed to have tapped into best practices that HPD wants to emulate and promote.

Although some of the community-related services described in the original plans and response to the RFP – such as services for the elderly, homework support, and health care – were not realized, residents within Via Verde and the surrounding neighborhood may benefit from services offered by the Montefiore facility, which opened in spring 2013.



Clockwise from top left: Lance Jay Brown, Paul Freitag and Karen Kubey; Ted Weinstein and Eric Enderlin; Via Verde residents

There have been suggestions of ripple effects from Via Verde that are having a positive impact in the immediate Melrose area. One lender noted that another project would not have been able to lease out its street-level retail space without the presence of Via Verde, although the area where the property is located, only several blocks away, looks essentially unchanged. Other new developments are being planned immediately adjacent to Via Verde. HPD, for instance, issued an RFP clearly influenced by the success of Via Verde for a neighboring site in 2013. It is for a smaller, though still dense, new affordable housing project with integrated green space on open land immediately to the southwest of the site. Other changes may require more time to manifest and detect.

Via Verde won a number of awards in 2012, including the American Institute of Architecture's New York Chapter Andrew J. Thomas Award; the Urban Land Institute Jack Kemp Workforce Housing Models of Excellence Award; the Big Apple Brownfield Green Building Award; and the Society for Marketing Professional Services, NY Industry Award.

CURRENT PROJECTS AND FUTURE PLANS

Via Verde is a place that represents an attempt at an architectural solution to affordable housing problems, rather than a process or an organization. As such, it is fully realized and 100% occupied. In the future, the developers hope to expand garden activities and eventually have the care of the vegetable plots completely managed by residents. Managers expect that the presence of the medical facility, which opened in the spring of 2013, will further encourage healthy behavior among residents and may expand programs aimed largely at Via Verde's population.

Beyond that, future activity will largely emanate from city agencies and developers seeking to expand on this project and ensure that more affordable housing incorporates green and thoughtful, innovative design. The recent HPD RFP for a project adjacent to Via Verde is indicative of the impact Via Verde is having on HPD expectations as well as plans for this neighborhood.

New York City is on the verge of achieving the goal of 165,000 affordable units preserved or built that was established ten years ago. Via Verde's developers and architects are encouraged by its success and are conceiving other new developments. Grimshaw Architects, for instance, started seeking housing projects that it may have previously passed over.



NHNY Steering Committee

Assessing Success

- Demonstrate ability to provide creative, innovative design for affordable housing.

Via Verde has caught the imagination of the design community in New York City and presented an innovative design model for future housing developments. How much of the process can be replicated without matching levels of support and commitment remains an open question.

- Provide truly sustainable design within affordable housing budgetary constraints.

Via Verde offers more sustainable features than most green, affordable housing developments. Its use of the building wrapping around

a central courtyard and stepped, green roofs to create open space is the foundation of the design and its most innovative and functionally important feature.

- [Reintroduce urban density to this area of the South Bronx.](#)

This project succeeded in creating greater density in this site than many thought possible, while at the same time creating additional open space for resident use.

- [Fill empty space in local urban fabric, knitting together sections of the community.](#)

Via Verde makes good and productive use of an unlikely site. Its long-term effect on the immediate neighborhood is unclear, although related and compatible projects are being planned in the immediate area.

- [Demonstrate the ability of design competitions to raise the bar in affordable housing design.](#)

The competitions that led to Via Verde are viewed as successful and have been discussed as models for future planning efforts in New York City and elsewhere. The two-step model utilizing a less prescriptive RFP encouraged multiple entries and creativity in design.

- [Show that city bureaucracies can work together to support development.](#)

The extraordinary level of commitment to Via Verde created motivation and opened channels for communication that are rare in New York City. There is potential for modeling and replicating this process, but at this point it is unclear how much structural change will occur in the way the city does business as a result of the project.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Selection Committee was excited about Via Verde because of the project's goals, its realization, and its potential to serve as a model. The goals – including producing housing that was “affordable, sustainable, and replicable” – were viewed as critical given the scale of urban housing needs.

Recognizing the number of affordable units needed, in New York as well as nationally, the Selection Committee felt that small-scale housing projects (with a few units a piece) alone are unlikely to be sufficient and that solutions must focus on bigger interventions. However, the long history of problems with large public housing projects supports the need for careful attention to scale and design, which is part of what made Via Verde so attractive to the Committee. The development – the product of two design competitions – indicated that architecture for affordable housing was viewed as important and was being taken seriously by the city, developers and the design community. The Selection Committee applauded the partnership between Phipps Houses and Jonathan Rose Companies, two developers with great track records in affordable housing. They also commented that the confluence of policy, people, and organizations working together in a project of this scale could be game changing for the future of affordable housing in the city and elsewhere.

The Selection Committee felt that the design exceeded expectations, in part due to the unusual mix of owned and rented units. They also appreciated the design for its ability to achieve the necessary density of units within a carefully crafted building that responds to the adjoining context in massing and scale, and offers a diversity of spaces and unit types. All this was achieved within a small and oddly shaped site that



David Sundberg / Esto

required significant remediation, while providing unusually high levels of access to outdoor space and vegetation. The Selection Committee also admired the health-related aspects of this facility's design. They agreed that the project's commitment to sustainable design and active living helped to provide human dignity within an inner-city sanctuary for its residents and demonstrated "a new, comprehensive approach to sustainable design." The Committee noted that offering a peaceful, quiet and safe green space – a place of refuge in a dense urban setting – was rare and important, especially in the South Bronx. Moreover, the Committee was optimistic that Via Verde was serving as an economic catalyst for this still depressed area of the city.

The Selection Committee hoped that the competition process and final design might serve as a model for other developments locally and around the country. They were concerned, however, about the apparent loss of some of the originally proposed health and social programs between the initial design and final product. The lack of designated space for the health education center, case management and wellness services for seniors, and student homework were seen as detrimental to the overall program goals and desires for creating ways that residents of owned and rented units could meet and come together. It is not clear at this point how interaction between the two populations takes place, even within the courtyard and roof terraces, as the latter are not as easily accessed by tower residents. The Selection Committee was also unclear as to what degree there was interaction between residents of the surrounding community and the building, as Via Verde's gate provides views to, but not access, to its courtyard and green spaces.

Resources

INTERVIEWS*

Competition Committee:

Lance Jay Brown, FAIA, City College of New York, New Housing
New York Steering Committee

Karen Kubey, Founding Co-Chair, New Housing New York
Steering Committee

Setha Low, Professor of Environmental Psychology and Anthropology,
City University of New York Graduate Center

Design and Development Team:

Michael Wadman, Phipps Houses

Paul Freitag, Jonathan Rose Companies

Jenny Wu, Jonathan Rose Companies

William Stein FAIA, Dattner Architects

Vanesa Alicea, Dattner Architects

Robert Garneau, Grimshaw Architects

Lee Weintraub, Lee Weintraub Landscape Architecture

Andy McNamara, Bright Power

Jonathan Braman, Bright Power

David Walsh, JP MorganChase

City Agency Staff, Community Representatives and Officials:

Cedric Loftin, Bronx Community Board 1

Wilhelm Ronda, Director, Office of the Bronx Borough President Bureau
of Planning & Development

Ted Weinstein, NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development

Eric Enderlin, NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development

Elyzabeth Gaumer, NYC Department of Housing Preservation
and Development

Marcel Van Ooyen, Executive Director GrowNYC

On-Site Staff, Program Managers and Tenants:

Max Ruperti, Phipps Houses on-site Property Manager

Gerard Lordahl, Greening Director, GrowNYC

Jackie Richardson, Manager Montefiore Medical Center at Via Verde

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ENDNOTES

¹ Press release from AIANY, 1, 17, 2007 [http://www.aiany.org/NHNY/
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*titles listed as of March 2013 site visit **web sites as of 2014 publication

Opposite page: view from 20th floor dining terrace



Lessons Learned

The five 2013 Rudy Bruner for Urban Excellence (RBA) winners present a variety of ways to foster healthier living environments and lifestyles and bring people together to help to improve lives and strengthen communities. They repurpose existing, often blighted, structures and land in established communities and incorporate creative and innovative sustainable development techniques.

The diversity of the 2013 winners reminds us that urban excellence happens at all scales with all types of projects, budgets and timelines. Important change can result from the process of developing six or 220 units of housing, an 80-seat restaurant or an 85-acre park. It can happen with an investment of less than \$1 million or nearly \$100 million, in as little as five years or over the course of more than two decades. The diversity of the projects offers a lesson about the variety of paths that can be taken to address the seemingly intractable problems facing our cities, as well as optimism about our ability to affect real and lasting change.

The five winning projects take on issues that are both familiar and new. All overcame significant hurdles, such as securing financing in hard economic times, convincing public agencies to try new approaches, and gaining the confidence and participation of skeptical communities and leaders. Each one made a significant impact in its city, changing the physical environment for the better as well as perceptions of what is possible, inspiring hope and influencing future development, practices and policies.

At the same time, the five winners highlight themes that reflect the nature of urban development in 2013. They present approaches for re-connecting communities and bringing together people within neighborhoods and cities, within common spaces and for common purposes. They address universal needs, such as creating places that support healthy living and incorporate sustainable development principles, yet each does so with a process deeply anchored in the unique context and history of its place. These projects remediate past environmental damage, provide access to healthy food and green space, and create sustainable living environments – particularly for low-income individuals and communities. These goals were deeply embedded in the philosophy and approach from the very beginning, informing the design, development and ongoing operations.

The 2013 winners tackled these issues with strong leadership, participatory design processes and entrepreneurial approaches that reflect the places and times in which they were developed. They include large-scale initiatives that merged public funding from local, regional and national resources with private investment. They also include smaller-scale projects with “can-do” attitudes and DIY (“do-it-yourself”) approaches that illustrate the potential of new approaches and ideas, and reflect popular interest in locally grown produce and handcrafted products. Several include non-profit, mission-driven “social enterprises” – revenue-generating programs that contribute to the project’s long-term financial sustainability.

Places that Bring People Together and Improve Lives

Regardless of scale and approach, all five projects improve their communities by bringing together people who might not otherwise be in contact. These “third places,” as referred to by Ray Oldenburg¹,



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Waterfront Development Corporation

From the top: Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park; Congo Street Initiative, Louisville Waterfront Park

offer warm, open and accessible gathering spaces outside of home or work that serve as places of gathering and sanctuary.

For instance, at Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park on Chicago’s West Side, diners from a variety of income levels and communities enjoy affordable, healthy, gourmet meals in a warm, inviting restaurant. Congo Street Initiative engaged homeowners, design professionals, students and volunteers from across Dallas in the design and construction/reconstruction of six houses and a one-block long street that serves as the community’s “living room”. Louisville Waterfront Park provides a green space within the city where people of all races and incomes from across the metro area converge to enjoy the attractions of the riverfront. The Steel Yard’s campus in the gritty Industrial Valley of Providence provides a place for artists and craftsmen to create, trade skills, socialize, and collaborate with local businessmen to introduce a new generation to the industrial arts. And in the densely developed blocks of the South Bronx, low-income and market-rate residents enjoy the landscaped courtyard and roof terraces, and take part in community gardening at Via Verde.

Anchoring Projects in Place

While the five 2013 winners address needs common to many urban areas – such as workforce development, access to healthy food and lifestyles, affordable housing, waterfront development and environmental remediation – each is firmly anchored in its own place. Each solution was carefully shaped in response to the unique historical, social and physical conditions of its immediate community and city.

The transparent façade of Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park and even the restaurant’s name were informed by input from neighboring



The Steel Yard (left), Congo Street Initiative

residents desiring a warm, welcoming space reminiscent of kitchens at homes where they gather with families and friends. The newly reconstructed homes on Congo Street are tailored to each family’s needs yet retain the compact footprints and materials from the original structures that imbue them with character and meaning. Public art and view corridors through the existing elevated highway in Louisville Waterfront Park reconnect the city with its origins on the Ohio River. Historic gantry cranes and recycled steel integrated into the new, “urban wild” landscape are reminiscent of The Steel Yard’s original use, and the distinctive, metal clad exterior and green roofs of Via Verde step up gradually to address the massing of low-rise commercial buildings along Third Avenue and the adjacent brick housing tower. The lesson from these efforts, as from RBA winners in the past, is that good design is contextual, responding to local conditions and history; it rarely arises from cookie-cutter or off-the-shelf solutions.

The Increased Role of Landscape

Landscape architecture and design are playing an increasingly central role in urban development, as illustrated by the 2013 award winners. Landscape design was the primary focus of two projects – Louisville Waterfront Park and The Steel Yard – and significantly contributed to the programs and identities of Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park,



Congo Street and Via Verde. Together the five projects address a diversity of urban landscape concerns common in cities today, such as reclaiming urban waterfronts, remediating contaminated land, and managing storm water runoff.

The projects demonstrate responses to important ecological issues, such as in Via Verde's integration of green roofs and the use of on- and off-site plots for small-scale urban agriculture at Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park. They reveal the critical role of landscape in the regeneration of urban communities, such as the conversion of a former industrial land along the riverfront into an expansive 85-acre park that sparked investment on adjoining land and commercial areas in Louisville, or the transformation of a contaminated industrial site in Providence into 3-1/2 acre pocket of green space that has become a magnet for the community.

The 2013 winners highlight the role of landscape at all scales in fostering innovation and new approaches to infrastructure, such as introducing storm water retention and vegetable gardens in Chicago, or the permeable pavement and landscaped swales in Dallas. Moreover, landscape design provides opportunities for urban dwellers to re-connect with nature, in a stroll across the Ohio River or through a fruit tree grove on a green roof in the Bronx.

Leadership

Leadership is central to the stories of the 2013 winners, which illustrate a diversity of styles and approaches. Great urban projects are driven by the efforts of individuals and organizations that have a vision for what is possible, are able to activate the community and enlist the support of others, and show perseverance in the face of daunting challenges.

Louisville Waterfront Park (top); The Steel Yard

An underlying theme of RBA winners over the history of the award has been that successful projects yielding real and lasting change are seldom the work of a single individual, no matter how brilliant or visionary. Rather, excellence results from collaboration and the involvement of many people and organizations that bring talent, insight and resources to the process of developing, designing, implementing and operating urban places. Successful leaders seek out participatory processes that bring the wisdom of the community to the effort and, in so doing, cultivate a sense of ownership for the place that is created. Indeed, strong leadership and participatory planning are not mutually exclusive, but require a delicate balance of direction with openness to ideas and input from the community.

The 2013 winners exhibit individual and organizational leadership that had the dedication and energy needed to create something out of nothing – particularly in financially challenging times – as well as the confidence to cede a measure of control to community process. Such is the case with Gold Medal winner Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park. Inspiration Corporation was born of the vision of its charismatic founder Lisa Nigro, and over time evolved into a sophisticated multi-million dollar nonprofit organization that retains a clear sense of mission and community. Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park was the product of the organization’s careful strategic planning process, supported by the thoughtful philanthropy of Leonard and Gabriel Goodman, which incorporated community input and involvement.

Likewise, Congo Street Initiative would not have happened without the skills, dedication and inspiration of Brent Brown, whose philosophy of community-engaged design won the trust of homeowners, city government officials, funders, and a community of people

that contributed their time and skills to make the project possible. In Louisville, David Karem’s background and skills in government enabled him to lead a process that solicited broad community input and established a multifaceted organization that has overseen the development and operations of a new city park for nearly three decades. The Steel Yard was created from the vision and determination of founders Clay Rockefeller and Nick Bauta, who recognized the need to involve people who had the skills to build and lead the organization into the future.

The leadership that led to Via Verde came from the collective vision of the New York design community, led by the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, working with city agencies. The result was two design competitions that brought together creative design firms and mission-driven developers and produced a winning design that approached affordable housing in a new way.

A key measure of the strength of an organization is its ability to survive changes in leadership, by attracting and cultivating staff and board members who can maintain its vision and advance its goals. Both Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park and The Steel Yard have experienced several leadership changes, including the withdrawal from daily operations of their founders as well as several executive director transitions. In each case the strength and capacity of the organization – including an engaged board of directors, talented staff, effective programs, financial stability, committed community partners, and strategic vision – enabled it to maintain focus and move forward. Waterfront Development Corporation has had the advantage of consistent leadership throughout several decades of development. It is yet to be seen who will replace its long-tenured president David Karem

when he decides to move on, although the finished state of the park and maturity of the organization suggests that new leadership might not require the same unique skill set that he possesses. It is uncertain what kind of future bcWORKSHOP will have without Brent Brown, given the degree to which the organization is powered by his unique personality and skills. However, it is clear that he and the organization are influencing an emerging generation of architectural designers and community organizers that are embracing “public interest” and “community-engaged” design as part of their practice.



AS220 Youth



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Sustainable Development and Environmental Considerations

Sustainability and respect for the environment emerged as prominent themes among the 2013 winners. All five projects occupy and improve previously-developed properties. Three of them, including Louisville Waterfront Park, The Steel Yard and Via Verde, entailed substantial environmental remediation. The Steel Yard has been recognized as a model for brownfield redevelopment for its creative approach to environmental capping.

Three of the five 2013 medalists – Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park, Congo Street Initiative and Via Verde – incorporate LEED-certified buildings. Since the introduction of LEED in 1998, the number of LEED-certified RBA winners has grown. In 2014 LEED certification is neither unusual nor the only benchmark for environmentally sensitive development, but the innovative solutions encompassed in the certifications of the three projects are worthy of note. Via Verde incorporated into an affordable housing project a level of sustainable features and design and construction techniques not usually found, even in market-rate developments. Likewise, Congo Street Initiative demonstrates that it is possible to achieve LEED certification while renovating existing homes for low-income homeowners on a modest budget, gaining recognition as HUD case study as a result. More importantly, design decisions in these projects were not made expressly to score LEED points. Attention to sustainability has become part of the definition of good design. The features that received LEED points were the outcome of thoughtful sustainable design processes and broader ecological concerns.

Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park was not about environmental issues, *per se*, but sustainability provided the underpinning for every aspect of

Clockwise from left: Lance Brown, Paul Freitag and Karen Kubey discuss the New Housing New York design competition; The Steel Yard founders, staff and volunteers are recognized at the award ceremony; residents participate in the planning process for Congo Street Initiative

the project – such as the very notion of bringing high quality healthy food to a community in a so-called “food desert” populated with fast food outlets and bereft of fresh produce markets. The project’s organic and permaculture gardens make a symbolic statement about locally-grown, fresh and healthy food, even though they supply a relatively small portion of the restaurant’s menu. The design for the restaurant was particularly thoughtful in its approach to sustainability, meriting its LEED Gold certification. In the reuse of an existing structure and materials, it provides a comfortable, energy-efficient space that makes use of technology such as solar thermal collectors and unusually efficient variable-speed exhaust hoods in the kitchen.

Likewise, Congo Street Initiative addressed sustainability for very practical reasons. While the five families owned their homes outright, they faced high operating expenses that stretched their tight budgets. The reconstructed, LEED-certified homes include power offsets generated by rooftop solar arrays, offering lower energy bills. Rebuilding Congo Street as Dallas’ first public green street was a response to the frequent flooding residents experienced over many years.

Green design was central to the planning and design of Via Verde, even inspiring the name. The concept for the initial competition submission, which remained largely intact through final design, used the metaphor of a plant tendril, winding up towards the sun. Working on a constrained, remediated site, the designers created a building that curled up and around, enclosing a courtyard and providing a series of rooftop gardens and green roofs that include a large number of photovoltaic panels. Additional features that contributed to the project’s LEED Gold certification included harvesting rainwater for vegetation, apartment ventilation systems that reduced the need for air conditioning, and



Congo Street Initiative bio swale (left), Via Verde rooftop community garden

facilities aimed at increasing residents’ physical activity, such as day-lit stairways, exercise rooms and bike storage areas.

The 2013 medalists tackled the environmental consequences of twentieth century industrial development, such as the brown field on which Via Verde was built and the remnants of industry on the banks of the Ohio River that became Louisville Waterfront Park. Nowhere, however, was the problem as significant and central as at The Steel Yard, where the primary design challenge was to find a way to remediate an extremely contaminated site adjacent to several regional waterways. The site’s industrial legacy had left the ground laden with toxic substances, including arsenic and high levels of lead. The challenge was to find ways to contain the contaminants, without compromising the “urban wild” character of the setting that was valued by the community. The organization’s leaders wanted to address the problem on site, rather than removing the toxic soil, believing that it would be unethical to “dump their problem on others.” Working with state agencies, The Steel Yard and its consultants discovered innovative ways to stabilize the soil and devise a variety of environmental “caps” that respond to the diverse environmental, programmatic and design needs of the site.

Healthy Living

Public health has become an issue of importance across urban America with a particular focus on the current epidemic of obesity, as exemplified by recent efforts in Oklahoma City led by Mayor Mick Cornett², a member of the 2013 RBA Selection Committee. The significance of this issue is reinforced by three of the winning projects, which addressed health issues within their respective local communities as central to their program, albeit in very different ways.

Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park was the most unique among RBA award winners, focusing on the role of nutrition by providing affordable, high quality, meals prepared with fresh ingredients in a restaurant located within a community with little access to healthy food or sit-down dining options. Meals utilize produce grown onsite and nearby and available for sale in limited quantities, demonstrating the practice of organic vegetable gardening in a community that lacks access to affordable fresh produce.

Louisville Waterfront Park supports healthy living by providing 85 acres of park land offering a variety of options for active and passive exercise for people of all ages. The Big Four Bridge supplies the added benefit of pedestrian and bicycle access across the Ohio River, eventually connecting to riverfront amenities and communities on the Indiana side when that landing is completed.

Via Verde took a broad-based and ambitious approach, becoming the first affordable housing project to integrate New York City's new *Active Design Guidelines: Promoting Physical Activity and Health in Design*.³ The development incorporates a series of design features – large and small – that have not been typical in affordable housing projects, to



Steven Gross



Clockwise from top: food preparation at Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park; Via Verde fitness center, pedestrians on the Big Four Bridge at Louisville Waterfront Park

encourage physical activities. These features include attractive, day-lit stairways; locating the laundry room on the main floor adjacent to the courtyard, rather than in the basement as is more common; an on-site health club and bicycle storage room accessible to all residents, albeit with modest fees; and a variety of interconnected and landscaped outdoor spaces. Access to healthy nutrition is provided by harvests from onsite fruit trees and vegetable gardens, supplemented with produce from local farms, along with recipes from the tenant gardening club. All of these are intended to increase activity and improve diet as a way to reduce obesity.

Scale of Approach and the DIY/Maker Movement

Among the 90 entries and five winners, the Selection Committee observed that a number of projects reflected characteristics of the “maker” or “do-it-yourself” (DIY) movement: places made possible by grass-roots, hands-on efforts of architects, artists, artisans and other community members to create physical objects and places – art, food, structures and public spaces – that improve lives and communities and bring people together.

Elements of this movement can be seen in three of the 2013 winners: Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park, with its focus on growing, making and serving good food; Congo Street Initiative, where six houses and a street were remade through a collaborative, hands-on effort of designers, homeowners and community volunteers; and The Steel Yard, where teaching and supporting the process of making artistic and useful objects is central. These projects illustrate the potential of modest, small-scale projects led by visionary “makers” to affect broader change.

This approach has been reflected in previous RBA winners such as Project Row Houses in Houston, Inner-City Arts in Los Angeles, the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, and the Artists Relocation Program in Paducah, Kentucky, among others. In 2013 the prominence of the “maker” movement was highlighted by the quantity and quality of submissions that embodied these characteristics, as well as the attention they received in the Selection Committee discussion. The Committee agreed that it was refreshing to witness the energy, enthusiasm and hope reflected in these efforts and by an emerging generation of practitioners.



Ceramics class and student fabricated bike racks at The Steel Yard



Moreover, these projects triggered a discussion about the value of different approaches given the size and scale of contemporary urban problems. Some argued that the nature of current needs – such as the tremendous shortfall of affordable housing in American cities – can only be addressed by large projects as exemplified by Via Verde. Efforts of this scale are needed and generally only possible when supported by government agencies and resources, often working in concert with private sector partnerships and investments as with Via Verde and Louisville Waterfront Park, where the regional nature of the development made multi-agency involvement necessary.

Others argued that large-scale efforts have limitations, rendering smaller, DIY and “maker” approaches particularly attractive in times of shrinking public resources. Via Verde took a great deal of time, effort and resources to realize, even with significant support from the City of New York to reduce bureaucratic roadblocks. In this era of diminished government involvement and funding, waiting for the stars of political support and funding to align can be discouraging. An antidote may be smaller, DIY efforts that are more nimble and less resource intense, and can be driven by a small group of dedicated leaders with community support, such as Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park, The Steel Yard

and Congo Street. They serve as a reminder that it is possible to affect economic, social and physical change incrementally and with modest resources. They can provide models that are inspirational to and accessible by others in different communities, and have the potential to “go viral” and achieve scale through replication. In that sense, the Selection Committee suggested that the future may be as much about “planting small seeds” as about “making big plans”.

Notes:

¹ Oldenburg, Ray (1989). *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day*. New York: Paragon House

² Cornett, Mick. *How an obese town lost a million pounds*. Filmed April 2013. TED video. http://www.ted.com/talks/mick_cornett_how_an_obese_town_lost_a_million_pounds.html

³ City of New York, *Active Design Guidelines: Promoting Physical Activity and Health in Design*, 2010. http://www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/html/design/active_design.shtml



Clockwise from top left: Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park, Congo Street Initiative, The Steel Yard, Louisville Waterfront Park, Via Verde
Photos (clockwise from top left): Steve Hall / Hedrich Blessing; buildingcommunityWORKSHOP; Annali Kiers; Waterfront Development Corporation Courtesy Hargreaves Associates, John Gollings; David Sundberg / Esto

2013 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence seeks to promote innovative thinking about the built environment and to advance conversation about making cities better. The award is dedicated to discovering and celebrating urban places distinguished by quality design and their social and economic contributions to American cities.

One Gold Medal of \$50,000 and four Silver Medals of \$10,000 are awarded each biennial. Projects must be a real place, not just a plan or a program, and be located in the continental United States. The Bruner Foundation publishes a detailed case study about each winner in order to make the creative ideas and thinking embodied in the project available to others.

This book presents the five 2013 Rudy Bruner Award winners. They include an 80-seat restaurant in Chicago, six houses and a one-block long street in Dallas, an 85-acre park in Louisville, a 3.5-acre arts campus in Providence, and a 222-unit housing development in the Bronx. All have transformed underutilized and overlooked urban spaces into vibrant places that bring people, skills, and communities together. In doing so, they challenge our assumptions about what is possible and inspire us with their optimism.

Gold Medal: Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park
Chicago, IL

Silver Medal: Congo Street Initiative
Dallas, TX

Louisville Waterfront Park
Louisville, KY

The Steel Yard
Providence, RI

Via Verde – The Green Way
Bronx, NY

For more information about the Rudy Bruner Award, including case studies about past winners, please visit us online at: www.brunerfoundation.org/rba.