

# Challenging Conventions

The 2015 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence



BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.



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Richard Wener, PhD; Jay Farbstein, FAIA, PhD; Anne-Marie Lubenau, FAIA; and Robert Shibley, FAIA, FAICP

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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*

# The 2015 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence: Introduction



## OVERVIEW

The Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) is a national design award that recognizes transformative urban places distinguished by their economic and social contributions to America's cities. Each biennial, the RBA honors five winners ranging from large, mixed-use developments to modest yet remarkable projects.

Founded in 1985 by architect Simeon Bruner, the award seeks to promote innovative thinking about the built environment and to advance conversation about making cities better by sharing the stories of some of America's most inspiring urban development projects.

The RBA is intended to be a resource for anyone interested in learning about urban development and a point of departure for local and national conversations about the role of design in cities. Fundamental to this discussion is the Bruner Foundation's belief that "good" design is design that contributes to the economic and social vitality of our cities. From early medalists Pike Place Market in Seattle (1987) and Houston's Project Row



Clockwise from top left: Selection Committee discussion, 2015 applications, touring Uptown District and Falls Park, and conducting a site visit interview.

Houses (1997) to Brooklyn Bridge Park (2001) and the 2015 finalists, RBA winners illustrate the power of design to effect positive change above and beyond the resulting physical place and remind us of the complexity of urban placemaking. Their stories are compelling and provocative, offering inspiration and food for thought for students and practitioners alike.

All of our RBA publications, case studies, and “lessons learned” chapters are available online at [www.rudybruneraward.org](http://www.rudybruneraward.org). We encourage you to read on, learn, and join the conversation about how we can all make cities better.

### *The RBA Process*

Each cycle of the RBA prompts a conversation about urban excellence in America. By design, the conversation begins anew every two years with another call for entries, set of submissions, and selection committee charged with choosing five winners.

To be eligible, projects must be urban, built (not just a plan or a program), in operation long enough to demonstrate impact, and located within the continental United States. The 2015 RBA submissions included 55 applications from 40 communities in 26 states and the District of Columbia. Projects ranged in scale from development budgets of \$20,000 to more than \$500 million.

The winners are chosen by a six-member selection committee newly comprised each cycle to include a mayor and a participant from a prior RBA winner along with other experts in urban design and planning, development and financing, and community engagement.

The committee meets twice: once to review and discuss all of the applications and select five finalists, and again to determine the gold and silver medalists. In between, a team from the Bruner Foundation visits each finalist, spending two to three days touring the site, taking photographs, and



“THE BRUNER WAY OF JUDGING  
GIVES DESIGN WORK THE MEANING,  
DIGNITY, IMPORTANCE, AND  
RELEVANCE TO THE COMMUNITY  
THAT IT DESERVES.”

— Susan Szenasy, 2013 Selection Committee\*

interviewing people involved in the project to gather additional information. One gold medal and four silver medals are awarded, with the gold medalist receiving a \$50,000 cash prize and each silver medalist receiving \$10,000.

Once the medalists are determined, the Bruner Foundation works with the winners to plan events that celebrate the medalists and reflect the unique character and culture of each place. Public programming such as tours and panel discussions provide opportunities to highlight the stories of the winners and their impact in the community and spur dialogue about future planning and development.

After the awards are made, the research and the selection committee discussions are integrated into detailed case studies and a summary of lessons learned that are available to others interested in urban design and development. The case studies are then posted online on the RBA website and published in a book by the Bruner Foundation.

*\*Szenasy, Susan M. “Food for Thought: Two competitions underscore the value of research, innovation, and collaboration.” Metropolis Magazine. June 2013. <http://www.metropolismag.com/June-2013/Food-for-Thought/>.*



Clockwise from top: Falls Park award ceremony, Uptown District panel discussion, Falls Park public program, Quixote Village award presentation.

Clockwise from top: City of Greenville, Case Western Reserve University, City of Greenville, Panza

# THE RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE

## Eligibility

Built, urban projects located within the continental United States are eligible to apply.

## Selection Committee

A new six-member committee is assembled for each biennial award cycle, including a mayor and a participant from a prior winning project.



**\$50,000**  
Gold Medal Winner



**\$10,000**  
Silver Medal Winners

## APPLICATION

The application provides an understanding of the project's design, development, and impact, including:

- Project data, overview, and description.
- Perspective forms completed by people involved in the project and community.
- Photographs and other visuals.
- Award use letter (opened after medalists are selected).

## SELECTION PROCESS

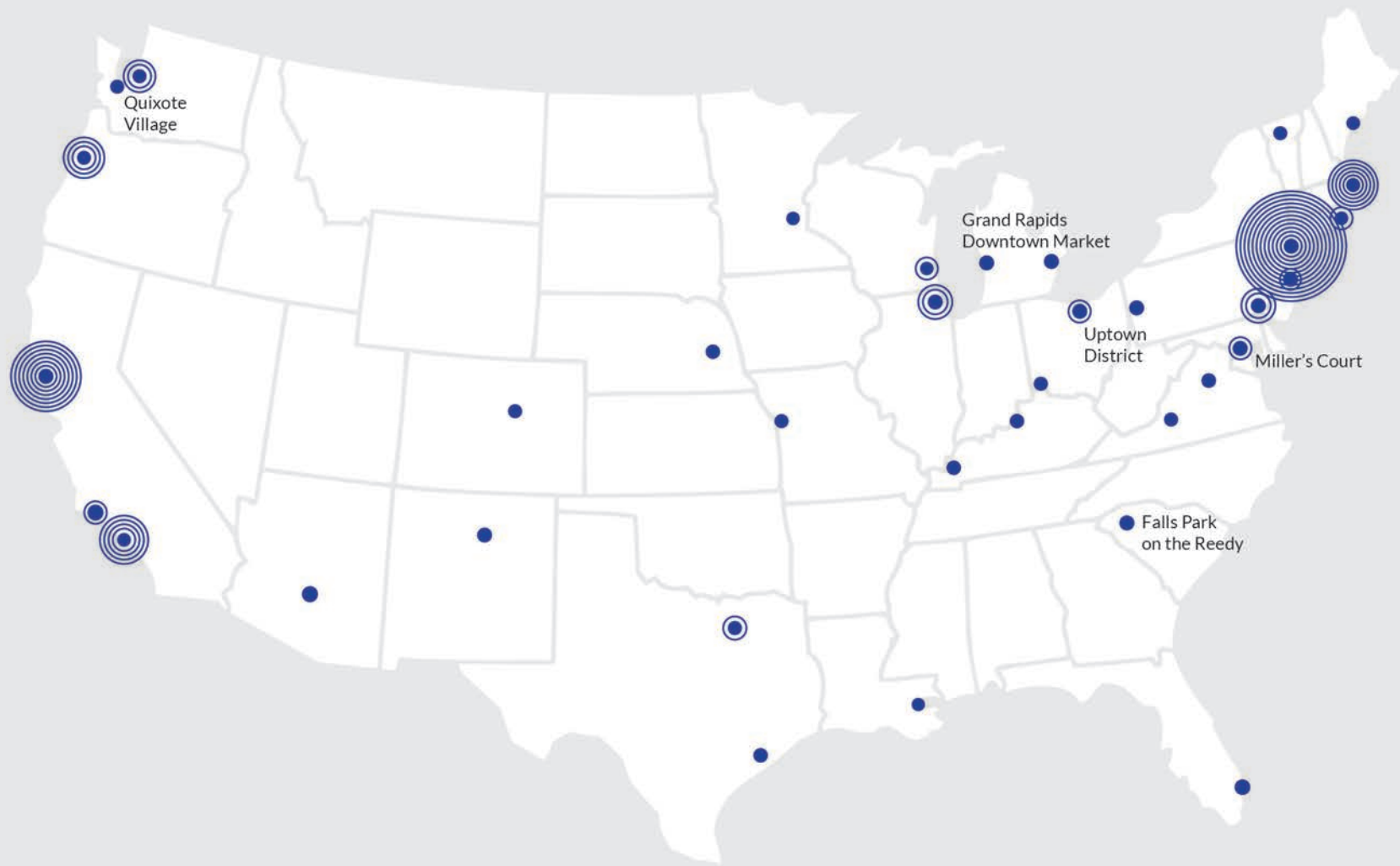
Winners are determined by the Selection Committee through a three-step selection process:

- Selection Committee reviews and discusses applications and selects five finalists.
- Bruner Foundation conducts site visits to collect additional information.
- Selection Committee reviews and discusses site visit findings and determines the medalists.

## AWARD & CASE STUDIES

The winners and their stories are documented and shared through presentations and publications:

- On-site award presentations that showcase and celebrate the winners.
- Events, presentations, and tours that highlight the stories of the winners and their impact.
- Detailed case studies with lessons learned from the medalists.



Together the 78 RBA winners reflect a diversity of scale and approaches and the evolution of cities and urban development in America.

## THE 2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD

Each round of medalists yields fresh ideas and perspectives that challenge our assumptions and increase our understanding of how to make great urban places. The 2015 RBA winners—Miller’s Court in Baltimore, Maryland; Falls Park on the Reedy in Greenville, South Carolina; Grand Rapids Downtown Market in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Quixote Village in Olympia, Washington; and Uptown District in Cleveland, Ohio—tackle big issues such as the quality of urban education, homelessness and public health, supporting local agriculture and entrepreneurship, and regenerating communities. As the 2015 Selection Committee observed, the medalists were ambitious and courageous, challenging conventional practices and wisdom, rediscovering and reclaiming existing assets and creating new ones in the process. Each winner engaged people and institutions in the community, creating collective buy-in and ownership and strengthening the city’s identity and pride. They also persevered in the face of challenges and setbacks, staying focused on their goals and true to their values.

The 2015 winners also highlight and reinforce common threads among nearly three decades of RBA winners. They demonstrate the capacity of design to transform lives and communities. They connect people and communities with each other and with resources and remind us of the importance of vision and leadership, collaborative partnerships, and engagement and capacity building. At the same time, each project is anchored in its own time and place and is a unique response to the history, culture, and economic and social conditions of its city. The winners also highlight increasingly common 21st-century urban themes that are emerging with the renewed interest in, investment in, and growth of cities. These include concerns about economic and social equity, sustainability and resilience, public infrastructure, balancing open space with density, and financing urban development. Together all 78 winners reflect a remarkable diversity of scale and approaches and the fascinating evolution of cities and urban development in America.

### *Gold Medalist:*

#### **Miller’s Court**

Baltimore, Maryland

A supportive living and working environment for school teachers and education-related nonprofits.

### *Silver Medalists:*

#### **Falls Park on the Reedy**

Greenville, South Carolina

Transformation of a forgotten waterfall and river valley into an urban oasis and centerpiece for the city.

#### **Grand Rapids Downtown Market**

Grand Rapids, Michigan

A new public market and gathering space promoting local food, education, and entrepreneurship.

#### **Quixote Village**

Olympia, Washington

A community of tiny cottages developed for—and, in part, by—people who were homeless.

#### **Uptown District**

Cleveland, Ohio

The collaborative redevelopment of a mixed-use urban corridor linking arts, education, and health care institutions and adjoining communities.





Clockwise from top left: *Miller's Court, Falls Park on the Reedy, Grand Rapids Downtown Market, Quixote Village, Uptown District.*

Clockwise from top left: Billy Michels, Rosales + Partners, Mike Buck, Panza, Rlen Van Rijnhoven

### 2015 SELECTION COMMITTEE:

Titles and positions of committee members were effective as of May 2015.

**Mark Stodola**  
Mayor  
City of Little Rock  
Little Rock, Arkansas

**Rebecca L. Flora, AICP, LEED BD+C, LEED ND**  
Sustainable Communities Practice Leader  
Ecology & Environment Inc.  
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**Larry Kearns, FAIA, CSI, LEED AP**  
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**James Stockard**  
Lecturer in Housing  
Harvard Graduate School of Design  
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*\*Architect of 2013 Gold Medalist Inspiration Kitchens—Garfield Park.*



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The 2015 RBA selection process was facilitated by Richard 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 lessons learned, and the 2015 publication. The case studies were written by Anne-Marie Lubenau, Jay Farbstein, Robert Shibley, and Richard Wener. Editorial support and copy editing was provided by Elizabeth Chesla.

**Anne-Marie Lubenau, FAIA**, is the director of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. She focuses on expanding the role of architects in shaping cities by engaging people in the process of design and increasing understanding about the built environment and its impact on our lives.

**Jay Farbstein, FAIA, PhD**, leads a national consulting practice based in Los Angeles that specializes in helping public sector clients develop and document their requirements for building projects and prepare post-occupancy evaluations after projects are completed.

**Robert Shibley, FAIA, FAICP**, is professor and dean at the School of Architecture and Planning at the University at Buffalo, the State University of New York. He also serves as the university campus architect and is a senior fellow of the University at Buffalo Regional Institute focused on the study and critical practice of public policy, urban planning, and design.

**Richard Wener, PhD**, is an environmental psychologist and professor in the Department of Technology, Culture, and Society at the Tandon School of Engineering of New York University, where he co-directs the Sustainable Urban Environments program and is a faculty affiliate of the Rutgers University Center for Green Building.

**Elizabeth Chesla, MA**, helps individuals and organizations around the globe communicate clearly and effectively in both print and online media. She has over 20 years of experience writing, editing, and teaching English and professional communication.

## ABOUT THE BRUNER FOUNDATION

Established in 1963 by Rudy and Martha Bruner, the Bruner Foundation seeks to inspire meaningful social change. Building collaborative partnerships, leveraging resources, and tackling complex social issues are common threads in the foundation's 50-year history. The foundation has placed priority on assisting neglected and disenfranchised segments of society and has influenced national policy in health care delivery, Holocaust studies, education, and nonprofit evaluation methodologies and increased understanding of the urban built environment.

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"The 2015 medalists are ambitious and courageous,  
challenging conventional practices and wisdom,  
rediscovering and reclaiming existing assets and creating  
new ones in the process."

*—2015 Selection Committee*

# Lessons Learned

We are in the midst of an urban renaissance. Many American cities are experiencing new growth and development as residents and businesses return to the urban core, spurring new planning and investment. Yet many urban centers continue to face significant problems including poverty, lack of affordable housing and access to healthy food, underperforming schools, growing concerns about public health, and increasing economic and social disparity.

For nearly three decades, Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence (RBA) winners have illustrated the capacity of design to address urban challenges like these and create transformative physical, social, economic, and environmental change. They achieve this by drawing upon the inherent character and culture of their communities, often while addressing themes such as the importance of nature, the power of art, or the communal value of food, to transform urban areas. Cities and urban development evolve, of course—today’s integration of environmental sustainability in design could not have been dreamed of when the first RBA medal was awarded in 1987—but the need for creativity and innovation is enduring.

Just as enduring are the themes and lessons that have emerged from RBA winners over the years. Yet each cycle of the RBA provides fresh insight and

perspectives on recurring themes and highlights new ones that emerge from the challenges and opportunities facing contemporary American cities. This chapter reflects upon the lessons learned from the 2015 winners. They are gleaned from extensive discussions with the 2015 Selection Committee and countless conversations and observations during the site visits. These reflections expand our understanding of urban excellence, particularly as it has evolved over the history of the RBA, and reinforce the purpose of the RBA: to recognize excellence in urban design, celebrate the ways in which it transforms our cities, and use the stories of the winning projects as opportunities to educate and inspire.

The 2015 medalists reinforce several themes that have emerged among RBA winners over the years, including:

- the nature of placemaking and the necessity of anchoring projects in their place;
- leadership that offers energy, vision, and an inclusive approach;
- the use of collaborative partnerships and participatory processes;
- the empowerment and growth of capacity of people and organizations; and
- ways to leverage the power of design to affect transformative change.

They also share several distinct characteristics that, while perhaps not unique to this cycle, were notable among the 2015 winners and resonated with the Selection Committee. The 2015 medalists:

- addressed critical social, economic, and environmental issues facing many American cities;
- displayed remarkable courage and perseverance in light of substantial challenges; and
- demonstrated significant aspiration and ambition, challenging the conventional and tackling big problems in novel ways.



## PROCESS AND CONTEXT MATTER

While successful urban projects can serve as models for other cities, they are more a starting point for inspiration than a template to follow. Adopting another city's project whole cloth, while a tempting way to shortcut the typically long and arduous but necessary design process, rarely works. Process matters and context is critical.

Placemaking that brings people together and embraces the distinctive history and characteristics of a city, neighborhood, or street has always been a hallmark of urban success stories. It was an important part of the story of Pike Place Market in Seattle, the first RBA gold medalist, as it has been for other winners over the years. The development process for each of our 2015 winners was thoughtful and inclusive, each yielding a uniquely local solution to common urban challenges.

This deeply local and contextual approach to placemaking is embodied in the “find your falls” counsel that leaders from the city of Greenville, home of 2015 Silver Medalist Falls Park on the Reedy, share with those who come to Greenville to learn how they created a vibrant, green city center. The advice to “find your falls” highlights the need to root projects in their local context, informed and inspired by the city's unique history and its current economic, physical, and social conditions. Successful placemaking begins with identifying what is unique about each place and using that as the basis for crafting effective local solutions.

Interestingly, unlike most RBA cycles, none of this year's winners are in major urban centers such as Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, New York, or San Francisco. Only once before have none of those cities been represented in a group of finalists. Instead, the 2015 winners are located in smaller cities within larger, growing regions—like Grand Rapids, Greenville, and Olympia—and in older legacy cities—former industrial centers like Baltimore and Cleveland—that are slowly recovering from decades of



*Falls Park on the Reedy*

decline. Although the circumstances and conditions are different, each of these cities is in the process of redefining its identity in the midst of evolution and change.

Although the issues and responses among the 2015 RBA winners couldn't be more different, the process of change was anchored in the culture and history of each specific time and place and initiated by visionary leadership from within the community. Once again, these leaders don't fit a single description, but rather share a deep passion and commitment to their city, a desire to help others and improve their community, and an understanding that broad collaboration and engagement are critical to success.

In Baltimore, a small, mission-driven private development company brought Miller's Court into being while in Grand Rapids, a coalition of business, civic, and philanthropic leaders together created a new public market. Institutional leadership in Cleveland transformed Uptown District while a garden

club, business leaders, and city officials worked together to create Falls Park in Greenville. And in Olympia, visionary leaders included people in the social sphere with the least political power—the homeless—who, with the support of nonprofit organizations, created a permanent housing solution.

### ADDRESSING CRITICAL ISSUES

The 2015 winners address big challenges facing many American cities, such as the quality of public education, housing the homeless, improving public health through access to healthy food and green space, and reconnecting and regenerating urban communities. They illustrate that it's possible to tackle big problems with a variety of budgets and scales, ranging from a single housing development constructed for \$3 million to a multi-use project spanning a full city block and costing more than \$200 million.

The quality of public education is, arguably, the foundation of a successful and democratic society. Public schools, however, have suffered in many cities, especially those that have felt the pinch of constricted revenues. Improving education is not usually thought of as a problem for urban designers, as these systems depend largely on the efforts of school districts, teachers, and parents, often working in challenging circumstances. While great places can't create good teachers and schools, they can support them by building the capacity of the people and organizations that are part of the system. In Baltimore, leadership for this effort came from the private sector. Donald and Thibault Manekin and their partners at Seawall Development Company realized that attracting and retaining good teachers was critical to the health of the public school system. Working closely with the city, community, and nonprofit groups, they developed Miller's Court to provide an affordable, supportive, and safe place for teachers to live along with office space for educational nonprofits. Seawall works hard to foster connections, both within the building and with surrounding neighborhood residents and businesses. Over time, this investment has paid off,



*Teach for America corps member*

Nicholas Grimer/Teach for America

with teachers staying on, falling in love with the city, and buying homes nearby in Remington. While it is too soon to evaluate the long-term impact on education, Teach for America was sufficiently impressed with the success of Miller's Court that it has moved to replicate the effort in cities across the country.

In so many American cities, homelessness continues to be a real and visible problem. Solutions that are both workable and affordable have been elusive, partly because the problem is so multifaceted; poverty, mental health, employment, and housing resource opportunities are among the many factors that need to be addressed. Quixote Village in Olympia hasn't solved the problem of homelessness, but it does offer a new model for providing inexpensive permanent housing in a supportive community for individuals willing to commit to refraining from the use of alcohol and illegal substances. The project succeeds, in part, by adapting the "tiny house" model with its inherent sustainability and cost benefits. Additionally,



*Miller's Court*

it creates a supportive community by arranging the private cottages around a central open area and providing shared gathering space and cooking and laundry facilities in the community building.

Increasingly, food systems and public health are also becoming major concerns in many urban areas. Grand Rapids Downtown Market addresses these issues by offering access to fresh local food, educational opportunities, and support for local food entrepreneurs in a new public market and civic gathering space that has become the pride of the community.

In a similar recognition of how attention to local natural resources can benefit the health of the community, Greenville reversed decades of neglect, cleaned up industrial pollution, and reclaimed the waterfall on the Reedy River. Falls Park reconnects the city to its historic roots by restoring the watershed, providing valuable green space in the heart of the urban core, and redefining the identity of the city in the process. Just as

important, the park has spurred revitalization of the downtown, creating an outdoor "living room" that connects surrounding communities and serves as a centerpiece for the city.

Finally, Uptown District in Cleveland illustrates how institutional collaboration and shared risk can knit together fragmented urban neighborhoods, especially in cities lacking a strong real estate market and public resources. Here, a large university, a long-standing community foundation, and several other partners played pivotal leadership roles in shaping, financing, and supporting multiple development projects and related initiatives that revitalized the district and connected it with surrounding neighborhoods.

## **COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE**

All of the 2015 winners demonstrated courage in tackling big issues as well as perseverance and patience, taking the long view and working steadily for years and, in some cases, decades. In the process, they all overcame numerous development challenges exacerbated by the uncertain economic times. Their success can inspire others to likewise address major issues and stay the course to see their projects through.

Quixote Village had an audacious beginning: A group of homeless people, brought together by local community organizers and the creation of the Poor People's Union, responded to a series of anti-homeless ordinances by creating a "tent-in." When the city moved to evict them, local nonprofits—mostly from Olympia's faith-based community—stepped up and offered to host the tent community. Over the next seven years, "Camp Quixote" moved from one host to another—more than 20 times in total—as volunteers in the community collaborated with state and local agencies to secure a site and funding and negotiate approvals and permitting for a permanent home. All the while the people in tents governed their own community, determining their own rules, disciplinary procedures, and activities.





Quixote Village

In Greenville, more than 100 years of incremental planning initiatives provided the foundation for the creation of Falls Park on the Reedy. The idea for Falls Park was sparked by a planning study commissioned by the city in the early twentieth century. It was revived 60 years later by local garden club members who, with support from the city and community partners, led the cleanup of the Reedy River valley and commissioned a study that created the initial vision for the park. In the following decades, the plan was refined and expanded to include removal of a “perfectly good” vehicular bridge that obscured the falls. Removing urban infrastructure is always controversial and politically risky, yet the vision for the park allowed its proponents to successfully advocate for removal of the bridge, and the elegant pedestrian bridge now in its place is closely associated with the city’s identity.

Perseverance was also evident in Michigan, where decades of careful investment by civic leaders in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids led to the development of a new market that anchors one end of the growing city and required a last-minute injection of additional funding after the loss of anticipated financing. In Cleveland, Uptown District traces its roots to more than 50 years of collaboration among over 30 cultural, educational, and not-for-profit institutions and more than a decade of patient land banking by Case Western Reserve University. In Baltimore, the developers of Miller’s Court leveraged personal experience and relationships cultivated over decades and sought input from the community to inform the creation of an innovative supportive housing model.

### ASPIRATION AND INNOVATION IN CRAFTING NOVEL SOLUTIONS

Bold change and innovation require ambition to come to fruition. All of the 2015 medalists reflect the aspiration of their respective communities to challenge conventional wisdom and aim high, regardless of their size and resources, to develop the best possible solutions. They illustrate how

design excellence takes into consideration not only the physical qualities of a development—such as how it accommodates the needs of those who live in, work at, or use the site and how it responds to and fits into the context of the surrounding community—but also the thoughtfulness and inclusiveness of the process that was used to get there. The 2015 winners sought out creative planners and designers locally and worldwide to develop exciting, distinctive, and responsive settings.

From the beginning, the vision for Cleveland's Uptown District was ambitious. It was intended to be different—to incorporate a mix of uses and housing types, to push the upper end of the market for housing even as it integrated student apartments, and to incorporate forward thinking "signature architecture." Some of the world's best-known designers were engaged over more than a decade of planning, including Frank Gehry, Laurie Olin, James Corner, Alex Krieger, Stanley Saitowitz, and Farshid Moussavi. The design approach to the new buildings lining Euclid Avenue resulted in a wholly new, visually distinctive contemporary urban fabric within the block.

Institutional leadership and collaboration was instrumental, with the Cleveland Foundation providing critical advocacy and funding for design and planning, not only for Uptown District but also for new public transit facilities and investments in surrounding neighborhood organizations to ensure that new development would benefit existing residents. Led by Case Western Reserve University and a broad coalition of important cultural institutions, the project remade and reinvigorated an urban neighborhood, linking the university and adjoining communities and providing a new gathering place for residents and visitors.

The story of Grand Rapids Downtown Market is firmly rooted in the progressive culture of this Midwest city, which strives "to be a city of the future, not the past" and takes pride in its tradition of civic engagement, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and innovation. It reflects the vision and



*Uptown District*

values of its civic leaders who have collectively, through powerful public-private partnerships, made substantial investment in the downtown core over more than three decades to ensure that it remains a vital urban center. Each investment, including the market, is the product of extensive research, community input, and planning that informs the design and signals the aspirations of the community, including the use of high-quality, durable materials.

Like the Downtown Market, Falls Park is the result of years of investment in research and planning by civic leaders who sought the best for Greenville. These efforts included national and international site visits to explore potential models for riverfront parks and downtown redevelopment. As with Uptown District, the community sought out leading designers such as Rosales + Partners, Sasaki Associates, and Santiago Calatrava to create a distinctive city space.

In seeking input and inspiration from leading design talent, other successful city projects, and members of their own community, the developers of these projects generated uniquely local solutions to problems in their communities, just as the developers of Miller's Court and Quixote Village generated new models for workforce housing and housing for the homeless.

### **BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES**

Like other RBA winners over the decades, the 2015 medalists are also distinguished by their vision to create places that strengthen the capacity of people to affect change in their lives and communities and form broad coalitions and collaborations that increase impact. Truly transformative placemaking entails a long-term commitment to a place and to processes that involve and engage the community in crafting solutions. It creates a sense of ownership that is one of the most important outcomes of the process and yields benefits to the community that go well beyond the physical space. These kinds of participatory processes have been inherent to RBA winning projects throughout the years. They all demonstrate participation by and empowerment of people in the community, many of whom otherwise have typically had little input into the governing and design processes that affect their lives.

Indeed, the 2015 winners remind us of the importance of creating places that bring people together. They connect people with each other and the community and provide access to resources, such as amenities and supportive services, that enhance quality of life; build the capacity of individuals and the community; and contribute to the city's overall diversity and vitality.

Ultimately, urban excellence is not judged by how a place looks, feels, and functions at any one fixed point in time. Great places adapt to evolving

conditions—economic, political, social, and environmental—and integrate into the fabric of their communities. To do so, their governing organizations and programs must be able to learn and respond to change. They must evaluate their own effectiveness, seek out new ideas and information, encourage broad participation, and support the development of human and social capital, providing the people they serve with the knowledge and skills to effect change. This is the draw of great urban places, which take root in communities, each with their own unique present and past, and use design to connect people to each other, to their own power, and to the potential of society as a whole.



*Grand Rapids Downtown Market*

Grand Rapids Downtown Market

These case studies share the remarkable stories of the five 2015 RBA medalists. They illustrate the roles of aspiration and leadership, courage and perseverance, and thoughtful attention to process and place in shaping urban development and demonstrate the power of visionary, participatory design to offer innovative solutions to critical issues facing cities today. The 2015 medalists, like other RBA winners over the years, offer ideas and inspiration, lessons to learn from, and food for thought for future urban placemaking.



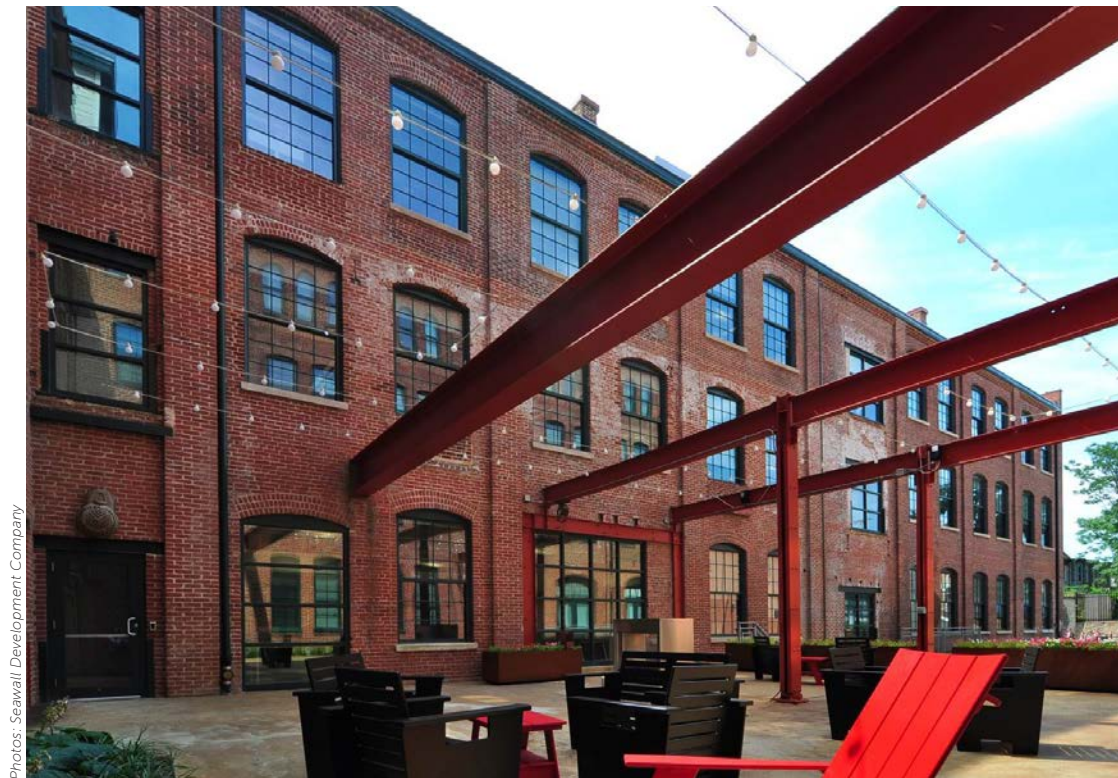




Gold Medal Winner

## Miller's Court Baltimore, Maryland

A supportive living and working environment for  
school teachers and education-related nonprofits



Photos: Seawall Development Company







## Overview

Submitted by: Enterprise Community Investment, Inc.

Completed: 2009

Total Development Cost: \$21.1 million

Miller's Court in Baltimore, Maryland seeks to build a safe, welcoming community for teachers and a home for education-focused nonprofits in a way that strengthens the neighborhood and local economy. The project was conceived and developed by Seawall Development Company, a small, socially-minded, mission-oriented business founded by Donald and Thibault Manekin. Miller's Court is Seawall's response to the challenges facing the Baltimore school system and professionals entering the field through programs like Teach for America.

Seawall, along with Marks, Thomas Architects, pursued a collaborative, integrative design approach to Miller's Court that included focus group meetings with teachers and local residents to inform the building's program and development processes. The resulting LEED Gold certified complex includes 40 rental apartments and 30,000 square feet of office space and shared meeting rooms with contemporary, loft-like interiors. A teacher resource center provides copiers for printing class materials and includes a lending library. Charmington's, a cooperatively owned independent café



**"MILLER'S COURT OFFERS A COMPELLING, INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF EDUCATION. IT BUILDS ECONOMIC VALUE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL BY CONNECTING TEACHERS AND NONPROFITS AND IMPROVING THE NEIGHBORHOOD."** *—2015 Selection Committee*

in the building, has become a popular gathering spot for teachers, tenants, and the community, hosting a visit from President Obama in February 2015 which highlighted the company's living wage policy.

Interaction is a key component of life and work in Miller's Court. The presence of Teach for America and other education, youth, and community service nonprofit tenants creates ongoing opportunities for information sharing, collaboration, and networking. Monthly brown bag lunches featuring guest speakers help promote connections among the nonprofits and with the broader community. The complex's central, landscaped courtyard offers outdoor space for informal gatherings and community events. Public areas feature artwork made by students from the nearby Maryland Institute College of Art with materials salvaged during the construction process.

The \$21.1 million Miller's Court development was financed with a combination of Historic Preservation and New Market Tax Credits, funding from Enterprise Community Investment, Inc. (which submitted the application for the Rudy Bruner Award) and SunTrust Bank, and low-interest loans from the City of Baltimore and State of Maryland. A \$300-\$600 discount on the monthly rental rate for apartments is offered to teaching professionals.

The award-winning project has generated additional investment in the surrounding community of Remington as well as interest from other cities. At the urging of several building residents, Seawall purchased and renovated 30 vacant neighboring houses to create Miller's Square. Baltimore public school teachers and police officers were eligible for \$25,000 grants toward purchase of these homes, several of which are now owned by former Miller's Court residents. The company also converted a former tire shop

across the street from Miller's Court into a home for two nonprofit theater organizations and a butcher shop and restaurant offering locally sourced meat and food products. Seawall has also developed Union Mill, a local initiative similar to Miller's Court, and is currently working with Enterprise and other partners to extend its "Center for Educational Excellence" community-building model to 10 other cities.

Miller's Court offers a compelling, innovative approach to addressing the quality of education, a critical issue for American cities. More than a building, it builds economic value and social capital by connecting teachers and nonprofits and improving the surrounding neighborhood by encouraging investment and development. The project illustrates the value of collaborative partnerships that tap into local and federal programs and resources and demonstrates that a for-profit business can have a significant social impact.

Seawall Development Company (left), Nicholas Griner







MILLERSQUARE.COM

2601



## Project at a Glance

- The renovation of an abandoned, historic manufacturing building into a supportive living and working environment for school teachers and education-related nonprofit organizations.
- Forty apartments, with discounts for teachers and rent-restricted units for low-income households.
- Shared resident amenities including a fitness center, lounge, outdoor courtyard, and teacher resource center.
- Office space totaling 30,000 square feet, with 11 tenants and 5,000 square feet of shared conference and training rooms.
- Charmington's, a neighborhood café.
- On-site property management with active social programs and events.







## Project Goals

- Create high-quality, affordable housing for teachers in a supportive community environment, improving teacher retention and ultimately benefiting Baltimore's schoolchildren.
- Create shared nonprofit office space, providing opportunities for growth and collaboration.
- Spark revitalization in the surrounding Remington neighborhood, which experienced decades of high vacancy and disinvestment and had a reputation as a crime-ridden area.
- Generate economic activity, increase tax revenues, and create new jobs in a low-income community.

## Chronology

**1661**

David Jones settles land known today as the Inner Harbor, where the Patapsco and Jones Falls Rivers meet the Chesapeake Bay.

**1729**

The City of Baltimore is founded.

**1874-1895**

H.F. Miller & Son Company erects a manufacturing facility at 2601 N. Howard St.

**1901**

H.F. Miller & Son merges with the American Can Company.

**1950**

Baltimore's population peaks at 950,000.

**1953**

Production ceases at 2601 N. Howard St., which is then leased as industrial/flex space.

**1992**

The last tenant at 2601 N. Howard St. moves out, leaving the building vacant.

1700

1800

1900

2000

**1800s**

Industry and manufacturing grow along the Jones Falls Valley.

**1880s-1950**

Manufacturing grows, fueling construction and employment in the city.

**1950s-1990s**

Manufacturing in Baltimore declines, leading to loss of businesses and population.

**1946**

Manekin, LLC is established as a family brokerage business in Baltimore.

**1989**

Teach for America, a national program that recruits recent college graduates to teach in low-income communities, is founded.

**2000**

Donald Manekin retires from Manekin, LLC after serving as Senior Vice President and Partner for 25 years.

US Congress establishes Federal New Market Tax Credits program.

**2000-2002**

Donald Manekin serves as Interim Chief Operating Officer of Baltimore City Public Schools.

**2007**

JANUARY: Seawall Development Company, LLC is established by Donald and Thibault Manekin to repurpose obsolete buildings in Baltimore.

JULY: Seawall acquires 2601 N. Howard St. to develop Miller's Court.

**2008**

Seawall closes on financing for Miller's Court in the midst of a challenging economic climate and construction begins.

**2010**

Charmington's café opens in Miller's Court.

**2012**

All of the available rehabilitated houses that comprise Miller's Square in Remington sell out in one day.

**2015**

President Obama visits Charmington's. Miller's Court is refinanced.

**2002**

Donald Manekin approaches Teach for America with concept for creating supportive housing for teachers.

**2007-2008**

Marks, Thomas Architects and Seawall hold focus group meetings with local teachers.

**2009**

Miller's Court opens its doors, 100% preleased.

**2011**

Union Mill, Seawall's first adaptation of the Miller's Court model, opens in nearby Hampden neighborhood.

Teach for America approaches Seawall about replicating the Miller's Court concept in other cities while Miller's Court residents approach the Manekins about renovating vacant homes in the neighborhood.

**2014**

Former tire shop across from Miller's Court, renovated by Seawall, reopens as an arts and food destination.

Oxford Mills, a project modeled on Miller's Court and developed by Seawall in partnership with D3 Development, opens in Philadelphia.

Seawall's Remington Row retail and residential development receives master plan approval.

Seawall acquires an 11-acre proposed Walmart site in Remington.

Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. completes Miller's Court Impact Case Study.





## Project Description

### INTRODUCTION

Miller's Court is the story of how Seawall Development Company, a small, mission-based, visionary developer, created an innovative development model to address one of our country's most pressing challenges: the quality of urban public education. They did so by renovating a historic, abandoned, and blighted building into supportive housing for teachers and collaborative office space for educational nonprofits. The Seawall team engaged teachers and the community in a thoughtful planning process that informed the building design, activated neighborhood organizations, and inspired subsequent investment in the neighborhood. The project effectively leveraged federal financing tools, including Historic Preservation and New Market Tax Credits (federal programs that promote preservation of historic buildings and private investment in low-income communities) as well as state and local programs, to fund a total of \$21.1 million in development. In the process, a community eyesore was transformed into a symbol of renewed interest and investment in Remington, one of Baltimore's most socially and economically diverse neighborhoods. Miller's Court has attracted national interest as a model for workforce housing and has already been successfully replicated elsewhere in Baltimore and in Philadelphia.



## CONTEXT

### *Baltimore*

Like other older American cities that have struggled with loss of industry, population decline, white flight, and urban blight over the second half of the last century, Baltimore is enjoying a modest renaissance as its historic character, neighborhoods, and relatively low cost of living attract a new generation of urban residents. In 2013, the city's population increased 3% to 622,104, ending decades of population loss since its peak of 950,000 in 1950. In contrast to the city's population decline, the Baltimore Metropolitan Area has grown steadily to approximately 2.7 million residents in 2010, making it the twentieth largest in the country.

Founded in 1729, the city of Baltimore has long been a center for manufacturing and national and international trade that initially centered on the city's strategic port and shipbuilding. Over time it expanded inland with development of mills along the Jones Falls River in the eighteenth century, the establishment of the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road Company (B&O)—the nation's first common carrier—in 1828, and the introduction of steel manufacturing in the late nineteenth century.

Following the decline in manufacturing between 1950 and 1995, Baltimore shifted to a service-oriented economy with education, health care, and financial and professional services as the key industries. Johns Hopkins Hospital, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland Health System were the city's top three employers in 2015. The city is also home to several Fortune 500 and 1,000 companies including T. Rowe Price and Black+Decker.

Baltimore has been the site of several major urban renewal and development projects, including the Charles Center in 1958, Harborplace in 1980, and Oriole Park at Camden Yards, one of the first "retro" major league ballparks, completed in 1992. In the early 1980s, Baltimore received national attention

for its innovative Dollar Home Program, which offered low-interest purchase and renovation loans for houses the city had acquired for a highway that was never completed, transforming blocks of blighted, vacant structures into some of Baltimore's most charming neighborhoods.

Often referred to as a "city of neighborhoods" and "Charm City," Baltimore continues to evolve. It is home to a growing population of Hispanics and millennials. Locals refer to the role of the popular HBO crime drama series *The Wire* (2002-2008)—which was set and produced in and around Baltimore and highlighted the city's gritty character and neighborhoods—in generating a sense of civic awareness and pride in the city's post-industrial architecture, culture, and history.

In early 2015, there was a sense of growing optimism and energy in the city. Well into her first full term, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake was focused on growing the city, improving public safety and education, and strengthening



A view of Baltimore's Inner Harbor in 1909.

Library of Congress

neighborhoods. As part of that agenda, Deputy Commissioner of Code Enforcement Michael Braverman implemented Vacants to Value, a new program designed to encourage neighborhood investment by using data mapping and code enforcement to encourage property owners who are not maintaining their buildings to improve them or sell. A variety of programs offered by the city, employers, and local foundations encourage homeownership investment by offering incentives for the purchase and improvement of houses, such as Live Near Your Work grants of \$2,000 and more that can be applied towards down payment and closing costs. Data tracked by city staff indicates that these programs are succeeding in attracting new investment in Baltimore neighborhoods, often in places where little has occurred in decades, and that the local real estate market is beginning to improve with increased demand and rising prices.

### *Central Baltimore*

Miller's Court sits in the heart of what's referred to as Central Baltimore, at the intersection of North Howard and 26th Streets, approximately two miles north of downtown Baltimore and the Inner Harbor. The area is comprised of 11 neighborhoods and includes the Baltimore Development Corporation Enterprise Zone, the Charles Street National Scenic Byway, the Station North Arts and Entertainment District, six historic districts, two community benefits districts (districts in which property owners pay a tax surcharge that funds supplemental services such as sanitation and safety), and numerous community-based organizations. In its 2013 "Projects, Plans, and Major Developments" map, Central Baltimore Partnership, a coalition of neighborhood, private, public, and institutional interests working together to implement a comprehensive community development strategy, states that "Central Baltimore is rapidly changing and revitalizing, with dozens of major development and infrastructure projects underway, including ten completed plans and development strategies, and millions of dollars invested in recent, in-progress, and planned developments from block level to large-scale redevelopment projects."

Current planning and investment includes the Homewood Community Partners Initiative (HCPI), a partnership between Johns Hopkins University, 10 Central Baltimore neighborhoods, and one adjacent commercial district. Initiated in 2012 by the university, it seeks to improve the quality of life, housing, education, and commercial retail development in the community surrounding its Homewood campus and promote local hiring, contracting, and purchasing. HCPI is pursuing a shared vision for a vibrant, livable, and active community with strategies and programs that address quality of life issues including transit, safety and sanitation, recreation, and open space; blight elimination and housing creation, including attracting 3,000 new households in 10 years; education; commercial retail development; and local hiring and purchasing.

### *Remington*

Miller's Court is located at the juncture of three Central Baltimore neighborhoods: Remington, Charles Village, and Old Goucher. Although it is technically within the neighborhood of Charles Village, it is most closely associated with Remington, a historically working-class community considered by many to be one of most socioeconomically and racially diverse neighborhoods in the city. Settled around 1850 and named for a local landowner who donated land for what is now Wyman Park, it has long been associated with industry, housing workers from the mills and railroad shops along Jones Falls Valley. The neighborhood is predominantly residential, comprised of modest two- and three-story narrow brick row houses dating from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, interspersed with neighborhood retail and occasional warehouses.

Like other city neighborhoods, Remington's population declined over the latter half of the twentieth century as residents left for housing and job opportunities elsewhere, leading to deterioration, vacancies, and increased crime and prostitution. According to the US Census, the residential vacancy rate in the neighborhood immediately surrounding Miller's Court increased

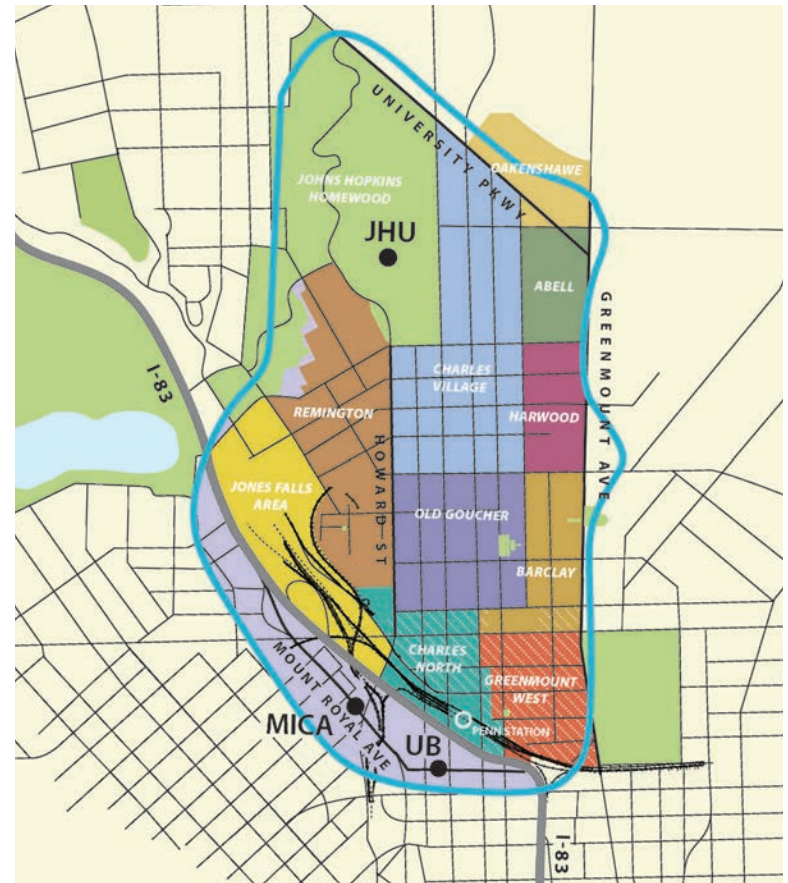
from 9.7% in 1990 to 19.3% in 2000 and remained constant around 19% through 2005-2009, a figure consistent with the city of Baltimore as a whole. The area had a median household income of just over \$28,000 from 2005-2009, compared to just under \$39,000 for the city.

The impact of this slow decline in prosperity is evident throughout the neighborhood where there are occasional vacant lots and properties with signs of deferred maintenance, such as peeling paint and haphazard repairs. However there are also signs of new investment, such as recently renovated homes and the arrival of businesses like Sweet27, a “multi-cultural bar and restaurant” catering to the diversity of residents in the area.

In interviews, Remington residents reported that conditions in the neighborhood have improved over the past five years; they and others in the city believe that it stands at a point of inflection. Many residents remarked on Remington’s strong “culture of community,” even in the midst of a growing influx of new residents and investment. Long-time residents commented that, for the most part, people who are new to the neighborhood make a conscious effort to be respectful of existing residents and become part of the community.

### PROJECT HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

The success of Miller’s Court is due to the convergence of several factors, including the vision and contributions of a charismatic and socially-minded development team, the evolution of the city of Baltimore and the Remington neighborhood, and the availability of federal programs like Historic Preservation and New Market Tax Credits. In contrast to larger and more expensive redevelopment efforts in Baltimore’s past, such as the Inner Harbor, Miller’s Court offers a smaller-scale, neighborhood-based model of investment.



Central Baltimore Partnership



The 11 neighborhoods of Central Baltimore (top) and views of Remington (bottom).

### *Seawall Development Company*

Miller's Court was created by Seawall Development Company and is the brainchild of Donald and Thibault Manekin, a father and son team who drew upon their collective experience and interests in education, nonprofits, and real estate as well as their personal commitment and connections to the city of Baltimore to found a socially minded real estate development company.

In 2000, Donald Manekin retired from Manekin, LLC, a family-owned real estate company based in Columbia, Maryland, after serving as senior vice president and partner for 25 years. The company was founded in 1946 and focused on suburban commercial real estate development.

Following his retirement, Donald Manekin was tapped by Baltimore leaders to lend his business expertise to helping the public school system. He served as interim chief operating officer of Baltimore City Public Schools from 2000 to 2002. Afterwards, he focused on his lifelong interest in education through consulting and setting up the Foundation for Education in rural Maryland. In the process he got to know educational nonprofit organizations throughout the state and joined the board of Teach for America. Through these roles he became familiar with the challenges of the public education system, including the need for affordable nonprofit office space and for recruiting and housing new school teachers like those participating in Teach for America, a program dedicated to enlisting and supporting new teachers to provide "educational equity and excellence" across the nation.

In the meantime, Thibault Manekin, who was not interested in joining the family real estate business, worked abroad on several social impact initiatives in Africa, Costa Rica, Ireland, and the Middle East and helped a friend start PeacePlayers International, a nonprofit that promotes lifelong friendships among children, youth, and adults from different cultures and groups



*Seawall Development Company partners (left to right): Jon Constable, Donald Manekin, Thibault Manekin.*

in conflict, using sports to help participants find common ground. When he returned to Baltimore, he approached his father about starting a real estate company to repurpose obsolete buildings in the city.

The Manekins decided to address the need for supportive housing for teachers entering the workforce in Baltimore. In January 2007, they founded Seawall Development Company, named for a beach in Maine where Donald Manekin served as a camp counselor for many years and the family continues to vacation.

Over time, Seawall grew to include two additional partners, Evan Morville and Jon Constable. According to Thibault Manekin, Seawall's partners don't look at themselves as real estate developers but rather as "social entrepreneurs who use the built environment to make neighborhoods



better places by breathing new life into forgotten old buildings and filling the finished product with people who in their everyday lives are doing the most important work in our city.”

### *Miller's Court*

Miller's Court was Seawall's first project. The idea grew out of the Manekins' desire as developers to support the local school system, drawing upon Donald's experience serving on the board of Teach for America and working for Baltimore City Public Schools and Thibault's desire to create a real estate company to repurpose functionally obsolete buildings. They set out to create a place that provided a “soft landing” for new teachers in order to support their vital work as educators and encourage them to fall in love with the city and stay. As Thibault Manekin explained, “Our vision is to roll out the red carpet for those individuals doing some of the most important work in Baltimore by creating beautiful, affordable, energy-efficient places to live.”



Looking south along N. Howard Street towards Miller's Court.

This vision addressed a real need in Baltimore, which hires some 1,000 new teachers each year. *Building Teacher Quality in Baltimore City Public Schools*, a report by the National Council on Teacher Quality, found that only 49% of the Teach for America teachers hired in the 2006-2007 school year were still teaching in Baltimore three years later, and the overall retention rate for Baltimore City Public Schools teachers was just 57%. In 2002, Donald approached the local Teach for America office with the idea of creating a supportive living environment for teachers to help increase retention, and they agreed it was an appealing concept.

With this intention in mind, the Seawall team began looking for properties. Along the way they engaged Baltimore-based Marks, Thomas Architects, a Women's Business Enterprise certified firm with expertise in adaptive reuse, historic rehabilitation, and urban development to help flesh out ideas for the development and evaluate potential sites. Community building, social impact, and sustainability were core goals from the beginning.

After considering several properties, the team settled on a vacant manufacturing building at the edge of Remington. Although the building was in need of significant renovation, the location had potential. It was close to the headquarters of the Baltimore City Public Schools and Johns Hopkins University School of Education, where many Teach for America participants earn master's degrees while teaching in the city school system. The property offered easy access to the Jones Falls Expressway (Interstate 83), which connects the city with the suburbs. There were also convenient connections to public transportation, including bus links to downtown and other neighborhoods as well as Baltimore's Union Station and Amtrak service. Amenities within walking distance included Wyman Park, grocery stores and pharmacies, and locally owned businesses and shops, including a bakery, bars, restaurants, a dry cleaner, and a car wash.

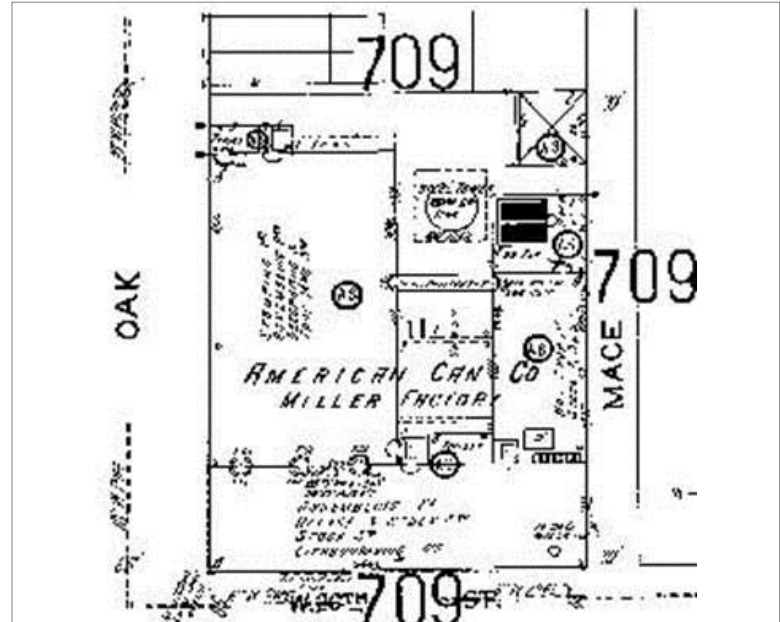
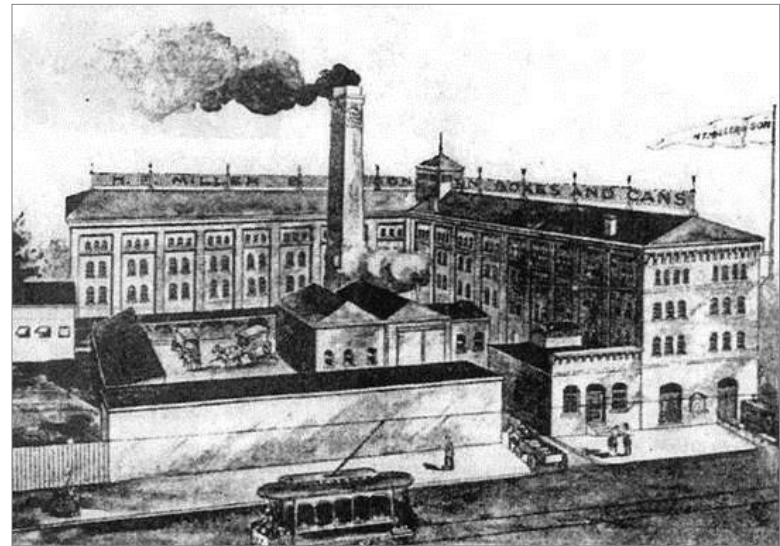


Seawall spent time talking with people in the community to solicit support for the project. Two previous developers had proposed to renovate the building for residential use but struggled to secure community support and financing. According to a representative from the Remington Neighborhood Alliance, part of Miller's Court's appeal was that the education focus might help to address Remington's lack of a neighborhood school.

The layout of the proposed site provided the opportunity to incorporate commercial space along North Howard Street. Through his work as an educational consultant, Donald Manekin realized the need for affordable, quality office space for nonprofit organizations with modest operating budgets. Teach for America Baltimore agreed to become an anchor tenant. The corner of North Howard and East 26th Street was targeted for retail space, and members of the community indicated a desire for a neighborhood coffee shop, ideally one that was locally owned.

## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The development of Miller's Court repurposed a blighted, vacant industrial building into an attractive, inviting residential and office compound. The 85,500-square-foot brick complex and 1.12-acre site that now houses Miller's Court was initially home to the H.F. Miller & Son Company, which later merged with the American Can Company, at one point the largest tin can manufacturer in the US. It was erected in three stages between 1890 and 1910 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as an example of late nineteenth century industrial architecture in Baltimore. More recently known as the Census Building (after the building's last tenant), the highly visible structure sat vacant and deteriorating for almost two decades, attracting vandalism and contributing to the perception of disinvestment and blight in the neighborhood.



A rendering of (top) and plot plan (bottom) for the American Can Company.

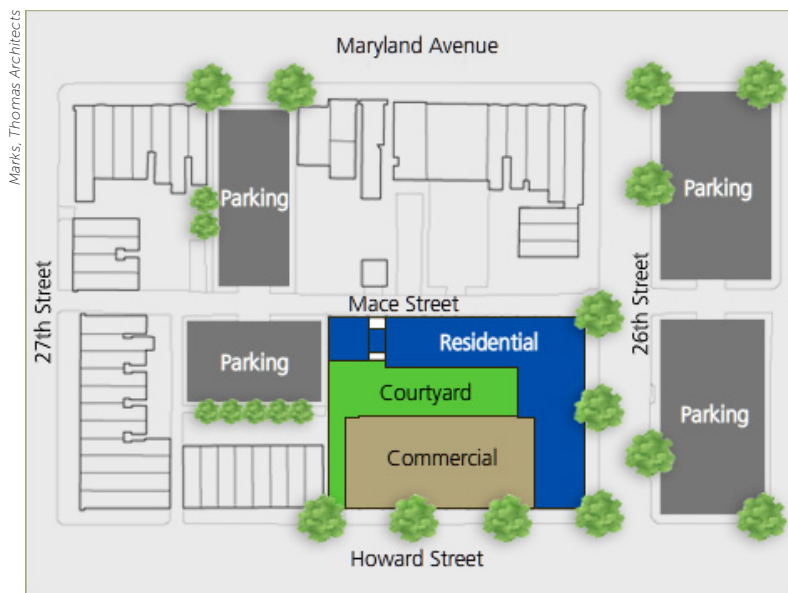
Photo and plan: Seawall Development Company



Before photos: Seawall Development Company

Before and after photographs of Miller's Court's exterior (top) and courtyard (bottom).





Site plan

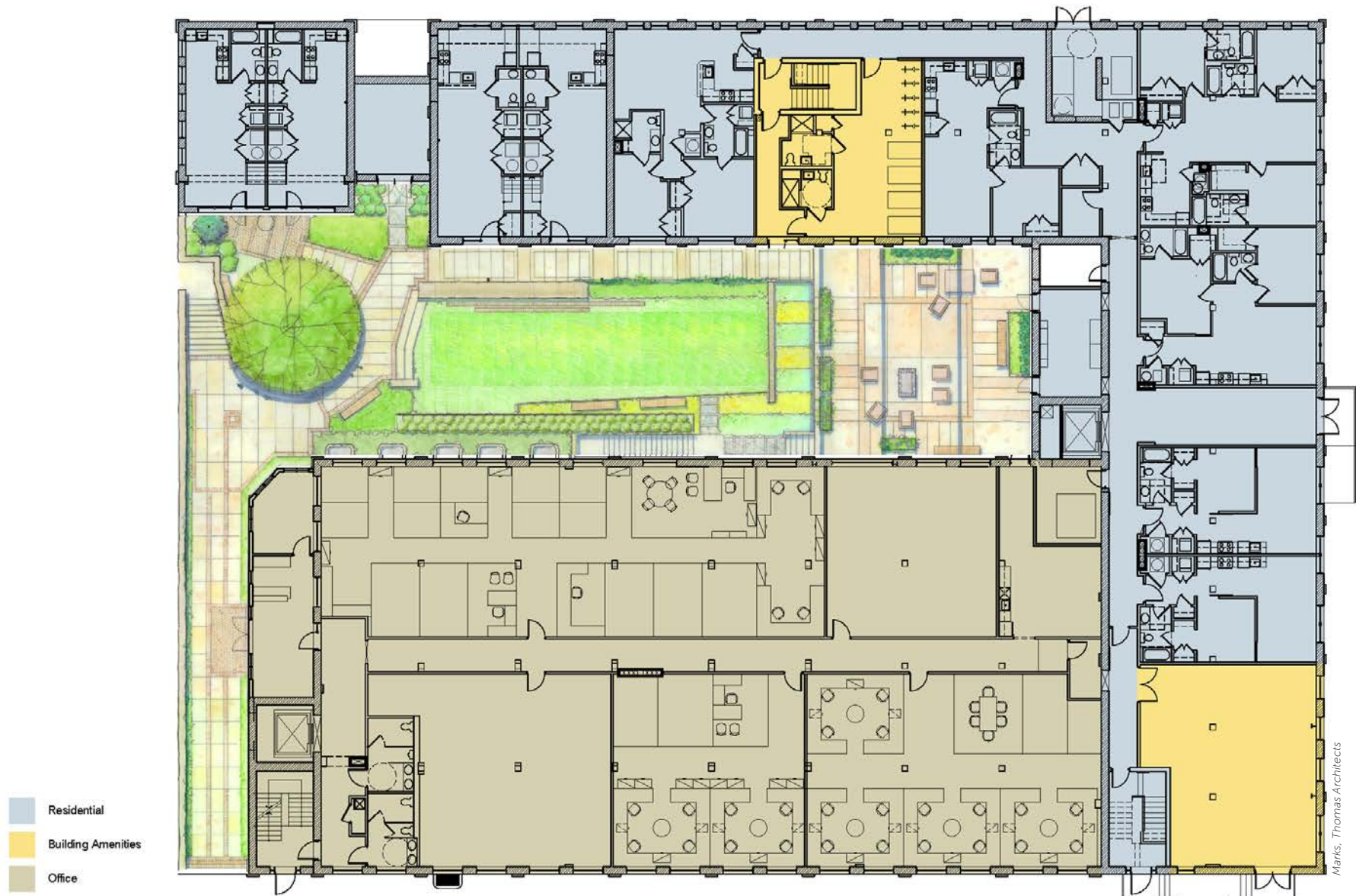
The Miller's Court complex is comprised of three connected brick buildings that wrap around three sides of a central outdoor courtyard. The renovated building includes:

- 40 one-, two-, and three-bedroom rental apartments
- shared resident amenities, including a fitness center, courtyard, lounge, and teacher resource center
- nonprofit office space with 11 tenants
- shared conference and training rooms for nonprofit office tenants
- Charmington's, a neighborhood café.

The three-story section of the building facing North Howard Street houses nonprofit offices while the four-story L-shaped section that anchors the corner of North Howard and faces West 26th Street and the adjoining alley (Mace Street) contains the majority of the apartments and Charmington's café. An adjoining two-story carriage house, also on Mace Street, includes townhouse-style apartments. Offices are entered from a recessed courtyard on North Howard Street and the apartment entrance lobby is on West 26th Street. Access to all of the apartments except the carriage house and boiler room units (located in the four story building) is through this lobby; the carriage house and boiler room units are entered directly from the courtyard.

Once the building was identified, Seawall and Marks, Thomas convened focus group meetings targeted towards end users, including Teach for America participants, to inform the design. During the process, the design team proposed providing a common laundry room to save energy and contribute to the sense of community. This idea reminded the many recent college graduates of dorm life and was rejected in favor of in-unit laundries. Potential residents were much more enthusiastic about having a teacher resource center with copiers and a lending library, an idea that emerged from a common story among teachers about running out late at night to make copies for class and a desire to share resources such as lesson plans. Discussions also led to the decision that apartments have a one-to-one ratio of bathrooms to bedrooms so two or more teachers could share a unit and each person could have his or her own bathroom. According to Seawall, this iterative design process continued throughout the development, involving consultants, contractors, and end users.

Miller's Court apartment and office interiors feature airy, loft-like spaces with exposed brick walls and wood beams. There are a diversity of apartment types and layouts—including open, loft, and townhouse plans—all of which respond to distinctive building conditions, including multilevel loft units on



Ground floor plan

Marks, Thomas Architects

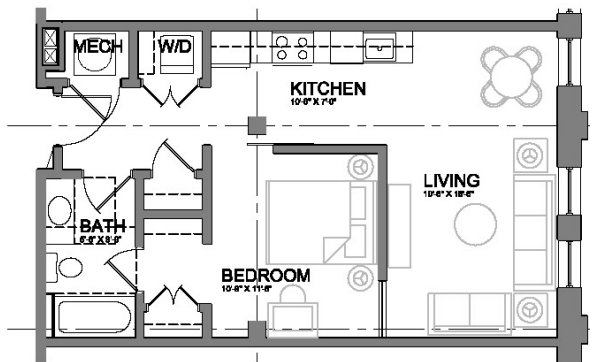
the upper floors and a unique “cupola” unit. There are 17 one-bedroom, 16 two-bedroom, and seven three-bedroom units. Overall there is a ratio of one bathroom for each bedroom, with the expectation that units would be shared. All of the units feature laundries and most have kitchens that open onto living spaces. Common areas include a first floor fitness room, a second floor teacher resource center, and a third floor room that can be used for informal gatherings and meetings.

Nonprofit offices vary in size and are outfitted in accordance with tenant needs. The spaces feature exposed brick walls and beams, and common areas and hallways are decorated with artwork including historic images and “before” photos of the building. A lower level conference center includes 5,000 square feet of shared meeting and training rooms that can be used by office and residential tenants.

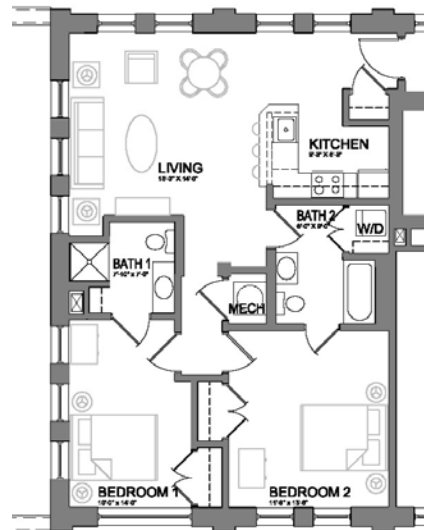


Seawall Development Company

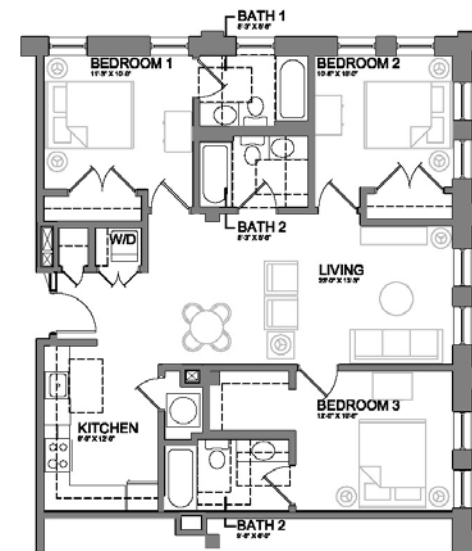
Apartment interior



Typical 1-Bedroom Apartment



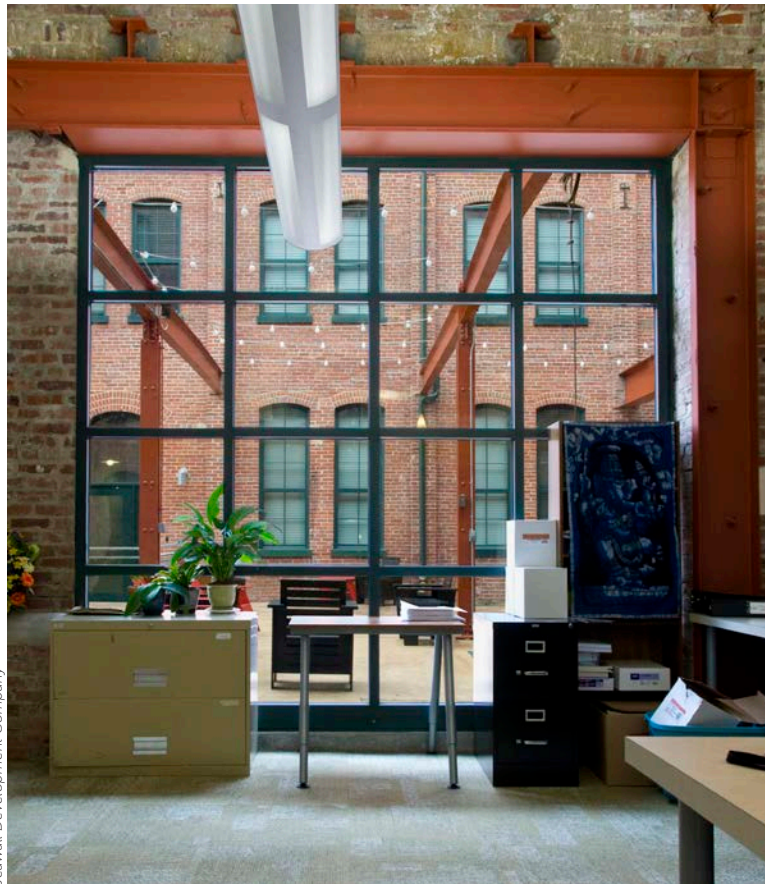
Typical 2-Bedroom Apartment



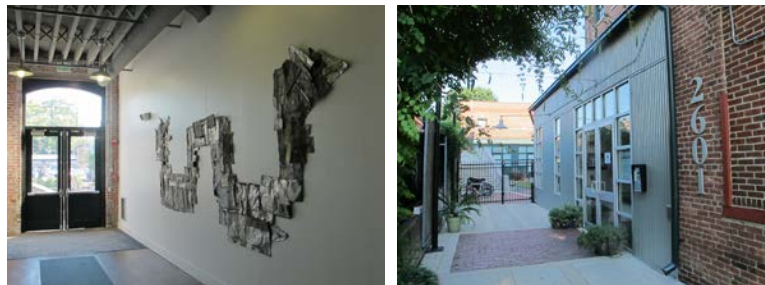
Typical 3-Bedroom Apartment

Plans: Marks, Thomas Architects





Seawall Development Company



Clockwise from top: Office interior, office entry, apartment lobby with student artwork.

The building lobbies and courtyard feature permanent artwork created by students in a freshman art studio at the nearby Maryland Institute College of Art using materials salvaged from the building during renovation. The students embraced the idea of the project, creating two wall-mounted "dragons" for the entrance lobby as symbols of strength and wisdom and a "snake," fabricated from an old electric meter and metal from reclaimed fire doors, displayed in the courtyard and symbolizing rebirth.

Free off-street, shared parking for Miller's Court residents, office tenants, and visitors is located in four adjacent, fenced asphalt parking lots. One is located directly behind the building, across from another facing Maryland Avenue. Two more are located across 26th Street from the building. The latter two were purchased by Seawall in order to secure property control and ensure there was ample parking for Miller's Court. All are accessed from 26th Street and Mace Street, the alley behind the building. The parking exceeds the city's code requirements of one space per four units of multifamily housing. Seawall leases some of the spaces to Tire Shop tenants.

Miller's Court is LEED Gold certified by the US Green Building Council, receiving a total of 40 points. The development does not include any particularly distinctive or innovative sustainability features, although the architectural team highlighted the energy recovery unit that serves the commercial office.

There have been a few issues associated with the start-up and ongoing operation of the building, to which Seawall has been largely responsive according to office and residential tenants. For example, office tenants reported problems with dust and some third floor roof leaks immediately following move-in. Seawall responded by installing additional sealing and caulking, replacing two printers for one organization, and repairing the roof leaks. There was also some frustration with the entry system (visitors are unable to access the tenant floor unless the door is open) and with

functionality of the lower level conference space (the absence of a kitchen is problematic for catering needs and there are issues with Internet access, lighting, and sound control). The commercial and residential tenants were very positive about Seawall's responsiveness to their concerns.

### **ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS, AND ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Seawall prides itself on quality property management and devotes considerable attention to building relationships and a sense of community among the residential and educational tenants of Miller's Court. According to Seawall and several education and residential tenants, interest in Miller's Court spread through word-of-mouth marketing among the Manekins' contacts in educational organizations and the community. All of the apartments and most of the commercial office spaces were leased when the building opened in 2009.

#### *Residential Community*

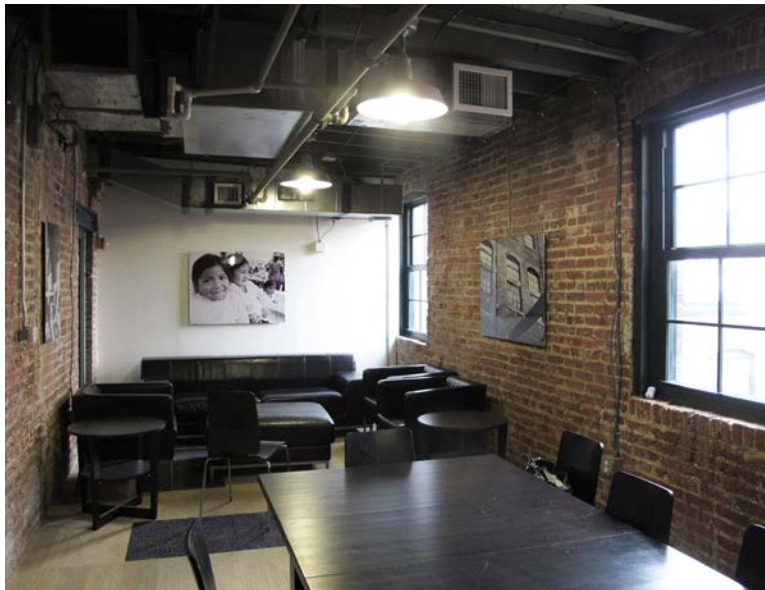
Approximately 70 to 75 residents live in Miller's Court at any one time. The majority of the residents are teachers working for public, private, and charter schools in the city of Baltimore and adjoining communities. Sixty to 70% are Teach for America members. Many residents are just starting their careers and moved to Baltimore from other places across the country for their teaching positions. Most reported that they found Miller's Court through word of mouth referrals and Teach for America. Seawall, which does not track demographic data for its tenants, estimates that residents typically range in age from 21 to 30 years old and that approximately 60% are women and 35% minorities. There are generally about five married couples living in the building at any one time, and on average the building welcomes one baby a year.

Residents indicated that affordability, convenience, and safety were important considerations when looking for a place to live, and these features contribute significantly to the appeal of Miller's Court. Many also value the free parking, on-site fitness center, and outdoor courtyard, where they are welcome to take part in events and gatherings hosted by Seawall and nonprofits in the building or host their own. Building maintenance issues are addressed promptly. There is a Miller's Court mobile phone app that provides a convenient way to report problems, receive notifications about deliveries, and learn about activities and events taking place.

As one Teach for America representative suggested, Miller's Court "provides a comfortable space" for the "transition from dorm to independence." The organization brings new program participants to Miller's Court when they start and offers tours of the residential building. Many teachers bring their parents, who feel more comfortable knowing that their son or daughter will be living in an attractive, safe, and supportive environment.

Residents remarked on the personal care and attention of the Seawall team. New tenants are welcomed with gift baskets containing coupons and tickets to local businesses and venues, and quarterly "bagels and coffee" mornings in the lobby as well as frequent courtyard events contribute to the sense of community. Several residents shared stories of how Seawall staff went out of their way to check in and help, such as assisting with the move-in process, dropping off flowers when one had a particularly bad day, and assembling a new bike for another.

Despite these efforts, one resident suggested there was potential to introduce additional programming and enhance communications to promote information and skill sharing among residents who don't necessarily know much about each other. Another questioned how the waiting list was managed after receiving a call that an apartment was available shortly after being told there was a long waiting list.



*Resident amenities include a fitness room (top) and comfortable lounge (bottom).*

While Seawall plans for 50% annual turnover, during the 2014/2015 year, turnover was only 30%. Seawall's goal is for residents to stay for about two years, at which point they will likely move on to another place due to changes in their personal lives or employment or purchase a home, hopefully in Remington or other Baltimore neighborhoods. This mirrors information collected from interviews with current and past residents. Seawall fields hundreds of inquiries a year for Miller's Court and nearby Union Mill—a subsequent development that adapted the Miller's Court model—and maintains a waiting list for apartments in both buildings. Over the course of a year, the list tends to grow to about 100-200 people, then shrinks as apartments are turned over and leased in spring. Prospective tenants are placed on the waiting list after completing an application and contacted in the order in which their applications were received. Residents who no longer teach can continue to live in Miller's Court, but they are no longer eligible for the rent discount (one person per unit must be a teacher to be eligible). According to Seawall, there have been only one or two occasions when this has happened.

### *Nonprofit Tenants*

Seawall works equally hard to create a sense of community among the nonprofit tenants within the building. Many of the organizations found out about the office space being developed at Miller's Court through existing relationships with the Manekins and mutual nonprofit network connections. Teach for America Baltimore is the primary tenant, and many teachers in the program live in the building. Other tenants include a variety of nonprofits, all of which share an interest in education.

In early 2015, the tenants included:

- Baltimore Urban Debate League
- Building Educated Leaders for Life
- Catholic Charities Center for Family Services
- Experience Corps



- GiveCorps
- Goucher College
- Megaphone Project
- Playworks
- Teach for America Baltimore
- Wide Angle Youth Media
- Young Audiences

A lower level conference center is available at no charge to tenants and residents as well as other nonprofits in Baltimore. Seawall and Donald Thibault use the conference center for monthly brown bag lunch presen-



Seawall Development Company



Clockwise from top: courtyard, brown bag lunch gathering, office hallway.

tations with guest speakers for tenants of Miller's Court and Union Mill. Approximately 30 people attended the presentation that took place in March 2015. The outdoor courtyard is a popular spot for nonprofit gatherings and events as well as periodic cookouts, happy hours, and ice cream socials hosted by Seawall. Playworks uses the space for 15-minute "office recesses."

There has been some tenant turnover and change due to organizational growth. One of the original tenants, Young Audience, grew out of its space and moved into the Tire Shop across the street. Others have renovated and/or expanded their offices in connection with recent lease renewals.

Criticisms were relatively minor. The majority of concerns revolved around the building, such as issues with the entry system and lower level conference center. Several expressed a desire for an on-site day care center that could serve tenants and their employees and were in discussions with Seawall about the concept.

### *Charmington's Café*

In many ways the heart of Miller's Court and of Remington is Charmington's café, located on the first floor at the corner of North Howard and 26th Streets. The busy café, which serves coffee and other beverages, pastries, and light meals, is a popular meeting spot for residents, nonprofit staff, and the community. The menu features organic and local food, including certified direct-trade coffee. Catering is available for companies and nonprofit organizations.

Charmington's is cooperatively owned by eight individuals who, like Donald and Thibault Manekin, are mission-driven with a vision: "to serve organic coffee and locally produced food in a comfortable and relaxed setting." According to one of the owners, they found the right space in Miller's Court and, in turn, met the community's strong desire for a locally owned coffee



*President Obama visits Charmington's cafe; cafe interior.*

shop. The company is a proponent of "living wages" and provides paid time off to its employees. In February 2015, President Obama visited the café and met with the owners as part of his national tour to promote guaranteed paid family and sick leave. In early 2015, Charmington's was planning to expand into adjacent first floor space.

### *Neighborhood Organizations*

From the beginning, Seawall reached out to residents and businesses in Remington because the team believed their input was most important. The neighborhood is known for its strong community process. Previous developers who sought to redevelop the building did not seek community input and were unable to move ahead without its support. As one person familiar with the area said, "The neighborhood is tough on developers; they don't get carte blanche."

In early 2015, the community was represented by two organizations: the Greater Remington Improvement Association (GRIA) and the Remington Neighborhood Alliance (RNA). Both are committed to neighborhood improvement. GRIA refers to itself as "an independent, resident-based group that provides an open forum for the development and discussion of

Remington community issues and neighborhood improvement initiatives." In the spring of 2015, GRIA was focused on activating small businesses, influencing Seawall's development, and creating a community land trust.

The Remington Neighborhood Alliance defines itself as "committed to building the community of Remington." According to local residents, GRIA was created to offer an alternative to the existing RNA, which was dominated by "old timers" resistant to change. Both GRIA and RNA were active participants in discussions about the development of Miller's Court and subsequent Seawall developments. Several people cited Thibault Manekin's success in winning over a well-known community leader who was a critic of the project as indicative of Thibault's willingness to listen, his sensitivity to neighborhood concerns, and his ability to build relationships and trust.

### *Investing in Remington*

Following the success of Miller's Court, Seawall continued to invest in Remington, largely due to the partners' growing passion for and commitment to the neighborhood and engagement with local residents who shared their desire for its continued improvement. As of early 2015, completed or planned additional investment in the community that complements Miller's Court includes:

- **Miller's Square:** Renovation of 30 houses scattered throughout Charles Village and Remington, several of which have been purchased by former residents of Miller's Court, completed in 2012.
- **Tire Shop:** Conversion of a one-story building into an arts and food destination hosting a butcher shop, restaurant, and two theatre companies, completed in 2014.
- **Remington Row:** A new construction, mixed-use development including apartments, a community health center, and first-floor retail that broke ground in early 2015 and is scheduled to be completed in summer 2016.



A few years after Miller's Court opened, five couples living in the building approached Thibault Manekin during one of the building's happy hours with a proposal. They told him they liked living in Remington and wanted to buy homes there. They'd looked at the vacant houses in the neighborhood and suggested that by investing in additional development, Seawall could help to stabilize the neighborhood and reduce crime. The couples proposed that Seawall purchase the houses, renovate them, and sell the homes to people like them who were living in Miller's Court.

Seawall accepted the challenge, purchasing and renovating 30 houses on the blocks surrounding Miller's Court that collectively became known as Miller's Square. They completed a model unit and invited the community to an open house in 2012. According to Thibault Manekin, 300 people showed up and all the houses that were marketed were sold within an hour. Seawall retained eight of the houses as rental properties, two of which are kept for tenants who have pets (which are not permitted at Miller's Court). The majority of the houses were sold at cost for \$150,000 to \$260,000. Many purchasers took advantage of homebuyer incentives, including \$25,000 grants offered by the Abell Foundation to Baltimore city public school teachers and fire fighters.

Following the success of the Miller's Square, the Seawall partners realized that they wanted to invest in the ongoing change in Remington. They assembled a team of investors and funding to purchase and develop additional properties in the neighborhood.

In 2014, Seawall opened the Tire Shop, a one-story former automobile tire shop across the street from Miller's Court renovated into a 5,500-square-foot arts and food destination. By early 2015, the building was home to Parts & Labor, a locally owned butcher shop and restaurant, and two nonprofit theatre companies, Single Carrot Theatre and Young Audience. The latter moved into the larger quarters here after outgrowing its previous space in Miller's Court.



Clockwise from left: Tire Shop, Miller's Square house, Union Mill.

Construction on Remington Row, the largest project to date, broke ground in early 2015. The \$35.5 million, 250,000-square-foot building, located on the 2700 block of Remington Avenue, will include 15,000 square feet of first-floor retail, 108 apartments, and about 270 underground parking spaces. Johns Hopkins Community Physicians will be the anchor tenant, leasing 30,000 square feet, reflecting its commitment to the Homewood Community Partners Initiative.

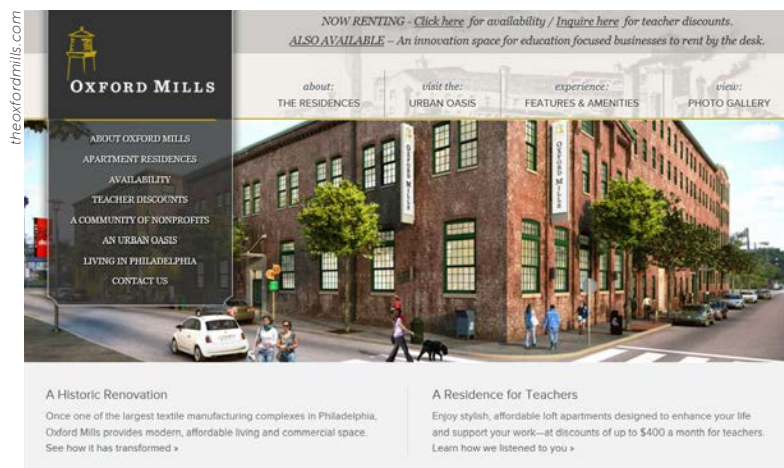
In addition to these developments, Seawall has acquired additional property in the neighborhood to protect its investments and prevent vacant properties from falling into the hands of out-of-state developers who might not work as inclusively with the community. These acquisitions include the 2014 purchase of an 11-acre site on which a Walmart was proposed but

ultimately rejected by the community. As of early 2015, Seawall owned 12 properties totaling more than 400,000 square feet in Remington.

### *Centers for Educational Excellence*

In addition to investing in community development in Remington, Seawall continued to adapt and refine the Miller's Court supportive living and working model for other locations. In 2011, the company opened Union Mill, the renovation of a historic mill building located two and a half miles away in nearby Hampden, in an area known as Woodberry in the Jones Falls Valley. The stone complex includes 56 one- and two-bedroom apartments, 25,000 square feet of nonprofit office space, and Artifact Coffee, a locally owned coffee shop.

About three years later, a team from Enterprise Community Investment, Inc. and Teach for America approached Seawall about taking the Miller's Court model to ten other cities. The first three cities included Philadelphia, Chicago, and Springfield, Massachusetts. The business model presumes that Seawall will partner with local developers in each city.



*Oxford Mills in Philadelphia*

The first completed project outside Baltimore was Oxford Mills in Philadelphia, a joint venture between Seawall and D3 Developers, a local, "civic-minded" company. The 175,000-square-foot complex opened in 2014 and includes 114 apartments, 40,000 square feet of offices leased to nonprofit educational organizations, and a locally owned coffee shop.

The development's financing structure is modeled on Miller's Court, using Historic and New Market Tax Credits. D3 handled the day-to-day local development process and property management while Seawall focused on the global picture, transferring experience gained from Miller's Court including financial and lending expertise and recruiting relationships with educational nonprofits. Sixty percent of the apartments are rented to teachers, who are offered a 25% discount. Nonprofit tenants include Teach for America and Education Design Studio Inc., an education business incubator created in partnership with the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania.

Additional opportunities are being explored with a focus on cities with a Teach for America presence, including Detroit, New Orleans, and St. Louis. A group of business leaders in Springfield, Massachusetts recently engaged Seawall and a local contractor to assist in identifying potential buildings to develop as housing for teachers and possibly participants in the local hospital's residency and nursing programs downtown.

As of early 2015, Seawall was making a conscious shift away from ownership and development towards a fee-for-service management and consulting business model, preferring to "over manage" and take care of properties already in hand rather than pursue new development.

## FINANCING

The ability of Seawall to secure financing and develop the \$21.1 million project with commercially available credits and incentives in the midst of the 2008 economic downturn speaks to the reputation of the developers in the community. The development was financed with a mix of public and private capital, including a significant share of New Market and Historic Tax Credits.

### *Development*

Seawall acquired the property at 2601 North Howard Street, which was appraised at \$3 million, for \$2.5 million. The building was in foreclosure and the company purchased the existing bank note from the lender for the previous owner, a developer from Washington, DC who purchased the building for \$4 million and was in significant default. Total acquisition costs were \$2.9 million.

A limited liability corporation, Smallpoint, was established for the development of Miller's Court. Ownership is shared by four individuals. The \$21.1 million project was financed using market rate bank debt, federal and state Historic Tax Credit equity, New Market Tax Credit equity, a deferred developer fee, and low-interest loans from the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland. Additional equity for financing was provided by interest income as well as the below market acquisition of the property (referred to as "book up" in Table 1). Equity was provided by Enterprise Community Investment, SunBank, and state tax credit investors.

The developers and investors note the significance of financing made possible through New Market Tax Credits (NMTC), an innovative federal financing program established in 2000 as a vehicle to bring private capital investment to low-income communities. The development received \$18.8 million in NMTC through Enterprise Community Investment, Inc. and SunTrust Bank. Enterprise is primarily a low-income housing syndicator and is

one of the largest recipients of NMTC allocations in the country. SunTrust became involved in the project through Donald Manekin. The Enterprise and SunTrust investments were in the form of seven-year, interest-only loans that are scheduled to be paid back beginning in 2015. Seawall was in the process of refinancing the project in spring 2015.

Development financing was not without challenges. The entire construction contingency (7%) was utilized during the construction of Miller's Court, and Seawall deferred \$1.5 million of its \$2.3 million developer fee. The total cost was \$236 per square foot.

### *Operating Costs*

Annual operating expenses for Miller's Court (not including building debt service) total approximately \$550,000. Administrative expenses, including a property manager, bookkeeping, and administrative personnel, account for 27%. Seawall has made a conscious decision to manage its own properties, hiring its own staff and budgeting modest line items for resident programs and gifts. Debt service payments to Enterprise and SunTrust constitute an additional \$621,500 in annual expenses, which includes Enterprise's \$50,000 asset management fee.

In 2015, the development was expected to generate nearly \$1.3 million in income, with 50% from apartment rent and 48% from office and retail space. After deducting operating expenses and guaranteed debt payments to Enterprise and SunTrust, and adding in \$50,000 in income released from reserve, Miller's Court is expected to net about \$100,000 for the year.

Apartment rental rates for teachers range from approximately \$800 to \$1,900, including \$300-600 per month discounts. The average monthly rental for a new one-bedroom apartment in downtown Baltimore is \$1,800-\$2,000. A 3% annual rent increase is budgeted.

TABLE 1: DEVELOPMENT SOURCES AND USES

<i>Sources</i>	
Small Point Manager Loan	\$5,800,000
New Market Tax Credit Equity	\$5,734,170
Historic Tax Credit Equity	\$3,203,168
State Historic Tax Credit Loan	\$2,662,662
State Tax Credit Investor Equity	\$57,338
City Loan	\$750,000
State Loan	\$700,000
Book Up	\$500,000
Interest Income	\$162,938
Deferred Developer Fee	\$1,538,177
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,108,453</b>
<i>Uses</i>	
Acquisition (including Book Up)	\$3,359,678
Soft Costs	\$1,926,000
Construction Hard Costs	\$11,012,673
Financing Costs	\$2,314,675
Developer Fee	\$2,495,427
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,108,453</b>

TABLE 2: 2015 OPERATING BUDGET

<i>Income</i>	
Rent - Apartments	\$637,126
Rent - Office	\$605,454
Rent - Retail	\$19,027
Rent - Storage	\$2,100
Miscellaneous Income	\$5,100
Common Area Maintenance	\$18,000
Rental Vacancy	(\$3,600)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,283,206</b>
<i>Expenses</i>	
Administration	\$149,457
Operating and Maintenance	\$176,468
Taxes and Insurance	\$98,141
Utilities	\$133,310
SunTrust Payment	\$281,160
Enterprise Payment	\$340,368
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,178,904</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>\$104,302</b>

TABLE 3: UNIT MIX AND RENTAL RATES

<i>Unit Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Square Footage</i>	<i>Teacher Rental Rates</i>	<i>Market Rental Rates</i>
1 BR	16	537-790	\$837-\$1,300	\$1,300-\$1,700
2 BR	17	790-1190	\$1,339-\$2,086	\$1,700-\$2,386
3 BR	7	1000-1260	\$1,796-\$1,912	\$2,096-\$2,212



Commercial spaces rent for \$18 to \$21 per square foot, including heat and air conditioning, with three- to five-year leases. Shared meeting spaces are available for rent at additional cost.

## IMPACT

Miller's Court offers a compelling, innovative approach to addressing the quality of education, a critical issue for American cities. It builds economic value and social capital by connecting teachers and nonprofits, improving the surrounding neighborhood, and contributing to Baltimore's ongoing renaissance. The project illustrates the value of collaborative partnerships and innovative financing that taps into local and federal programs designed to encourage investment in the urban core. Perhaps most compellingly, Miller's Court demonstrates that it's possible for a modest, privately developed project to make a significant social impact, and that the concept can be replicated in other places.



*View along Remington Avenue.*

In 2014, the Knowledge, Impact, and Strategy team at Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.—the parent company of Enterprise Community Investment, Inc.—completed an impact case study on Miller's Court. The study utilized surveys, interviews, economic analysis, and census data to evaluate the success of the project in its first five years of operation. The report concluded, "Miller's Court has brought new life and economic activity to a distressed neighborhood, while providing resources and a collaborative environment to strengthen the work of teachers and related nonprofits."

Although the development is having a positive impact on the quality of life for teachers living in the building, it is too soon to be able to evaluate its impact on the quality of education in Baltimore public schools. As one person suggested, the "story of the project's impact on the city is still being written." Even so, there is already much interest in replicating the Miller's Court model in other cities, and Seawall has completed a similar project in Philadelphia in collaboration with a developer in that city.

## *The Mission-Driven Developer*

The role of Donald and Thibault Manekin as charismatic, trusted leaders resonated in interviews with members of the community. People valued the Manekins' commitment to the educational and social goals of the project and their thoughtful approach to engaging the neighborhood and teachers in the planning and development process. Donald Manekin's track record as a developer and his civic and professional connections in the community lent credibility and attracted resources to the effort. Thibault Manekin's earnest and "infectious enthusiasm" and passion helped build support for the project and trust among people in Remington and city hall.

Many people characterized Seawall's leaders, particularly Thibault Manekin, as humble, self-aware, and willing to listen and learn. One person commented that the developers "understand their own weaknesses, which helps them to be good community members." In a city "notorious for not



Nicholas Griner/Teach for America



A Teach for America teacher works with students (top); Teach for America Baltimore's office (bottom).

reaching out to communities," Seawall reached out to people. In so doing, the company "gave voice to community needs," and, as one person said, "When you engage the community, the community will give back," enabling Seawall and Remington to grow together.

Several people suggested that Seawall reflects Baltimore's "socially oriented development community," born from decades of historic preservation, rehabilitation, and community development work. One Remington resident commented that the company's focus on teachers "struck a chord deeply felt in the community," and its approach to the project signaled that authenticity—something important to the neighborhood—would be valued.

#### *Collaborative Partnerships and Innovative Financing*

Miller's Court made use of national programs—such as Historic Tax Credits, New Market Tax Credits, and Teach for America—created to spur investment of private capital and talent in America's older urban centers. The development also utilized local and state financing and leveraged recently created city programs, such as Vacants to Value, designed to incentivize investment in underutilized buildings and neighborhoods.

The project would not have been possible without the extensive network of relationships that the Manekins had established with the City of Baltimore, local foundations and nonprofits, and national entities such as Enterprise, SunTrust, and Teach for America. It was also helped by the substantial credibility and trust the Manekins had earned over years of working in Baltimore and their patient, thoughtful approach to engaging the community during the development of Miller's Court. Tapping into this network for resources—funding as well as expertise—enabled Seawall to undertake a new kind of development and navigate challenges such as community buy-in, adaptive reuse of a historic building, and financing and leasing the building in difficult economic times.

### *Creating a Supportive Community*

The Seawall team works hard to maintain a supportive living and working environment and to connect residents and nonprofit tenants with each other and the community of Remington. This sense of community is valued by residents and tenants, who suggest that it enables them to be more effective in their work. They also appreciate the strong connection to Remington, and many have put down roots, purchasing homes and starting families in the community.

Teachers in Miller's Court appreciate the support structure that offers access to copiers and curricula in the teacher resource center, the ability to tap into the knowledge and experience of their neighbors, and the opportunity to collaborate on lesson plans and projects. Participants in the Teach for America program value the close proximity and support available from the program's staff.



*A street party celebrating Miller's Court's medal brings together residents, tenants, and members of the community.*

Among other things, the Enterprise report acknowledged that the project created high-quality affordable housing for young teachers within a supportive community environment. The affordable apartments, supportive environment, and available resources address some of the financial and professional challenges facing new public school teachers. Through resident surveys, residents report that Miller's Court has had a positive impact on their quality of life, personal financial security, and commitment to teaching.

Nonprofit organizations in Miller's Court also cite advantages of the collaborative office space. According to the Enterprise report, an annual tenant benefit survey conducted by Seawall indicated that the majority of tenants benefited from having more affordable and higher quality space than is typically available to nonprofits. The Enterprise report also found strengthened collaboration among tenants and increased professionalism and opportunities for growth.

A deep passion for community and commitment to living in Remington resonated among those living and working in Miller's Court. A number of employees of nonprofit organizations in the building and the Tire Shop live in the neighborhood and some, like many former Miller's Court residents, have purchased homes in the area.

### *Investing in the Community*

Overall, the consensus among community organizations, institutions, and residents as well as Baltimore City Council representatives and city employees is that Miller's Court has had a positive impact on the neighborhood of Remington—both in converting a large, visibly vacant building that had become an eyesore and magnet for vandalism into a positive anchor and in attracting a "critical mass" of new residents and investment in Remington. As one person put it, the project contributed to the stabilization and revitalization of a "quietly declining" neighborhood. Another referred to the



project's "ripple effect" in contributing a sense of hopefulness, energy, and optimism in the community.

While some specifically credit Miller's Court for the improvements in and around Remington, others suggest positive changes were due to a combination of factors. These include increased interest and overall improvement in the Baltimore real estate market, the mayoral administration's focus on neighborhood development and housing, city programs such as Vacants to Value, and state and federal tax incentives for urban development that are encouraging community investment in places like Remington. One person noted that the change in the perception of Remington happened in less than ten years and suggested that Miller's Court marked the tipping point. Another person working in city hall observed, "Miller's Court is a signature project that embodies Baltimore—who we are and what we want to do."

### *A City at the Point of Inflection*

As a city emerging from decades of declining population and loss of industry, Baltimore appeared poised for change and growth at the turn of the century. Mayoral leadership has infused new attention and energy on neighborhoods. New residents have been drawn to the city and its low cost of living and interesting architecture. Neighborhoods are attracting new residents including millennials, many of whom are committed to urban living and making a difference in their communities.

Some people suggest that the relatively small scale of Baltimore—commenting that it is more like a big town ("Smalltimore") than a city—has played a role in the city's transformation and the success of Miller's Court by enabling a small group of individuals to access a powerful network of resources. As one person offered, "When people are proximate to each other, they are more likely to talk."

### *The Threat of Gentrification*

The question of whether or not gentrification will become an issue for the community was discussed. One person referred to research by Paul Brophy, a national development consultant who has focused on development strategies for weak-market cities, that suggests there is a difference in the dynamic of gentrification between strong-market (growing) and weak-market (declining or shrinking) cities. According to Brophy, change in weak-market cities is likely to take longer—15 to 20 years versus 15 to 20 months for strong market cities—so the displacement discussion is different. One of the newer residents of Remington bristled at the question, responding, "The city was abandoned by the people who should have been stewarding it...Socially responsible people are moving back to the city and putting their money where their mouth is."

While in general most people in Remington are pleased with the changes in their community, there are concerns, particularly among long-term residents, that rents and property values are rising and existing residents will be pushed out. City officials acknowledge that they are thinking about the issues associated with rising property values and rents and are working on affordable housing preservation strategies. Baltimore has a 4% cap on annual property tax increases, which helps to protect existing homeowners. In general, the attitude among people working in the community and in city



Site and plans for Remington Row (left), Remington Avenue homes.

hall is that gentrification does not present a significant, immediate threat in a city that has experienced significant population loss and vacancy, and that ongoing development of new housing will add to the supply and help to meet demand, thereby preventing rents from escalating.

### ASSESSING IMPACT IN RESPECT TO PROJECT GOALS

*GOAL: Create high-quality, affordable housing for teachers in a supportive community environment, improving teacher retention and ultimately benefiting Baltimore's school children.*

The Enterprise study identified positive financial changes, improved quality of life, and increased commitment and positive teaching experience among Miller's Court residents. Research included online surveys that were completed by 46 of the 75 residents, 30 of whom were working as teachers during the 2013-2014 school year. Almost 90% of respondents indicated they "were getting a better value at Miller's Court than they would in other apartments," and 81% of respondents indicated that "living in the building made their jobs easier," with two-thirds reporting that "they'd utilized resources from the nonprofit tenants in the building." The experience of living in Miller's Court has also had a positive effect on residents' perception of the neighborhood; more than 70% think the neighborhood is improving and would recommend local restaurants and amenities to a friend, as well as owning or renting a Remington area home.

One resident interviewed in early 2015 referred to Miller's Court as "an oasis in the inner city" and said that living in "a safe, secure building helps to maintain balance." Another reflected on the potential to influence the quality of education: "When your physical and emotional needs are taken care of, you'll be a better teacher."

*GOAL: Create shared nonprofit office space, providing opportunities for growth and collaboration.*

Nonprofit tenants value the quality of the office space, collaborative working environment, and sense of community created by Seawall that has resulted in resource sharing and new partnerships. One nonprofit leader reported partnering with every organization in the building in some way. Examples of nonprofit collaborations include sharing equipment and paper shredding services, arranging for catered meals from Charmington's for meetings and workshops, and a partnership between Wide Angle Media, Teach for America, and the Maryland Disability Law Center to build a multilingual classroom curriculum. The same spirit of collaboration emerged in conversations with Tire Shop tenants across the street.

The opportunities for collaboration extend beyond the building, including the joint brown bag lunches with Union Mill tenants that encourage interaction and provide opportunities for regular updates on each other's activities and networking with the broader Baltimore community. As one person noted, Donald and Thibault Manekin "are good at leveraging opportunities for tenants and will make introductions on their behalf." Nonprofit tenants appreciate Seawall's commitment to Remington and consider the diversity of the neighborhood and the presence of community organizations a plus.

*GOAL: Spark revitalization in the surrounding Remington neighborhood, which experienced decades of high vacancy and disinvestment and had a reputation as a crime-ridden area.*

Findings from the Enterprise study indicated an increased "sense of place," reduction in crime, increased new investment, and greater long-term neighborhood commitment in the Remington community.

Miller's Court has encouraged additional interest and investment in the community. According to the US Census, the residential vacancy rate in the

surrounding neighborhood decreased from 19% in 2005-2009 to 16% in 2010. Interviews with local stakeholders conducted by the Bruner Foundation and Enterprise indicate that the opening of Miller's Court was a "game changer" for the neighborhood, shifting people's perception of the area and catalyzing new development and investment. As one person commented, "Seawall didn't just do Miller's Court; they focused on the neighborhood and transformed it."

Community members referred to the transformation of a formerly "dark, dangerous corner" that people were afraid to walk by and attracted vandalism and crime into a highly visible beacon and hub for the community. According to the Enterprise study, reports of theft dropped by 38% in the years following the building's opening, and there has been a steady decrease in the number of total reported crimes since 2009 (although crime was still a concern in early 2015).

There has also been a 40% increase in the number of home sales in recent years in the neighborhood. These home sales include those in Miller's Square, Seawall's rehabilitation of 30 row houses scattered throughout Charles Village and Remington, a project inspired by Miller's Court residents interested in investing in homes in the neighborhood.

One neighborhood resident credited Sewall for galvanizing neighborhood organizations to become better organized in order to respond to challenges and opportunities created by new development interest.

***GOAL: Generate economic activity, increase tax revenues, and create new jobs in a low-income community.***

The Enterprise study suggests that the development of Miller's Court has resulted in increased economic activity and local spending, job growth, and new tax revenue generation. The Enterprise report concluded that Miller's Court created significant economic opportunity within a low-

income neighborhood. According to the report, "Residents of Miller's Court now spend a combined \$97,000 annually at the establishments within walking distance of the property, providing an influx of revenues to small, locally owned businesses. Construction of Miller's Court created 150 jobs, ongoing operations have created approximately 16 full-time jobs, and the office tenants have brought 139 full-time and 21 part-time employees into the neighborhood." However, the report also acknowledged that some indicators, such as employment growth in the immediate neighborhood, had not changed, and that other measures, such as residential vacancy, were consistent with the overall trends in the city of Baltimore.

### *Recognition*

Miller's Court has received significant local and national recognition, including a March 2015 visit by President Obama to Charmington's as part of his promotion of living wages. It has also been the recipient of numerous real estate development awards, including:

#### **2011**

- President Obama's Champion of Change Award
- Novogradac Real Estate Investment of the Year

#### **2010**

- US Environmental Protection Agency National Award for Smart Growth Achievement
- Urban Land Institute Jack Kemp Models of Excellence in Work Force Housing Award
- Council of State Community Development Agencies Presidential Award for Innovation
- Baltimore Heritage Preservation Partnership Award
- NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association Best Historical Renovation Award



- NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development Association Community Impact Award
- Baltimore Business Journal Heavy Hitters Best Residential Development Award
- US Green Building Council Maryland Chapter Special Recognition Award

## 2009

- Urban Land Institute Wavemaker Award
- American Institute of Architects Residential Knowledge Community Green Housing Award



*The courtyard offers a welcome outdoor space for tenants and residents.*

## SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

In selecting Miller's Court as the 2015 RBA Gold Medalist, the committee drew attention to the need for creative solutions that help to improve the quality of public education in American cities. Committee members praised the project for its compelling, innovative approach to addressing the need for teachers in the city by providing affordable, high-quality housing in a supportive living environment. The committee commended the project for its impact on the occupants as well as the surrounding neighborhood and city of Baltimore. Members were impressed by its replicability and noted the potential for significant influence, particularly with national partners like Enterprise and Teach for America.

When identifying Miller's Court as a finalist, the committee noted that "it's more than a building"—it serves as a community hub that creates social capital as well as economic value. The project increases the capacity of individuals, organizations, and the community by connecting them with each other and with resources in the surrounding neighborhood and city. The support offered to those living and working in Miller's Court minimizes the feeling of isolation, particularly among new teachers beginning their careers in some of the most challenging educational settings. The committee was impressed by the Enterprise case study detailing the impact of Miller's Court and by the fact that the model had already been adapted to other urban settings in Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Like the other 2015 winners, Miller's Court was a collaborative effort that engaged multiple participants including a private developer, the neighborhood of Remington, teachers and nonprofits, the City of Baltimore and State of Maryland, and local and national investors. The committee observed that the project made use of federal programs designed to encourage investment in older urban areas including Historic Preservation and New Market Tax Credits, as well as other turn-of-the-century initiatives like Teach for America and charter schools that offer resources to

"IN SELECTING MILLER'S COURT AS THE 2015 RBA GOLD MEDALIST, THE COMMITTEE DREW ATTENTION TO THE NEED FOR CREATIVE SOLUTIONS THAT HELP TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN AMERICAN CITIES."

increase the quality of education in American cities. The partnership with Teach for America, with its focus on supporting new teachers, has proven to be particularly valuable by providing a strong educational connection and anchor tenant, a steady stream of prospective apartment tenants, and interest in replicating the model in other cities.

The committee commented on the significance of the project being led by a private developer, demonstrating that it is possible to do social good and make money, and commended Seawall's leadership and vision as well as its continued commitment to Remington, acknowledging that Seawall's ongoing development efforts not only help to improve the neighborhood but also to protect its own investments. The committee appreciated that the developer renovated and repurposed a historic structure that had become a community eyesore as well as the modest and contextual approach to the building design.

## RELATED RBA WINNERS

Miller's Court offers an innovative approach to addressing the quality of education by providing a supportive living and working environment for teachers and education-related nonprofits. Several previous RBA winners have used housing in conjunction with incentives and supportive programs for specific populations, such as artists and service workers, to encourage investment in a targeted geographic area.



**THE ARTIST RELOCATION PROGRAM** in Paducah, Kentucky (2005 Silver Medalist) encourages artists from across the country to relocate to Paducah's Lower Town neighborhood. The city provides relocation incentives and has contributed to the revitalization of a blighted historic neighborhood, strengthened Paducah's creative economy, and renewed the downtown residential community.



**PROJECT ROW HOUSES** (1997 Silver Medalist) in Houston reclaimed an inner-city neighborhood by rehabilitating 22 historic "shotgun" style houses to provide art gallery and installation space for prominent African-American artists, housing and support services for single working mothers, and daycare and after school programs for neighborhood youth.



**CABRILLO VILLAGE** (1989 Silver Medalist) was purchased by farm workers led by Caesar Chavez who, in the face of eviction from grower-owned substandard housing, organized and found a way to buy the property in Ventura County, California as a limited equity cooperative. They improved the village, making it into a place they could afford and were proud to call home.

Other RBA winners have addressed the role of education and schools in community building, such as 2011 Silver Medalist Gary Comer Youth Center/ College Prep in Chicago, and 2009 Gold Medalist Inner-City Arts and 2003 Gold Medalist Camino Nuevo Charter Academy, both in Los Angeles.

More information about these and other RBA winners can be found at [www.rudybruneraward.org](http://www.rudybruneraward.org).

## Resources

This case study was compiled from information gathered from the project application, an extensive site visit in March 2015, discussions with the RBA Selection Committee, and research and interviews conducted during these processes and throughout the writing and editing of this book. Titles and positions of interviewees and URLs listed below were effective as of the site visit unless otherwise noted.

### INTERVIEWS

**Seawall Development Company, LLC:**

Jon Constable, Partner

Donald Manekin, Partner

Thibault Manekin, Partner

**Marks, Thomas Architects:**

Tom Leibel, Principal\*

Nancy Leibrecht, Associate

**City of Baltimore:**

Mary Pat Clarke, Baltimore City Council District 14

Carl Stokes, Baltimore City Council District 12

Eric Booker, Assistant Commissioner, Code Enforcement Inspections

Michael Braverman, Deputy Commissioner, Baltimore Housing

Colin Tarbor, Deputy Mayor, Office of Economic and Neighborhood Development

**Community Representatives:**

Bill Cunningham, Living Classrooms

Joseph McNealy, Executive Director, Central Baltimore Partnership

Elaine Stevens, Manager, The Dizz

Joan Floyd, Remington Neighborhood Alliance\*

Peter Burkill, Greater Remington Improvement Association

Ryan Flanigan, Greater Remington Improvement Association

Ronald J. Daniels, President, Johns Hopkins University\*

Andrew Frank, Special Advisor to the President on Economic Development,  
Johns Hopkins University\*

**Funders:**

David Bowers, Vice President and Market Leader, Mid-Atlantic;

Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

Elaine Dipietro, Vice President, Structured Finance;

Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

Tina Hike-Hubbard, Director of Education; Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

Tiffany Manuel, Vice President, Knowledge, Impact and Strategy;

Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.

Michael Forry, Senior Vice President, Community Capital Mid-Atlantic; SunTrust Bank

Nora Viahoyannis, First Vice President, SunTrust Community Capital; SunTrust Bank

**Miller's Court Commercial and Nonprofit Tenants:**

Laurie Vozella Bell, Center for Family Services,

Catholic Charities Center for Family Services

Michael Burke, Senior Secretary, Experience Corps

(also a Miller's Square homeowner)

Caroline Glass, Communications, Marketing and Operations Manager,

Teach for America\*

Susan Malone, Executive Director, Wide Angle Youth Media

Ali Shah Rasool Smith, Executive Director, Holistic Life Foundation

Amanda Rothschild, Managing Partner, Charmington's

Diane Sellars, Chief of Staff, Teach for America Baltimore

**Miller's Court Residents:**

Jackie Clary\*

Tracy Evans

Alana Simon Purvis\*

Nycole Stawinoga\*

Matt Vaselkiv (former resident)\*

**Miller's Square Homeowners:**

Michael Burke

Andrew and Ashley Gorby

Julie Oxenhandler

**Tire Shop Tenants:**

Stacie Evans, Executive Director, Young Audience Theatre

Baita Feldman, Development Director, Single Carrot Theatre

Allision Garvey, Food Shed Manager, Parts & Labor

**Centers for Educational Excellence Developers:**

Gabriel Canuso, D3 Developers (Oxford Mills in Philadelphia, PA)\*

Paul Doherty, Doherty, Wallace, Pillsbury & Murphy, P.C. Attorneys at Law  
(Springfield, MA)\*

*\*Interviews conducted by phone*

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Silver Medal Winner

## Quixote Village Olympia, Washington

A low-cost, sustainable community of tiny houses developed for—and, in part, by—people who were homeless



Jeremy Bittermann



Panza

## Overview

Submitted by: Panza

Completed: 2013

Total Development Cost: \$3.05 million

Located in Olympia, Washington, Quixote Village is a two-acre residential community that provides permanent, supportive housing for previously homeless adults, including people suffering from mental illness and physical disabilities and recovering from addiction.

Completed in December 2013, the village is composed of 30 tiny cottages facing a central open space and retention ponds, as well as a 2,640-square-foot community building that houses a communal kitchen and gathering room, showers and laundry facilities, staff offices, and a meeting room. Each 144-square-foot house provides just enough room for a single bed, a desk and chair, a half bath, and a closet. Front porches encourage interaction and contribute to the sense of community, as do personalized decorations and small "door gardens" at the cottage entrances.



**"A FASCINATING PROJECT THAT ADAPTED THE TINY HOUSE MODEL TO  
CREATE AN INNOVATIVE DESIGN SOLUTION AND CHANGED PERCEPTIONS  
ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN THE COMMUNITY."** —2015 Selection Committee

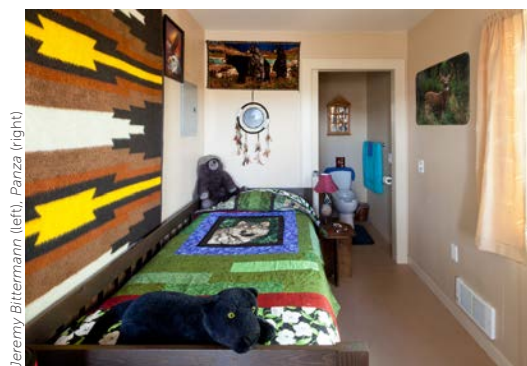
The concept for Quixote Village emerged from a group of community organizers and homeless adults who, in 2007, formed a self-governing tent community in a downtown Olympia parking lot in response to a new city ordinance forbidding sitting or lying down on downtown sidewalks. After city officials threatened to remove the camp, a local church offered to host the community on its grounds.

Over the next seven years, Camp Quixote, as the tent community was called, moved from site to site among local churches with the help of Panza, a nonprofit formed to support Camp Quixote and, eventually, help develop a permanent home for its residents. Panza was able to achieve this final goal after securing a plot of land from Thurston County on the edge of an industrial park in Olympia. The "tiny house" idea—providing a basic, free-standing cottage for each resident with shared bathing and cooking facilities rather than individual rooms or apartments within a larger building—emerged from a series of workshops with camp residents and Panza members led by Garner Miller of MSGS Architects, a local architect and Camp Quixote volunteer.

Although Panza serves as the legal owner and landlord, residents of Quixote Village have responsibilities and continue to play a significant role in governing the community. Weekly resident council meetings address community concerns and advise Panza on new resident applications. Each Quixote Village resident is expected to pay 30% of his or her monthly income as rent, participate in regular council meetings, and share cleaning and maintenance duties, including managing the shared vegetable garden and berry patch. A full-time program and facilities manager and a resident advocate provide support for the community including property management, local transportation, and programmed activities, as well as

individualized counseling that connects residents with education and employment opportunities, local mental and physical health services, and state and federal government aid.

Advocates for the homeless suggest that Quixote Village offers an innovative and practical solution for a widely shared housing problem, presenting a cost-effective and empowering alternative to traditional methods for housing people who are homeless, especially in less urban settings. It provides a sense of place for residents, many of whom have seen their lives dramatically improved in this supportive and empowering community, enabling them to regain their footing and pursue paths towards long-term personal and economic stability. Quixote Village, and Camp Quixote before it, also, in the words of one participant, "changed the way [the] community thinks about homeless people and homelessness," especially among the hundreds of volunteers who got to know the residents as they served as camp "hosts."



Jeremy Bittermann (left), Panza (right)







## Project at a Glance

- A low-cost, sustainable community of 30 tiny cottages developed for, and to a significant degree by, homeless residents, demonstrating an innovative and cost-effective local and national model for housing people who are homeless.
- The seven-year evolution of a self-governing tent community that started as a protest against an anti-homeless ordinance and moved among church sites over 20 times before becoming a permanent housing solution.
- A housing solution that provides both privacy and a strong sense of community, offering residents basic social and financial support in a safe and stable place from which residents can begin rebuilding their lives.
- A demonstration of how the connection between homeless people in tents and the church members and other volunteers who supported them broke down stereotypes and changed the way a city and county think about homelessness.







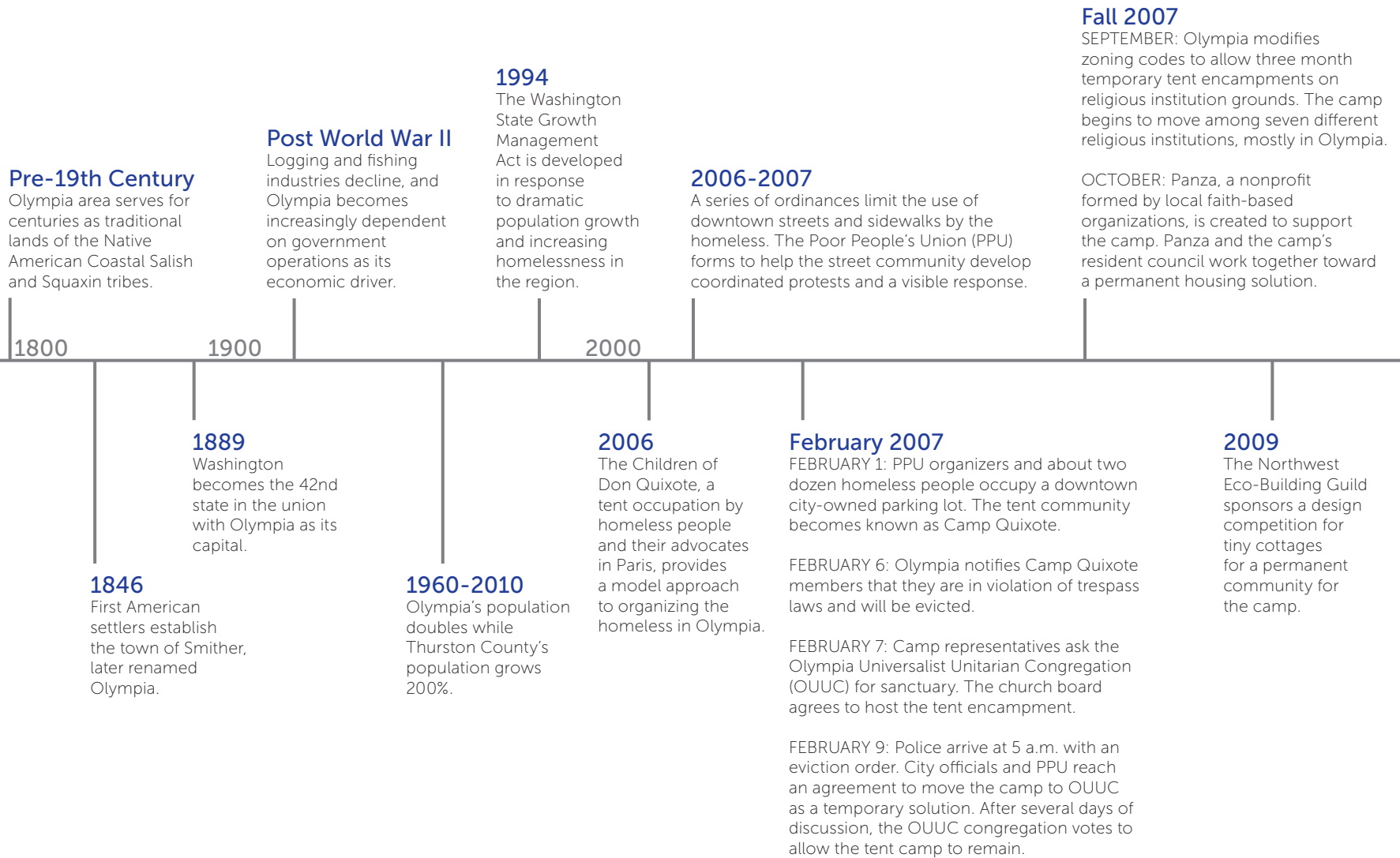
## Project Goals

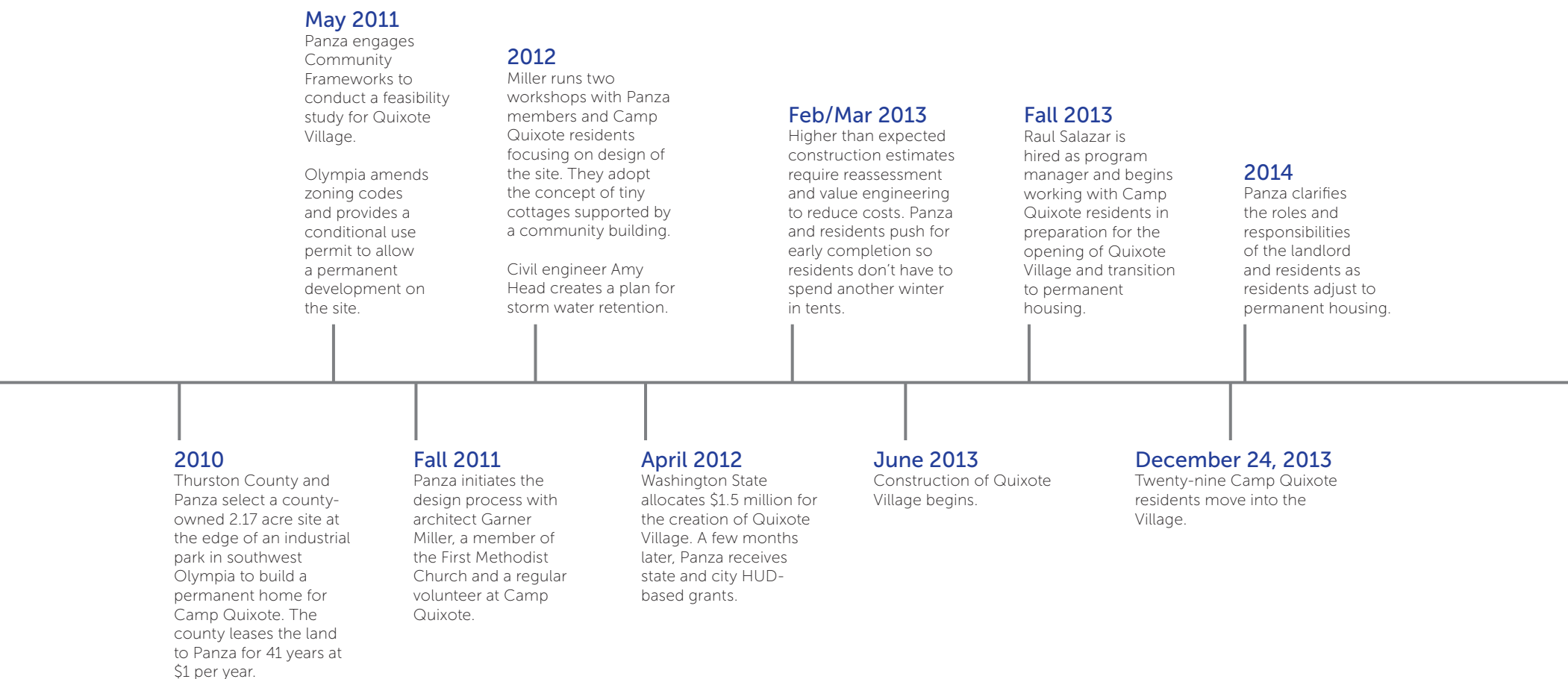
- Provide basic housing for chronically homeless adults—a population that is “often traumatized, disabled, and burdened by deficits,” but resilient.
- Overcome community opposition and keep the tent camp alive.
- Support a community characterized by self-government by residents.
- Provide a low-cost housing solution with a small carbon footprint.
- Offer housing that balances the need for privacy with a design that supports and promotes social interaction and helps maintain a sense of community and common purpose.





# Chronology







## Project Description

### INTRODUCTION

Quixote Village is a residential community in Olympia, Washington, that provides permanent, supportive housing for previously homeless adults, including people suffering from mental illness and physical disabilities and recovering from addiction. The long process that led to the development of Quixote Village began with a tent encampment—a protest by community organizers and homeless individuals against city ordinances intended to push the homeless out of downtown Olympia. For the next seven years, “Camp Quixote” migrated among church sites, supported by Panza, a not-for-profit organization made up largely of members of the faith-based community in Olympia and neighboring towns. Day-to-day operation of the camp was managed primarily by the residents.

Working with community partners and officials from city, county, and state government, Panza was able to obtain a two-acre site at the edge of an industrial park along with funding to build a permanent community. Quixote Village is composed of 30 tiny cottages facing a central open space and retention ponds. A community building houses a communal kitchen and gathering room, showers and laundry facilities, staff offices, and a meeting room. Panza provides support to residents through a full-time program and facilities manager and a resident advocate, local transportation, and individualized counseling that connects residents with education and employment opportunities, local mental and physical health services, and state and federal government aid.



## CONTEXT

### *Olympia*

The area now occupied by the city of Olympia, on the southern-most point of access to inlets from Puget Sound, just 60 miles southwest of Seattle, served for centuries as a fishing, hunting, and gathering site for Native Americans of the Coastal Salish and Squaxin tribes. The European “discovery” of the area was made by a British Vancouver expedition led by Peter Puget in the late eighteenth century, and the first permanent American settlers arrived in the mid-nineteenth century. Olympia was first named the provisional territorial capital in 1853 and later the state capital when Washington became the 42nd state in the union in 1889.

Olympia’s economy depended on industry that was based on its location and ecology—logging, lumber, ship building, and commercial fishing—along with the steady presence of state and county government workers. After World War II, the major industries (particularly logging and ship building) declined, and the economy became, and is still, significantly dependent on Olympia’s status as the site of city, county, and state governments.

Olympia is the seat of Thurston County and is part of a larger metropolitan area that has a total population of about 120,000 and includes the contiguous cities of Tumwater and Lacey. As of the 2010 census, Olympia’s population was largely white (83.7%) with 6% Asian, 10.3% other, and 6% across racial groups identifying as of Hispanic or Latino origin. The median household income for Olympia is \$51,902, about 15% lower than Washington state as a whole.

Thurston County has grown dramatically in recent decades, in part as a spillover of its proximity to Seattle. The population of 55,000 in 1960 more than doubled by 1980 to 124,264 and doubled again by 2010 to 252,264. Olympia has also grown significantly, from under 20,000 in 1960 to over 46,000 in 2010, though the growth rate has slowed in the past 10 years.



*Aerial view of Olympia taken between 1928 and 1940.*

Washington’s population surge was state wide, prompting the passage of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990. Four years later, the first Comprehensive Plan produced under the GMA sought to “find the balance between planning responsibly for our future population while preserving the qualities our residents so appreciate.”

Homelessness was a problem that Olympia and the broader Thurston County area had already been struggling with for decades, a result of the dramatic increase in population, rising housing costs, and financial inequality. Changes in Olympia’s governance model in 1982 resulted in the establishment of an Office of Community Development to address these issues, although it seems that there was often uncertainty about whether the city or county should be responsible for finding solutions and alternative housing options. In 2005, the county developed a 10-year plan to reduce the number of homeless people by half by improving coordination of services and increasing affordable housing options. The

county also began an annual one-day “homeless census” (since adopted by the state for all counties) to document the number of homeless people and provide a baseline against which progress could be measured. The census documented significant fluctuation of Thurston County’s homeless population over the last 10 years, from 441 in 2006 to 976 in 2010 and down to 599 in 2014. The report on the 2014 homeless census attributes the gradual improvement over the past few years to the increased coordination of programs and an improving economy.

Olympia, the most urban city in Thurston County, has experienced a visible presence of homeless people on the streets of downtown. In a city struggling with economic revival, this was seen by local retailers and some officials as discouraging business traffic. Many of Thurston County’s social services for people who are homeless are based in Olympia, which, some say, has helped attract more homeless individuals to the city. Despite the belief that the homeless population comes to Olympia from great distances, the annual homeless surveys suggest that most are actually local to Thurston County, if not Olympia in particular.

## PROJECT HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

The story of Quixote Village is one of empowerment—really self-empowerment—of people on society’s lowest rung: those who are homeless, often including individuals who have suffered physical or sexual abuse or other traumas; suffer from mental illness, chronic diseases, or physical disabilities; and/or are addicted to alcohol or street drugs. It is also a story of the support provided to this community by volunteers, largely from faith-based organizations, who helped create a long-term and finally permanent housing solution for the Camp Quixote community. While Olympia city government was initially an obstacle to be overcome—although a few isolated officials lent support from the start—an important aspect of the story is the turn-around of government bodies and officials who eventually provided

the support, funding, and ordinance and code changes that ultimately made Quixote Village possible. In the end, while the physical solution was unique and cost-effective, the strength of community support and the effort by the homeless population itself may be the most unusual and impressive part of this project.

By 2007, the homeless community in Olympia and its advocates in organizations such as Bread and Roses, a nonprofit Catholic Worker community that served “the homeless, the poor, and the marginalized,” saw the city as hostile to people in need. These attitudes grew particularly strong after the city council passed a series of ordinances designed to keep people who were or even looked homeless off of the streets, culminating in the Pedestrian Interference Ordinance of 2007, which made obstructing pedestrian or vehicular traffic and “aggressive panhandling” on sidewalks, streets, or alleys in downtown areas illegal. Although homeless people and their advocates regularly spoke out at city council meetings, they felt ignored in their protests.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### *Poor People’s Union*

In late 2006, Bread and Roses staff and interns, working with Olympia’s homeless community, began to meet regularly to plan a political action that would provide a place of shelter for homeless adults while dramatizing their situation and the lack of responsiveness from the city. They named their organizing body the Poor People’s Union (PPU) and held Saturday meetings with coffee and pizza, attracting several dozen people from the street community.

From these first discussions, the PPU developed a strategy that included creating a temporary encampment—a tent city where a community could form and members and supporters could work towards “a permanent site

that they owned, and could farm, free of the pressures of the social service system, able to recover at their own pace." In "A Tale of Tent Cities: A Camp Quixote Retrospective," Rob Richards of the PPU notes that they were surprised by the degree to which these homeless people "bought in almost immediately" to a plan that would give them control of their own destiny.

In planning for the tent encampment, Richards reports, a series of committees were established, along with a constitution assuring that "any decision that affected only the street community was made by only members of the street community." Encampment members chose the name Camp

Quixote after a contemporary tent camp set up by homeless protesters in Paris which had called itself The Children of Don Quixote, presumably for their opposition to the power of the city government.

PPU committees made up of Bread and Roses staff and homeless people discussed and planned every aspect of the coming protest. A site selection committee was formed and discussed potential camp locations, eventually choosing a highly visible city-owned lot downtown to keep the focus on city rulings and represent their belief that city land belongs to all people. The goal was to move in on February 1, 2007, when the ordinance would take effect, and toward that end detailed logistical and material preparations were made.

On February 1, protestors and supporters set up 21 tents on the downtown site as well as portable toilets and a kitchen tent, and by the end of the day they shared a community meal. They worried about being removed from the site by the police and considered each day that the camp remained undisturbed a victory. A chicken dinner cooked on site several days later, with food donated by local supporters, took on the trappings of a festive meal celebrating the success of the protest.

While many local residents were supportive of the protestors and brought food and coffee, many local business leaders and city officials were openly opposed. One former city official commented that the camp "fed the narrative of Olympia as dangerous and hurt the tax base [...] the city has a right to regulate and this was clearly illegal." On February 6, the city manager told reporters that "the community's patience is wearing thin." He and the police chief informed the camp members that they were trespassing and subject to arrest and asked them to vacate the site. Pressure of a pending raid led to discussion of alternatives, and a Bread and Roses intern offered to contact leaders of his congregation, the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Church (OUUC), to request sanctuary.



Photos: Rob Richards



The first Camp Quixote encampment in downtown Olympia.



### *Olympia Unitarian Universalist Church*

OUUC's minister, Reverend Arthur Vaeni, had also gotten a call from a city council member who was anonymously supportive of Camp Quixote, asking OUUC to consider hosting the tent city if police moved to evict camp residents from the downtown site. Earlier that year, the congregation's difficulties in managing its own shelter for homeless families had led OUUC to have a series of internal conversations, led by OUUC Board President (and later Panza Board President) Tim Ransom, about OUUC's mutual responsibility, potential liability, goals, and role in working with homeless people. These conversations led the congregation to an understanding of the need for a more holistic approach to homelessness and primed the OUUC congregation to be ready to intervene in the evolving downtown crisis.

On the evening of February 7, representatives of Camp Quixote contacted the church board, concerned that eviction could come at any time. The board went into emergency session and on February 8 voted to create a Temporary Emergency Sanctuary Policy allowing sanctuary with stipulations that sexual predators or people with outstanding warrants be screened out and that drugs or alcohol not be allowed on site. The board also agreed that the temporary sanctuary would only be in place until the full congregation voted on the matter.

At 5:00 a.m. on February 9, officials arrived with an eviction order for the tent encampment and police surrounded the tent site. Reverend Vaeni had been notified of the action early that morning. When he arrived shortly after the police to offer the sanctuary of the church's grounds, it appeared to some city officials, who hadn't known about the fervent discussions of the previous day, that Vaeni had come "from nowhere [...] to offer the church site." Camp residents, organizers, and city officials agreed to the move, so that when the police moved in there was no resistance, averting a difficult response that could have sent camp residents to jail and scattered the community (as it was, several residents left when the police arrived



*Camp Quixote at St. John's Episcopal Church in Olympia.*

and were not heard from for weeks). Volunteers—including the camp's supporter on the city council—brought trucks which carted people, tents, and supplies to the church. Soon after, though, the city informed OUUC that this move was in violation of city codes and that it would have to apply for a permit to allow the camp on its grounds. Obtaining the permit, it was made clear, would involve a significant commitment of time and money.

The question was put to the OUUC congregation, which had an extended discussion and ultimately unanimously approved hosting the camp. Several members of the congregation noted how proud they were that they had come through a long and difficult discussion with an informed and strong commitment to get involved. "Justice won out in the end," one member said.



Soon after the vote, the church board negotiated with city officials, including Steve Friddle, principal planner for the City of Olympia, about the code issues. Friddle helped work out a compliance agreement that allowed the camp to stay for 90 days with a set of requirements (largely addressing public health and safety issues), but with no fees. This agreement became the basis of the ordinance the city passed later in 2007. The church's case was supported by the 2000 Federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), which was created to protect religious institutions from zoning or other land use regulations that are "unduly burdensome."

The goal of the tent city, in the view of the PPU, was to force the government and citizens of Olympia to reexamine the city's approach to dealing with the street community. It seems to have done that and more. Members of the church described how the coming of Camp Quixote galvanized their community and brought ordinary citizens into direct contact with homeless people as peers, resulting in changes in understanding, lessening of stereotypes, and, in some cases, creation of long-term friendships.

### *City of Olympia*

City policy also changed as a result of the protest and OUUC's involvement. Although the city had agreed to the move to church grounds, this solution violated existing zoning codes. In 2008, Olympia City Council passed the Temporary Homeless Encampment Ordinance as a zoning modification that allowed tents to remain at a particular site for up to three months. Similar ordinances eventually were passed in Lacey, Tumwater, and Thurston County. Several years later, the ordinance was modified again to extend the allowable time to six months. The ordinance specified that only religious organizations could host a tent camp, with an additional proviso that there be a congregant volunteer on duty 24 hours a day. One city official noted that connecting the camp to religious sites would help it to secure second amendment protection against attempts of any future government to dismantle it.



Seven churches in the area hosted Camp Quixote during its more than 20 moves over seven years.

### *Panza*

The need to find a new home for the tent community after three months and to arrange ongoing logistical support led to discussions among OUUC and other religious institutions within Olympia and in Tumwater and Lacey as well. This resulted in the creation of a support organization called Panza (as Sancho Panza lent support to Don Quixote), composed of people from multiple religious institutions and registered with the state of Washington as a nonprofit in October 2007. Panza became a federally recognized 501(c)(3) organization in 2008.

Panza's mission was to provide critical support for Camp Quixote. Initially that meant organizing the church tent sites and managing the moves among them, providing volunteers to serve at the sites, raising funds, and lobbying and interfacing with government and social service agency officials. Ultimately, Panza was the primary advocate for and eventually legal owner and manager of the permanent housing site for camp residents.

Under Panza's guidance, in this post-protest period and over the next seven years, Camp Quixote moved from site to site, over 20 times in all, among seven churches, with additional support from a synagogue, a mosque, and other organizations. Although Lacey, Tumwater, and Thurston County passed similar ordinances allowing temporary tent encampments, only one church outside of Olympia, in Lacey, actually hosted the camp.

Throughout this period, one constant was the self-governing nature of the camp. The residents formed a resident council, elected officers, and organized into a series of committees that managed issues ranging from internal security to meals. Problems among residents were addressed by extensive discussions in open weekly meetings that included the entire resident group. This process appeared to the volunteers to be functional, positive, and in many ways therapeutic for residents, many of whom had

experienced years of difficult personal circumstances, including disempowerment and abuse.

The Camp Quixote tent community continued and thrived, and it soon came to be seen within Olympia as something positive rather than a liability. Several people noted with satisfaction that many government officials as well as the local newspaper that had called for the camp to be ousted later became supporters and called Camp Quixote a great success. The city ordinance that allowed the churches to host encampment sites required that before each move to the next site, an open meeting had to be held for neighborhood residents. Typically, the first time the group moved to a site, these meetings were crowded and contentious. By the second or third time around, however, they became non-events, as neighboring residents realized that Camp Quixote did not represent a threat. To the contrary, in many cases it was seen as a positive addition to the neighborhood, as camp members lent "eyes on the street," provided security patrols, and helped keep the neighborhood clean.

However well run, Camp Quixote was still a community in tents. Although one church with a more protected setting had become the regular winter-over site, Washington winters can be difficult, and no one considered the tents to be a long-term solution. A permanent site with built structures was always the ultimate goal. Panza members and the camp's resident council lobbied government officials toward a long-term solution, including finding and obtaining a piece of land for a permanent home. Jill Severn's relationship with members of the state government proved particularly effective. Severn, an OUUC member and later president of the Panza board, had a varied career in journalism and editing, educational program development, and state government, where she had worked on educational policy and served as a speechwriter for two governors. She and many members of Panza had personal and professional connections





*Views of Quixote Village and the surrounding industrial park looking west and east along Mottman Road.*

with city, county, and state officials, and the organization became very effective at lobbying and turning volunteers and residents out en masse for government meetings.

In 2010, Thurston County identified a number of potential sites that could serve as the permanent home for Camp Quixote. Panza and county officials evaluated four sites and settled on a 2.17-acre parcel on the edge of an industrial park. The site also placed Quixote Village within the concern and purview of three jurisdictions: Thurston County, the city of Olympia, and the city of Tumwater, whose northern border is a few feet from the property. County Commissioner Cathy Wolfe, speaking on behalf of all three county commissioners, testified that Thurston County was “100% behind this effort” as “efficient, economically feasible, and environmentally sensitive...a model for the rest of the county.” Later that year, the county leased the parcel of land to Panza for 41 years at \$1 per year. This land use required changes to Olympia’s master plan and to zoning codes, which were recommended by the Planning Commission in May 2011 and approved by the city council in September as a conditional use permit allowing residential unit construction in this industrial zone.

When the site was announced, neighboring industry owners protested. They felt that the plan had not been announced until it was too late for them to do anything about it and were concerned that the presence of the homes in an industrial area would lead to restrictions on their operations. They also feared that residents would sooner or later complain about noise, leading the city to change the rules governing the industrial zone. The business owners sued the city but lost at every turn.

### *Community Frameworks*

Having a site for the permanent community made it possible for supportive state legislators to enable a \$1.5 million appropriation from the Washington State Housing Trust Fund for the proposed Quixote Village. With land

and significant funding in hand, the need to create a plan for its development and implementation became clear. In May 2010, Panza leaders were introduced to Ginger Segel of Community Frameworks, a local nonprofit community development organization with a mission “to support and develop affordable housing as a foundation upon which individuals, families, and neighborhoods can build vital communities.” Community Frameworks’ considerable experience as a nonprofit developer of affordable housing brought important expertise to the project.

As an initial test of their relationship, Panza contracted with Community Frameworks to complete a feasibility report, specifying what would be needed in order to complete the project now that the parcel of land and initial state funds were available. This included research on the potential for further public funding, which became more complicated as the concept of non-traditional housing in the form of tiny cottages without bathrooms began to emerge.

The feasibility report, completed in November 2011, suggested that the construction would cost about \$2 million. By this point, Segel and Community Frameworks were excited to be involved in the project and officially signed on to be a part of the development team.

## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Once the land was transferred from the county, Panza began in earnest to design the facility. The design process was led by Garner Miller of MSGS Architects and included Panza Board member Bob Wolpert, an architect, and Amy Head, a civil engineer. Based on the results of several participatory design workshops with Panza and Camp Quixote residents, Miller settled on a circular plan that placed 30 tiny cottages and a community building around an open space. Initially, each cottage had electricity and heat but no plumbing, and the community building, which faced the street, included a

shared kitchen, bathrooms, and gathering spaces. The cottages were later modified to include a half-bath. The plan was also revised to incorporate an extensive storm water management system designed by Head.

The groundbreaking ceremony was held in early summer 2013, and the team felt pushed to move construction forward so that residents could move in by the end of the year and not have to spend another winter in tents. In fact, the site was occupied just a few days after the start of winter, on December 24, 2013.

Getting a design that worked for Quixote Village was a challenge, given the specific needs and desires of the residents, limited funding, and a small, difficult site. Several critical elements determined the final outcome of Quixote Village, including a participatory design process that involved Camp Quixote residents, leading to the use of the tiny cottage model and layout of the site; addressing storm water management and necessary codes and permits; and value engineering to bring the project within budget.



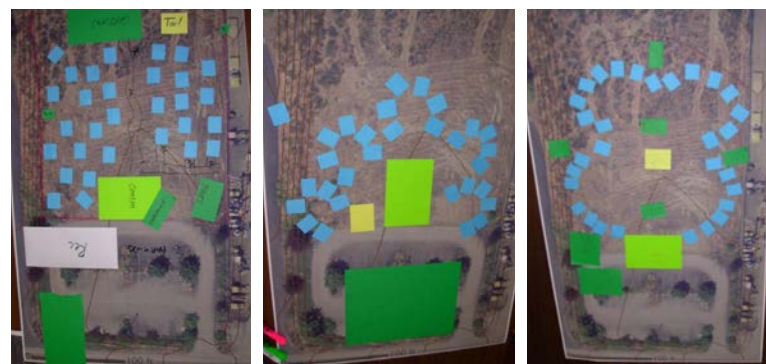
*Initial rendering of the proposed design.*

### *Participatory Design Process*

Architect Garner Miller was then a member of one of the hosting congregations, the First United Methodist Church of Olympia, and had volunteered with Camp Quixote when it was at the church site. As such, he had gotten to know many of the people in the camp and understood their concerns. Miller, whose seven-person firm, MSGS Architects, does mostly commercial projects, provided his services pro bono at first and was eventually contracted by Panza to complete the design.

The conceptual plan and many design details for Quixote Village, such as the layout and spacing of the cottages and community building, were addressed in two design workshops led by Miller, working directly with homeless residents of Camp Quixote and Panza members. Panza staff and residents recalled these workshops as creative and exciting and felt that they had played a major role in representing resident needs in the final design.

The first meeting focused on the general layout of the site. In 2009, Panza and representatives of the Northwest Eco-Building Guild, which promotes sustainable small housing, sponsored a design competition to identify prototypes for Quixote Village. Although the competition resulted in only three entries, it introduced the concept of tiny cottages supported by a community building, and that idea became an important part of these workshops. Residents were attracted to the idea of having free-standing homes rather than a unit in a large building. Much of the workshop addressed how 30 cottages and a community building would be organized. Three groups were formed and given maps of the site and paper cut-outs of building footprints. They devised three different ways of laying out the houses: (1) a grid with rows of houses, (2) five clusters of houses, and (3) a circular plan with houses surrounding an open area. When the whole group came together to discuss these options, the grid was rejected as too “street-like,” and the clusters seemed too likely to create and support cliques within the



*Design workshop with Camp Quixote residents and Panza members (top) and resulting site design alternatives.*

MSGS Architects



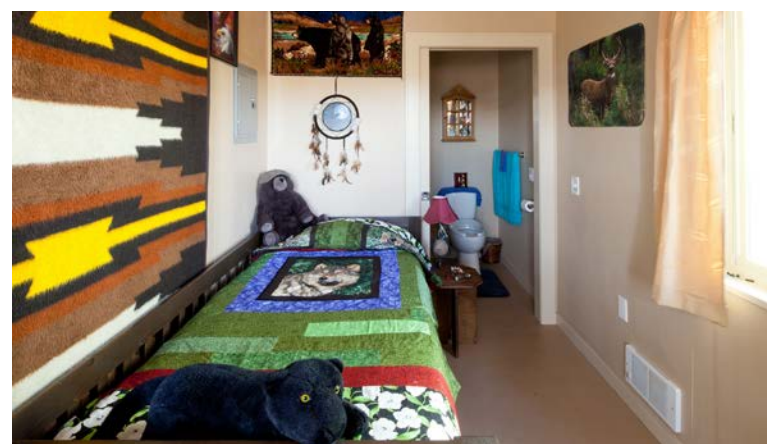
larger community. The circular plan was adopted as the one that could most help provide a sense of community for the entire population while still maintaining separation for privacy. The second meeting addressed issues of the design of the community building and individual cottages.

### *Adapting the Tiny House Model*

For Camp Quixote residents, adapting the tiny house model for their cottages represented a perfect fit—larger and more protected than the tents they had been using, the cottages provided some independent personal space but were small enough to help make the community affordable. Residents emphasized their need for autonomy and privacy within the community, which meant, in part, having no shared walls among their homes. Many of the homeless adults in this area, after all, had lived in the woods before coming to Olympia or on Olympia's streets.

The cottages were intended to provide a modest bedroom with a closet. As small as the cottages already were, residents were willing to trade off some indoor space for a small front porch. Porches were important to the residents as a way to connect to the community (to be able to nod at and greet neighbors and passersby) and to the outdoors. Sitting on one's own front porch is a symbol of ownership of the space and an important demonstration of belonging for this group of people who had lived so long without a permanent place to call their own.

In a development without common walls, a minimum distance between buildings of 10 feet was required by fire code. Side windows were off-set so that no one would have a direct view into a neighbor's home. The group indicated a preference for a simple, traditional style home with a pitched roof, with most amenities residing in the community building. Two of the cottages directly adjacent to the community building were made accessible according to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards with ramps and 10 additional square feet of interior space.



Photos: Jeremy Blittemann

Each cottage includes a front porch, bedroom, and powder room.



Initially, the architects proposed using factory-built structures for the cottages to speed construction and save money. However, there were no available buildings that would have met their criteria, and the ones that came closest would have required considerable on-site modifications. The contractor, Construct, Inc., offered a competitive price to build on site, and the final design closely resembled the images residents had seen in the workshops.

Quixote Village cottages have just enough room for a single bed, desk, and chair, plus a small back room with a sink, toilet, and closet. There are five different exterior paint color schemes to support visual variety and individualization, and many residents add their own personal items and decorations, including chairs, hammocks, and art. Each has a small patch of land in front which is typically used for a lawn, flowers, or an individual herb or vegetable garden.

The cottages are wood framed with painted plywood floors supported by concrete posts, roofs constructed of engineered lumber, and wood stud walls with board-and-batten siding over fiberglass batt insulation. Each cottage has electric heating and a sprinkler, with two sprinklers in the ADA accessible units, as per fire code.

### *The Community Building*

Residents played a key role in determining the design of kitchen and bathroom layouts in the community building, drawing on years of experience using the shared tent kitchen in Camp Quixote. The community building was intended to be homey and lodge-like, comfortable for people used to living in the woods, as many residents had. The combined dining room and living space serves as a “great room” with a high ceiling and a wood stove and uses natural materials such as cedar siding on beams and columns as well as cork flooring. The living room windows have a view



*The community building includes a shared kitchen and great room.*

Photos: Jeremy Bittermann

north toward a forested area. The broad back porch acts as an extension of the living room, with comfortable chairs and a view of the common area and woods.

The community building serves as the development's face onto the street, and its lockable front door provides secure access into the fenced site. It houses necessary facilities lacking in the cottages such as showers and bathtubs (as specifically requested by the residents), coin-operated clothes washers and dryers, and lockable storage units. The four showers/tubs and two toilets in the community building are in individual rooms with lockable doors rather than large, institutional toilet or shower rooms. The large kitchen is designed for individual as well as group meal preparation. A comfortable living room area anchored by a wood-burning stove is used for sitting and reading, small group gatherings, and whole community meetings. Staff and residents post notices and messages on a chalkboard on the wall in the living area, and a separate meeting room used for resident council and Panza board meetings is located across from the program manager and resident advisor offices.

Lockable storage (both refrigerators and pantry lockers for non-perishable food and personal items) was important to the residents, responding to a constant concern, after living on the street or in the woods, about loss of personal property. That fear seems to have lessened in this community over time and there are now discussions about whether, for instance, locks are needed on the refrigerators. A soda machine and the chalkboard wall that serves as a message center were added to the community building in response to resident requests.

From the designers' perspective, the combination of tiny cottages and the large community building provides an ideal mix of the kind of privacy that many of the previously homeless residents desired, with opportunities for



Initial community building floor plan.

interaction over meals and use of other facilities in the community building that help promote a sense of community.

### *Sustainability*

All affordable housing projects that receive support from the Washington State Housing Trust Fund are required to meet state Evergreen Sustainable Development Standards, which are intended to safeguard “health and safety, increase energy and water efficiency, promote sustainable living, and preserve the environment.” In Quixote Village, no carpet or vinyl was allowed; landscape used water efficient design and plantings; the community building has piping and pre-wiring for solar photovoltaic and solar hot water systems; roofing and paving were designed to reduce heat island effects; and efficient lighting, heating systems, and appliances were used. In many ways, the small size of the cottages themselves may be the site’s most sustainable feature, reducing the amount of material used as well as the heating costs of more typical-sized housing.

### *Storm Water Management*

Over the years, Community Frameworks has learned that “donated land often comes with donated problems,” and in the case of the site given by Thurston County for Quixote Village, the biggest of those problems was water drainage. The need to retain and direct storm water flow had the largest impact on the final design. Civil engineer Amy Head, who had gotten to know architect Garner Miller through involvement in Leadership Thurston County, was brought in to design the storm water management plan. The water issues had to be reviewed and approved by three jurisdictions: Thurston County and the cities of Olympia and Tumwater.

Storm water management is often an important issue in Olympia, as in most of the Pacific Northwest, due to the plentiful annual rainfall and the clay subsoil that doesn’t allow water to infiltrate. County code required that the Quixote Village site allow no more water to flow out than in its original,



*Storm water management issues required the addition of on-site retention ponds.*

pre-development condition, which in this case, lacking other historical data, was calculated to be a wooded area. Given these conditions and the tight budget, finding enough space to hold the required storm water was not an easy assignment.

Solution options were limited by the small, narrow lot. Off-site water storage in neighboring lots would have been expensive to construct and wouldn’t have held enough water to solve the problem.

Resolving the storm water management issues and site design was an iterative process between the architect and engineer. The site design came first, following the resident workshops, and was handed off to Head, whose assessment of required pond size created issues the architects then had to address in adapting the design, following which Head reviewed and made final water management calculations. The first design she received placed retention ponds on the outside of the lot, surrounding the houses



and community building, which themselves enclosed an open space to be used as a garden, much like the original PPU plan of a village with a farm. This plan was the one that was submitted to the county for the conditional use permit.

The required size of water retention ponds, however, made the proposed design unfeasible. In fact, at one point it seemed as if the ponds might be too big to fit on the property and still allow room for the houses and community building. Olympia code, however, provided storm water modeling credits that allowed a 20% reduction of water retention if natural dispersion plans were used. Natural dispersion, in this case, meant that most water on the site flowed naturally, without being artificially collected and piped to the ponds. It is considered “low impact development,” mimicking what water has always done: flow to the lowest points.

The final engineering design incorporated three ponds. In the first two dry ponds, designed to hold water in heavy rain, water is treated using plants and cattails. The third pond is wet and substantially deeper at 12 feet, with a relief valve into an existing fourth pond off-property. The three ponds function as one big collection area. One large pipe brings water in at the point closest to the community building, additional pipes connect the three ponds, and one more pipe leads out of the property at the back.

Even with the 20% credit, the required pond size was so large that the circle of houses facing one another grew uncomfortably small. Quixote residents strongly indicated a preference for a low density community with space between the homes, so when they reviewed the revised plan, the houses facing one another seemed much too close. In the next iteration, therefore, the ponds were brought into the central open space, surrounded by the cottages. There was no longer enough space to complete the circle of cottages around the ponds, so in the new layout, two rows of staggered cottages face one another across the expanses of water. A community

vegetable garden and berry patch fill available space on either side of the community building.

A landscape architect was brought in to design a required green buffer around the perimeter and proposed a simple row of trees to separate Quixote Village from the surrounding industrial sites. Black chain-link fencing was used around the last and largest pond because of its 12-foot depth. Since intensive landscaping was one of the things lost to cost cutting, residents have helped improve the site by cultivating their own front yard gardens as well as the community garden and berry patch and by placing plants (mostly donated) around the village. In addition, volunteers from the city of Olympia and Washington Americorps provided and installed more plants around the storm water ponds.

### *Cost Cutting and Value Engineering*

None of the participants in this project commanded significant monetary resources. Panza and the residents became adept at lobbying for funding at state, county, and city levels, but the price tag for Quixote Village remained a significant sum. Community Frameworks’ 2011 feasibility study pointed out that fundraising was a challenge because Panza was a new organization with no track record to give confidence to funders or lenders. Given that reality, Panza’s ability to raise the needed funding was impressive, even more so when it succeeded in raising additional money as costs grew from \$2 million to \$3 million.

Early in 2013, Panza was pressed for both funds and time, given its commitment to occupancy by winter 2013 so residents would not have to spend another cold season in tents. A third-party cost estimator determined that the project’s price would be higher than anticipated, which, along with changes suggested by value engineering, prompted Panza and the design team to reduce the project scope and cut \$500,000 from the construction budget. The community building lost a second floor loft

library and wrap-around porch. Cedar siding and cork flooring originally intended for the cottage interiors became board-and-batten walls and painted plywood floors. Concrete slab foundations for the cottages were replaced by concrete posts that supported the wood frames. Other changes included fewer cabinets in the kitchen and the elimination of bi-fold doors separating bathrooms and closets in the cottages. A picnic shelter and shop building were dropped from the plans. Eventually some items listed in the bids as alternates were able to be included, such as painting the community building interior, installing downspouts and gutters, and providing fencing around the site. Additional amenities were supplied by volunteers who painted cottage interiors, made curtains, and donated toilet accessories and the community building's wood stove.

### *Codes and Permitting*

The original cottage design was unusual not only for its size—a mere 144 square feet—but also for having no indoor plumbing. Sinks, toilets, and showers were amenities meant to be in the community building only. Living in cottages that had no plumbing would not have been a stretch for Camp Quixote residents who had spent seven years living in tents, but it was a sufficiently atypical design to complicate the process of obtaining funding and approvals. There were no models or precedents the city could use in providing permits for this type of development. The cottages would not fit code requirements for individual dwelling units, nor for dormitory or multifamily units, nor for a trailer park. Half-baths (each with a toilet and sink) were therefore added, largely in response to urging by funders, Panza board members, and local affordable housing proponents.

Units with toilets but no showers still presented problems with respect to codes, permits, and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 requirements for rental assistance for low-income households. In the end, the development was treated as if it were a deconstructed dormitory. For the International Residential Code and the city's conditional

use permit, the cottages were considered sleeping units rather than dwelling units, like Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing. To qualify for HUD vouchers, the city wrote a local definition of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing to describe Quixote Village, understanding that HUD allows facilities to meet either its definition or the definition in a local code.

Construction was difficult largely because of limited tractor access to the narrow and often muddy site. It would have been easier if equipment could have entered from the side, but at the time, Panza was in court battles with neighbors who refused to allow such access. Moreover, there was not the efficiency that would have been available if these had been shared-wall row houses rather than individual units. Still, the project was completed in time for the residents to be out of tents for the winter of 2014. The site was occupied on Christmas Eve, 2013.

### *A Permanent Home*

The physical setting works well, by most accounts, but the first year on the site was a period of adjustment and change for both the residents and Panza. The organization hired its first full-time employee, Raul Salazar, in the fall of 2013 so that he could establish relationships with the residents, learn how the organization functioned, and help design the rules and policies under which Quixote Village would be run prior to the transition. Salazar had studied criminal justice and, having spent years as a probation officer, had considerable experience working with people with histories of drug abuse and mental illness.

Salazar was not used to or comfortable with the lack of structure at Quixote Village. Panza had hoped to run the village in much the same manner as Camp Quixote had been run, with the resident council maintaining significant control over rules and decisions. But a number of incidents occurred in the first months of occupying the permanent site that required staff and police to come to the site after hours, including drug use and aggressive

behavior. Moreover, there were complaints by residents that some on the resident council abused their position. One original camp resident in particular was seen as the cause of difficulties and was uncomfortable with the new rules, reportedly saying when confronted, "You can't kick me out—this place was built for me."

Among the most important changes that took place in the transition from Camp Quixote to Quixote Village was the institution of a policy that all residents must pledge and work to stay "clean and sober," a step significantly beyond the Camp Quixote requirement of no drug or alcohol use on site. This change, which had been discussed extensively in resident meetings prior to the move to the permanent site, played a role in the turnover of residents in the first months of Quixote Village's operation. Many who left were not ready or able to make such a commitment, although for those who stayed, risks remained. In early 2015, one resident died of a drug overdose, the first and only incident of this kind since Quixote Village opened.

Residents and Panza members soon discovered that the situation had changed, and the ideal of resident self-government that had been so effective in the tent camp had to be adapted to a new reality in which Panza was the owner and landlord with legal responsibility and liability for operations. For example, tenant law required confidentiality and due process in the case of evictions, which conflicted with the open dialogue process and quick expulsion after a resident council vote that occurred in Camp Quixote.

Eventually, a new system was established which came with a series of re-formulated guidelines. Residents were required to sign leases, agreeing to pay 30% of their income, if they had any, toward rent. They accepted rules that prohibited aggressive behavior or substance use and agreed to be monitored by staff-administered drug tests, understanding that eviction could result from a violation of the rules. The eviction of one of the early



Jeremy Bittermann

*Residents value the autonomy and privacy provided by the cottages.*

residents, after a series of complaints and numerous attempts to address the problems through other measures, made this reality clear for all residents. In the first year, about a dozen of the initial residents left for many reasons, most often because of difficulty living under the more structured system. Of the 31 residents still living in the tents of Camp Quixote at the time Quixote Village opened, 29 moved in, and 17 remained 15 months later. The remaining cottages were filled by others from the homeless population of Olympia.





Jeremy Bittermann

*Porches provide important connections to outdoors and the community.*

Turnover has slowed since then as the remaining original and new residents have accepted and seem quite comfortable with the established goals, policies, and procedures. Residents continue to participate in the operation of the village, albeit with less authority within the framework of the new structure.

Churches and volunteers continue to be involved, but the nature of volunteer efforts is shifting as the needs of the Quixote Village community change. Many saw Thanksgiving 2014 as a turning point in resident self-image and sense of independence when offers of donated food and cooking help were politely declined by residents in favor of a meal that they purchased and prepared themselves. It also represented a difficult change for some volunteers who were needed less for these basic services.

Quixote Village continues to receive financial support from churches, local Native American tribes, and individuals, and people still volunteer to bring services and programs to the Village, but Panza is trying to redirect volunteer efforts to other critical forms of support, such as education, job training, and health services. Social service agencies with specialization in these areas are taking on a greater role.

## OPERATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Quixote Village is a community, not a social service agency. Residents live in their own rented space and are free to do what they wish during the day. Many work in the community garden or maintain their own small front gardens. Several have jobs and a few do day labor. Four are going to school, two have recently earned high school diplomas, and others spend time reconnecting with family. Some attend intensive outpatient addiction treatment programs and go to mental health peer support group meetings. The residents' only requirement as members of Quixote Village, in addition to paying rent, is to spend a portion of each week doing maintenance and cleaning chores assigned by the resident council.

To support residents, Panza staff members work hard to connect them with relevant programs, treatments, and services available in and around Olympia. Residents routinely take part in treatment programs, and an increasing number are taking advantage of educational programs.

The resident council and its elected executive committee meet regularly with the program manager to discuss issues. The executive committee interviews potential new, pre-screened candidates and provides input to staff members who make the final determination regarding admissions. More recently, several residents participated on the team that interviewed candidates to fill the resident advocate position. The resident advocate, Panza's second paid employee at Quixote Village, helps residents gain access to the variety of local, state, county, and federal services to which they are entitled, including health care, employment, and counseling.

At Quixote Village, there is also an emphasis on health and wellbeing. Volunteer nurses regularly visit the village and meet with residents. Yoga classes are offered as are exercise activities, such as group hikes. None are required, but many residents take part. Perhaps the most significant health benefits come from living in the community itself. Residents report greatly reduced stress levels as a result of being part of a community and knowing they will be spending the night in a safe and warm setting. They also comment on the vast improvement in their diet that comes from eating more fresh vegetables and cooking for themselves. In fact, residents have full control over the extensive vegetable garden and plan, purchase, and prepare their own meals.

Panza owns a van which is driven by staff and volunteers and used to take residents to programs, events, doctor and mental health appointments, and the food bank. Some residents have their own cars while others make use of bicycles and public transportation, which has recently become much more accessible thanks to the location of a bus stop only a block away.

There is no limit to how long a resident can stay at Quixote Village. This can be long-term housing if needed and desired. Some residents see it that way and have no plans to leave, although that could change as people build new lives and relationships. Those who plan to stay are, for the most part, older and/or more severely disabled. Others view this as a step towards independence and plan to leave after a year or so as they achieve more stability in their lives.

When a cottage at Quixote Village becomes vacant due to resident turnover, staff look to a waiting list of individuals that is maintained by a non-profit agency that acts as a county-wide, single point of entry for homeless programs for single adults. The slow process of filling empty cottages is frustrating to Panza, and improving the system through better coordination with county agencies is a near-term goal.

## **ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

In addition to the faith-based institutions that formed the basis for Panza, Quixote Village also partnered with Community Frameworks as its developer, AmeriCorps volunteers who planted native plants in the storm water ponds, and the Eco-Building Guild for a design competition for the cottages. Catholic Community Services provided considerable logistical support and advice to Camp Quixote, and teams from a local technical school and the Evergreen State College are collaborating with Panza on the design and construction of additional outbuildings. Interns from a nursing program at St. Martin's College in Lacey provide regular wellness visits for residents. Additional and continuing financial support comes from the Nisqually, Snoqualmie, and Chehalis Tribes; the Boeing Employees' Community Fund; and several foundations, including Seattle's Medina Foundation and the Elizabeth A. Lynn Foundation. Panza also works closely with city, state, and county agencies to make sure that residents receive the services and benefits to which they are entitled.



Panza



Organized activities such as Halloween trick-or-treating and meals connect residents, families, volunteers, and the community.

The role of volunteers has changed since Quixote Village opened but is still important. During the years of Camp Quixote, volunteers provided critical resources, including meals and staffing the mandated 24-hour monitoring of the camp in three-hour shifts. In Quixote Village, residents are more able to get, grow, and cook their own food, and round-the-clock community staffing is no longer required. The focus now is on redirecting volunteer efforts to services that support residents' growth, such as educational programs or job skills training. Volunteers who bring improved quality of life experiences are welcomed and regularly provide haircuts, art activities (for example, workshops in guitar, batik, and creative writing), and exercise programs. Residents invite friends and supporters to meals and special events and open Quixote Village to children from nearby residential areas for Halloween festivities each year.

## FINANCING

### *Development*

Although raising all the funds necessary to create Quixote Village was no easy task, the list of sources that made it possible is short and straightforward. About 90% of all development funds came from government sources, most of it from state and county funds. The early appropriation from the State of Washington Housing Trust Fund of \$1,559,000 not only provided half of the total development costs in a single stroke, it also gave credibility to the project at a crucial time when Panza was seeking other funding sources and requesting adjustments of city codes.

Another 25% of funds came through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) from the state (\$644,022) and the City of Olympia (\$55,000 designated specifically for the community building). Thurston County donated the land and granted an additional \$170,000 from the 2163 Fund, which comes from document recording fees and is specifically earmarked for homeless housing programs. Approximately \$300,000 came from cash

TABLE 1: DEVELOPMENT SOURCES AND USES

<i>Sources</i>		<i>Soft Costs</i>	
Washington State Housing Trust Fund	\$1,559,000	Architect	\$200,822
Washington State CDBG	\$644,022	Developer Fee	\$170,000
Thurston County (donated land)	\$333,000	Legal - Real Estate	\$36,000
Thurston County 2163 Fund	\$170,000	Davis Bacon Monitoring	\$10,500
Olympia CDBG (exclusively for the community building)	\$55,000	Environmental Assessment	\$4,990
Cash Donations (private sources)	\$215,082	Boundary and Topographic Survey	\$3,063
In-Kind Services	\$80,321	Geotechnical Study	\$1,335
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,052,999</b>	Capital Needs Assessment	\$1,300
<i>Uses</i>		<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$428,010</b>
<i>Acquisition</i>		<i>Permanent Financing</i>	
Land	\$333,000	State Housing Trust Fund Fees	\$31,000
Closing, Title, and Recording Costs	\$4,726	County Administration of CDBG Funds	\$3,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$337,726</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$34,000</b>
<i>Construction</i>		<i>Capitalized Reserves</i>	
Community Building	\$665,500	Operating Reserves	\$50,000
Cottages	\$568,000	Replacement Reserves	\$100,000
Site Work/Infrastructure/General Conditions	\$419,267	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$150,000</b>
Primary Electrical Service (through Puget Sound Energy)	\$30,540	<i>Other Development Costs</i>	
Off-Site Infrastructure	\$25,000	Permits, Fees, and Hookups	\$94,811
Material Testing and Other Miscellaneous Fees	\$4,157	Insurance	\$5,655
Furniture	\$2,165	Bidding Costs	\$1,798
Other Construction Costs	\$25,910	Development Period Utilities	\$1,030
Sales Tax	\$153,146	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$103,294</b>
Construction Contingency	\$106,285	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,052,999</b>
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,999,970</b>		



donations from private sources including community organizations, foundations, and individuals as well as in-kind contributions, including architect and real estate fees. Contributing organizations included the Nisqually and Chehalis Tribes and the Boeing Employee Community Fund.

Of the available funds for development, \$1,999,970 was used for hard construction costs and \$428,010 for soft costs, and \$150,000 was set aside for operating costs and replacement reserves. The per-unit cost for all development expenses was just over \$88,000.

### *Operating Expenses*

Quixote Village's total operating costs for 2015 were projected to be \$230,841. This sum does not include food, which is purchased by residents or donated, or significant levels of programming and social services which

are provided by state, city, or county agencies or nonprofit organizations. It does include salaries for two staff members—the program manager and resident advocate—as well as office and organizational operations (auditing and legal services, copying and office supplies, insurance, maintenance, utilities, etc.), and a set-aside fund for operating and replacement reserves.

Most of the revenue to cover these expenses comes from the Washington Housing Trust Fund (targeted to non-HUD supported units); grants administered by Thurston county; and a community investment partnership of the United Way, the county, and the three largest cities within the county (\$118,681). An additional \$88,580 comes from rental fees for the 30 cottages. About 10% of that rental income is paid by residents in rental fees that equal 30% of their income. The rest comes from HUD Section 8 payments which cover the difference between what the low-income tenants can pay and the full rental value of the unit. This income source is expected to increase as Quixote Village is using only a portion of the 25 project-based Section 8 vouchers it was granted by HUD.

**TABLE 2: 2015 OPERATING BUDGET (PROJECTED)**

<i>Income</i>	
Grants and Contracts	\$118,681
Rent	\$88,580
Additional Donations	\$23,400
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$230,661</b>
<i>Expenses</i>	
Payroll	\$108,317
Operations	\$79,839
Contract Services	\$26,685
Office Administration	\$2,500
Reserve	\$13,500
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$230,841</b>

### **IMPACT**

Quixote Village is an exemplary story of how a group of people on the lowest rung of the social ladder—people who were homeless—effected powerful change by taking control of their own lives with important support from local nonprofit organizations, primarily from the faith-based community. What started as a political protest against laws removing the homeless from downtown Olympia streets led to a traveling tent community and eventually a permanent home. Quixote Village made innovative use of a tiny house model for its 30 cottages, providing a low-cost, independent living model for housing formerly homeless people.

Quixote Village also shows that “bottom-up” efforts such as this need great persistence and perseverance to reach their goals. In this case, the tent community had to survive seven years in temporary encampments and learn to work with local government to create the permanent solution. Government support was needed to procure the site and development funds and to devise ways to help make this model, which didn’t fit previous rules and codes for supportive housing, work. The long process brought volunteers into contact with Quixote residents who helped change perceptions of homelessness.

### *Empowerment of Homeless People*

The most essential theme that runs through the story of Quixote Village is the empowerment of the homeless population of Olympia. In particular, this effort helped empower the group that was committed to the tent encampment protest, lived for years in Camp Quixote, and eventually moved into Quixote Village. The village demonstrates that even those with the least power and control in our society can organize to effect changes in their own situation as well as in broader policy—and control their own lives through self-government of an intentional community.

The original tent city and the extended Camp Quixote brought together people who, by nature of their circumstances, had lived alone or in small groups and in transient situations—essentially community-less. In this created community, they had domiciles (even if they had tarps for walls), a relatively stable home (even if it moved every three or six months), and an ongoing community of fellow residents, connected organizers, and volunteers. In working through committees, attending a great many meetings, and voting over decisions such as who could come into the community and who had to leave, residents took control of their lives and their community. It was, by all accounts, a process that changed perspectives and lives.

### *Innovative Approach to Housing First through Tiny Houses*

This project provides a model of addressing homelessness through permanent supportive housing. It differs from “housing first” models in its requirement that residents pledge to become and remain “clean and sober” and in its emphasis on helping residents gain access to community-based services to help them improve their health and quality of life. Many housing first programs do not provide these kinds of services or require such behavioral changes and commitments on the assumption that having a decent and stable place to live is a necessary precondition to other life changes. At Quixote Village, housing and services are seen as interdependent.

Many residents at Quixote Village have taken advantage of the stability and relative ease of their daily routine, free of the controlling concern for subsistence and shelter, to address their personal problems in terms of relationships with family, education and training, employment, medical attention, and therapy so they can, among other things, uphold their commitment to sobriety. Residents commented that their lives were “more



*The design of Quixote Village fosters both independence and cooperation.*

cohesive, more functional, and stronger” now. One said that having basic needs for housing met “allows my brain to have space for things that will make my life better. In an apartment I would isolate myself. I feel supported to recover here.”

Quixote Village has also helped some residents reestablish family bonds. Several have visitation rights with their children that hadn’t been exercised in years. Children can’t live at Quixote Village but can come and stay over weekends, and several residents have taken advantage of this opportunity to spend time with their children or grandchildren.

One Panza member noted that for this community, where people often have problems with substance abuse or mental illness, housing cannot be the only response. The current focus is on making connections to a variety of education, employment, counseling, and health care programs to provide support for residents. Quixote Village represents an impressive, creative, and cost-effective approach to a serious urban problem that exists in all US cities.

One interesting note is the inclusion of toilets in the Quixote Village cottages. The initial designs excluded toilets in an attempt to save money and as a nod to the years of life in the tent camp. It turned out, though, that not having toilets in the cottages was itself an obstacle for regulators and funders. Once they moved into Quixote Village, residents acknowledged that having a half-bath in the cottage indeed had a significant impact on their lives. Not only did it allow them to avoid outdoor trips during unpleasant weather, but it also added to their sense of control and privacy, helping them to be more comfortable venturing out to interact with the group.

Quixote Village is looked upon as a model by many in this region and elsewhere because of its level of self-government by the residents and its use of tiny cottages. The tiny house movement has drawn increasing



*Quixote Village has attracted considerable local and national press.*

interest as an approach to affordability and sustainability. Panza has had dozens of inquiries and visits from interested parties from around the country and has been told that local adaptations of the model are being implemented in Eugene, Oregon, and Austin, Texas, and at least three cities in Western Washington are seriously considering following suit. The founders of Occupy Madison’s tiny home development consider Quixote Village an inspiration.

At this time, Panza has no plans for another project of this type; the organization’s hands are full trying to run and maximize the potential of Quixote Village. This project drew heavily on the volunteer community which, at the moment, is somewhat exhausted from the effort. City and county officials indicated that codes are in place and resources could be

available for another project, but that the effort would have to originate from the community.

### *Collaboration among Faith-Based, Nonprofit, and Government Sectors*

The process that created and sustained first Camp Quixote and finally Quixote Village was largely driven by not-for-profit and faith-based volunteer organizations. The organizational efforts started by Bread and Roses and then the Poor People's Union were impressive in their foresight, their self-governance model, and their impact.

Government staff, officials, and agencies also played a role in this story, albeit a secondary one. At first, government was seen as part of the problem, an obstacle to be overcome. The one Camp Quixote supporter in the city council was able to provide some support, but only surreptitiously. Later, as politics and perceptions changed, crucial support was provided by the government in the form of money, land, code changes, and policies. Groups trying to create similar communities in other places, such as Occupy Madison in Wisconsin, were envious of having a county that provided land, a state government that allocated significant funds, and a city council that worked to modify zoning restrictions to make this community possible.

One of the most impressive parts of the Quixote Village story is the strength of the faith-based community, which maintained a high level of support and involvement over such an extended period of time. For seven years, formerly homeless individuals were able to maintain a cohesive community, in spite of living in tents and making frequent moves. Over that time, Panza needed to provide considerable material and emotional support and keep the camp staffed by volunteers 24 hours a day in three-hour shifts—amounting to over 20,000 volunteer shifts over the seven-year period. In addition, Panza was charged with finding the land, resources, and expertise to create the final permanent camp, and many of those resources



*Quixote Village involved collaboration and support from faith-based organizations, government, and volunteers.*

and experts came from the volunteer groups. The striking thing is not that some volunteer sources were exhausted by the time the residents moved into their permanent home, but that volunteers were able to keep up the effort so well and for so long.

### *Changing Stereotypes of Homelessness*

An important aspect of Quixote Village was its impact on ordinary citizens, particularly those affiliated with the participating faith-based institutions. The 24-hour volunteer shifts required by the city ordinance promoted contact between volunteers and Camp Quixote residents. There are many stories of people who became involved in the camp through their religious affiliation and, in so doing, had their first direct social contact with people from the homeless community. Volunteers talked about being nervous and fearful when going into the camp for the first time and of





*Residents can cook and share meals together in the community building kitchen.*

establishing relationships that changed their understanding of the people and the problem. Congregants hired residents to do odd jobs, and residents attended church services and programs. Some have maintained contacts and friendships for many years.

### *Changing Realities of Power and Control in a Permanent Community*

If an important part of this story is empowerment of the homeless community through self-government, then a coda is how that governing situation changed in response to the realities of creating a permanent community. In developing Quixote Village, a legal entity was needed to take on the role of fundraiser, owner, landlord, and signatory on legal documents such as grants and deeds. That role fell to Panza, and one consequence was a significant shift in power and control from the residents to Panza. While residents maintained a certain level of involvement, they

shifted from self-governance to a primarily advisory role. This was a difficult change for some in Panza who were politically and emotionally committed to an ideology of resident self-control.

It was also a difficult change for some of the early residents, who found the new restrictions and adjustments to the new governing structure sufficient reason to leave the village. For example, residents could no longer meet on their own to determine evictions—such action would run afoul of tenancy and fair housing laws. Moreover, in the first months, some leaders on the resident council appeared to take unfair advantage of their position, leading to resentment disputes within the community. Concern over loss of some aspects of governance was intermixed with the new and stricter standards of behavior with respect to substance use, and this had much to do with the significant early turnover of residents.

Despite these challenges, most residents in early 2015 seemed happy with the arrangement and distribution of control and are proud of their continuing level of involvement in operations. For example, residents were an active part of the search for a new resident advocate in spring 2015. Three residents were on the committee that interviewed candidates, and the whole community met candidates at Quixote Village breakfast meetings.

Anecdotally, lives seem to be changing for the better at Quixote Village, although at this early stage, there are no formal data to support such an assertion. This improvement is likely aided by the fact that residents who remain are more committed to a clean and sober lifestyle and better able to carry through with such a commitment. Residents have access to a number of health-related programs which have the potential to improve their well-being. First and foremost, the stability of having housing and a supportive community reduces life stress. Food from the village garden and meals cooked in the well-equipped community kitchen provide an

important change in nutrition from living on the street. In addition, Quixote residents get regular visits from volunteer medical professionals. Volunteer-led programs also provide wellness activities such as yoga and nature walks.

### *Future Challenges*

Quixote Village came into being because of dedication, perseverance, and innovative thinking—but not with an overabundance of funds. One of the challenges of the future will be in finding ways to maintain a balanced operating budget while maintaining or increasing programmatic support. There is some potential to increase the number of residents receiving Section 8 voucher support for their rent.

Surviving seven years of a wandering tent camp, followed by the heavy lift of developing, building, and opening the permanent village, took its toll on the Panza board of trustees, which, by some accounts, is suffering from burnout. An important step in the future will be to build new board capacity and operate Quixote Village in a way that does not drain board time and energy, allowing it to focus on policy and fundraising.

For some in Panza, the hardest part of opening Quixote Village was reducing the level of control the homeless residents exerted on day-to-day decisions. While this was a necessary change to accommodate the realities of owning a permanent site, some hope that they will find a way to reassert more resident control.

Social service organizations and government agencies in this region seem very positive about Quixote Village and its impact on the people living there. Quixote Village is a significant part of the broader response to homelessness in the community, as has been acknowledged by other service organizations in the area, including Catholic Community Services, Interfaith Works, and Homes First, and by the local governmental consortium that coordinates their services and funding resources. Everyone recognizes

that it only addresses the problems of a specific segment of the homeless community, including individuals willing to live in the setting, engage in its self-governing process, and commit to its rules. Different solutions are needed for other segments of the homeless community, including families and others unable to make the commitment necessary to live in Quixote Village.

### **ASSESSING IMPACT IN RESPECT TO PROJECT GOALS**

Quixote Village succeeded in creating permanent housing that provides security, safety, and dignity for its occupants. In so doing, it became a new option in the broader city and county homeless system and, through its innovative plan, has become a model for others seeking sustainable and affordable responses to homelessness, both locally and nationally. The model was a physical one—the use of tiny homes for permanent housing—but also an approach to empowerment through self-government by the formerly homeless occupants. It is a cost-efficient approach that leverages the social services available in the city and county as well as the efforts of volunteers, to a large degree from the local faith-based community.

***GOAL: Provide basic housing for chronically homeless adults—a population that is “often traumatized, disabled, and burdened by deficits,” but resilient.***

Quixote Village has successfully provided housing for a specific segment of the homeless population. While 30 units is small scale, even for a city the size of Olympia, its unique approach to creating low-cost housing in a community setting serves as a model for other communities in the US and elsewhere.

***GOAL: Overcome community opposition and keep the tent camp alive.***

Community opposition to the original tent camp was overcome surprisingly quickly, largely because of the effect of constant and casual contact between residents and volunteers and the way the camps came to be seen

as beneficial to each temporary encampment site. Opposition to Quixote Village from industrial neighbors was only overcome by winning court challenges. Some of these neighbors have become helpful (donating furniture, for example) but are still skeptical about the long-term impact on their businesses.

*GOAL: Support a community characterized by self-government by residents.*

Self-government has been an important aspect of this project from its first day of planning and operation more than eight years ago. The scope and nature of self-government changed as the community moved into Quixote Village because of the realities of ownership and tenancy, which have forced Panza to assert greater control. Even so, within these new limits, residents have a significant impact on rules, hires, acceptance of new tenants, and day-to-day issues and operations.

*GOAL: Provide a low-cost housing solution with a small carbon footprint.*

Quixote Village has been widely recognized as a viable, sustainable model for housing people who are homeless. Units in Quixote Village cost about half of typical units in other homeless housing projects. While those savings were achieved by building tiny cottages with limited facilities, living in Quixote Village is by no means a bare-bones existence. The mix of privacy and social interaction and the facilities available on the grounds and in the community building provide a rich, varied, and home-like setting. Quixote Village was recently given the Phoenix Award from Behavioral Health Resources Foundation to “celebrate those who have risen from the ashes of mental illness and addiction along with those who have helped them do so.” It is too soon to know how many places will build homeless communities based on tiny homes and self-governance, but Quixote Village has also been visited and lauded by a number of homeless housing advocates, especially since a 2014 story about the village in the *New York Times*. Other places looking for ways to offer sustainable housing for their



*Residents manage the community garden and share the harvest.*

homeless populations, including one in Madison, Wisconsin, cite Quixote Village as their inspiration.

*GOAL: Offer housing that balances the need for privacy with design that supports and promotes social interaction and helps maintain a sense of community and common purpose.*

Quixote Village provides a thoughtful mix of facilities that gives residents the ability to be alone in their individually-owned space or to connect with others from their front porch, in the community building, or on village grounds. These qualities are particularly important for this community of residents, people who have spent significant parts of their lives outside mainstream living and who may have disabilities that make social connections anxiety provoking or difficult. This design gives them a range of choices that have helped spur the strong community feeling that most residents seem to have.

### SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Like the other 2015 winners, Quixote Village addresses a critical urban issue: in this case, homelessness. The project captured the Selection Committee's attention as a fascinating story that tapped into the tiny house movement to create an innovative design solution. The committee applauded Quixote Village as a response to a big, national issue that grew out of the local community and volunteers. It is an entirely grass roots, nonprofit venture that did not rely on big institutions and funding. The process and resulting project educated people in a very personal way, changing perceptions and increasing understanding of the homeless as individuals. It builds human capacity by creating a community that fosters physical and psychological autonomy for residents.

The committee commended the project for its approach to design, including the adaptation of the tiny house model. They noted its success in creating a balance of community and privacy for residents, particularly in serving a specific demographic part of the homeless community. The arrangement of the buildings around a central green space contributes to the sense of community with the community center providing the social hub and nucleus. The committee observed that the project illustrates the importance of creating layers of spaces that provide transitions between private and public areas and offer residents a choice of environments—such as the privacy of a cottage interior, the semi-privacy of the front porch and “door garden,” and the more public communal green space and community building.

Although they were excited about the project and the potential for replication, committee members had some reservations. They acknowledged that some of the aspects of the project that make it so successful—such as the adaptation of the tiny house model—could make the project difficult to replicate in other places, particularly in denser urban areas. The com-



Community building entrance.

Tim Ransom



## “QUIXOTE VILLAGE BUILDS HUMAN CAPITAL BY CREATING A COMMUNITY THAT FOSTERS PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL AUTONOMY FOR RESIDENTS.”

mittee observed that its location puts people already living on the margins on the margin of the city; it is an island within an industrial park. They also suggested that the building and site designs might have been a bit more inspired and questioned the long-term durability of the building materials. The committee suggested there may be potential for partnerships with organizations like Habitat for Humanity and AmeriCorps that utilize volunteers to support grass roots community-building efforts.



*Residents beautify the community with individual “door gardens.”*

### RELATED RBA WINNERS

As a way of addressing a particular segment of the homeless population, Quixote Village is a unique site and solution, but the issue itself is anything but new. Homelessness is, sadly, a common problem in large and small urban centers across the US, and there have been many thoughtful attempts to address this issue, including other RBA winners.



**THE BRIDGE** (2011 Gold Medalist), for instance, was built as an important part of Dallas’ response to chronic homelessness. While it addresses housing needs for a similar population, it differs from Quixote Village in its scale, its focus on emergency and transitional shelter, and its attempts to serve as a central point for social services for the local homeless population.



**THE ST. JOSEPH REBUILD CENTER** (2009 Silver Medalist) in New Orleans is a day center for homeless people. It serves the chronically homeless, people made homeless by Hurricane Katrina, and immigrants with housing problems. It does not provide housing per se but offers services to those without it, including meals, laundry, health care, and social services access.



**THE TIMES SQUARE** (1997 Gold Medalist) in New York City is, in some ways, the opposite of the Quixote Village “deconstructed SRO” model. An example of a high-rise SRO in an elegantly rehabilitated landmarked building in the center of Manhattan, it was created to house the formerly homeless, mentally ill, elderly, and persons with AIDS.

Many other RBA winners have addressed related issues, including low-income housing (2013 Silver Medalist Via Verde in Bronx, NY; 1997 Silver Medalist Hismen Hin-Nu Terrace in Oakland, CA; 1993 Silver Medalists New Community Corporation in Newark and Harbor Point in Boston; and 1989 Silver Medalist Tenant Interim Leasing Program in New York City) and tiny houses (1997 Silver Medalist Project Row Houses in Houston).

More information about these and other RBA winners can be found at [www.rudybruneraward.org](http://www.rudybruneraward.org).

## Resources

This case study was compiled from information gathered from the project application, an extensive site visit in April 2015, discussions with the RBA Selection Committee, and research and interviews conducted during these processes and throughout the writing and editing of this book. Titles and positions of interviewees and URLs listed below were effective as of the site visit unless otherwise noted.

### INTERVIEWS

#### Panza Board and Staff:

Tim Ransom, Board President  
Jill Severn, former Board President  
Raul Salazar, Program Manager  
Alicia Crumpton, Resident Advocate  
Rev. Arthur Vaeni, former Minister, Olympia Unitarian Universalist Church\*  
Miriam Lorch, Board Member

#### Volunteers and Supporters from the Faith-Based Community:

Steve Pederson  
Jerry Smith  
Linda Crabtree  
Ralph Blankenship  
Kathy Driesbach, Westwood Baptist Church  
Howard Ullery, Pastor, Lacey Community Church

#### Quixote Village Residents:

Mike Bell  
Scott Benz  
Lisa Blazer  
Richard Bolton  
Jon Waddey  
Sharon Wilson

#### Consultants:

Ginger Segel, Community Frameworks  
Garner Miller, MSGS Architects  
Andrew Christiansen, Construct Inc.  
Rob Richards, Bread and Roses, Poor People's Union\*  
Amy Head, SCJ Alliance\*

#### Government Officials:

Mark Foutch, former Mayor, City of Olympia  
Steve Hall, City Manager, City of Olympia  
Steve Friddle, Principal Planner, City of Olympia  
Leonard Bauer, Deputy Director, City of Olympia Community Planning and Development Department  
Pete Kmet, Mayor, Tumwater City  
Neal McClanahan, Tumwater City Councilman  
Theresa Slusher, Thurston County Homeless Coordinator  
Karen Valenzuela, former Tumwater Councilperson, former County Commissioner  
Cathy Wolfe, Thurston County Commissioner  
Denny Heck, State Representative, Tenth Congressional District

*\*Interviews conducted by phone*

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View from community building towards cottages and retention ponds.





Silver Medal Winner

# Grand Rapids Downtown Market

Grand Rapids, Michigan

A new public market and gathering space promoting local food, education, and entrepreneurship



Grand Rapids Downtown Market







Jeffrey Grooters

## Overview

Submitted by: Grand Rapids Downtown Market, Inc.

Completed: 2013

Total Development Cost: \$29.5 million

Grand Rapids Downtown Market is a new, state-of-the-art public space in West Michigan that provides access to fresh local food, supports local food entrepreneurs, and provides opportunities to learn about nutrition and healthy lifestyles. It is located just south of the downtown business district in Heartside, one of the area's most economically challenged neighborhoods and home to food pantries, homeless shelters, and social service organizations. The Downtown Market celebrates the local food system by linking the Grand Rapids community with many of the 12,220 farms in 11 surrounding counties. It attracts a diversity of customers and has brought additional investment to the southern edge of downtown.

The first LEED Gold certified public market in the country, the Grand Rapids Downtown Market was designed by Hugh A. Boyd Architects in collaboration with Michigan-based Progressive AE and based on a concept developed by Market Ventures, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in the planning and development of innovative food-based projects and programs.

The first-floor market hall is home to more than 20 permanent vendors who showcase locally grown, produced, and prepared foods. Upper floors house educational classrooms, a commercial kitchen incubator, a rooftop greenhouse, offices and meeting rooms, and event spaces. A 52-stall outdoor shed provides sheltered space for additional food and craft ven-

**“THE MARKET LEVERAGES THE FARM-TO-TABLE MOVEMENT TO CREATE A ‘FOOD HUB’ THAT ADDRESSES SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL IMPACT GOALS.”** *–2015 Section Committee*

dors from May through September. The ground floor also includes two full-service restaurants.

Educational programming is at the core of the market’s mission and is provided in partnership with organizations including Grand Valley State University, Kent Intermediate School District, Michigan State University Extension, and Spectrum Health Healthier Communities. Cooking and nutrition classes are offered in the teaching kitchen, which features adjustable-height countertops that can be lowered for children. An incubator kitchen program helps start-up entrepreneurs develop, produce, and market food products using a shared commercial kitchen.

The Downtown Market offers a variety of fresh and healthy food options in a neighborhood once considered a food desert. Vendors accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamps, and the market partners with local nonprofits to provide educational scholarships to low-income residents along with complimentary transit passes and “produce bucks” that can be used to purchase ingredients from Relish Green Grocer. The Heartside Gleaning Initiative collects excess fresh produce from market vendors for distribution to local food pantries.

The Grand Rapids Downtown Market was made possible through a public-private partnership led by Grand Action, a not-for-profit organization that has revitalized downtown through investments in major projects like the new \$75 million Van Andel Arena, the \$212 million DeVos Place Convention Center, and renovation of the historic Meijer Majestic Theatre. “The city seeks to be a community of the future, not the past,” says Dick DeVos, co-chair of Grand Action. The organization believes in “thinking boldly, planning collegially, and acting urgently.” The \$29.5 million market received funding from private donors and foundations, the City of Grand Rapids, the

Environmental Protection Agency, and the State of Michigan. Local public agencies contributed infrastructure improvements including new streets and sidewalks and enhanced public transportation access through the rerouting of bus lines.

The project has sparked \$50 million in new investment in the neighborhood, including the conversion of two adjacent, vacant warehouses into 170 units of affordable housing, helping to draw development southward from the downtown core. It has also generated interest from over a dozen cities in the United States and Canada seeking to develop similar markets.

Since its opening in 2013, the Grand Rapids Downtown Market has been a source of civic pride for the city. Opening day attracted more than 30,000 people, and the space has become an important venue for hosting events and meetings. More than a market, it has become a popular local and regional destination, a beacon that celebrates the surrounding rich West Michigan agricultural community and brings together local residents, foodies, and city visitors in a light-filled public space.



Grand Rapids Downtown Market (left), Mike Buck









## Project at a Glance

- A state-of-the-art LEED Gold certified facility that celebrates the West Michigan agricultural system and brings food education and local food production, distribution, and marketing to the community.
- A 24-vendor, year-round indoor market hall with two full-service restaurants and a 52-stall seasonal outdoor market shed offering a variety of local and organic products, specialty items, and prepared foods.
- A teaching kitchen featuring fully adjustable countertops where classes on cooking, culinary skills, and nutrition for children and adults are offered.
- A shared commercial incubator kitchen that provides aspiring entrepreneurs a place to develop and produce food products and a program that assists start-ups with development and marketing.
- A rooftop greenhouse used for cultivation, education, and special events which serves as a glowing beacon at night.
- A popular civic venue that brings together the community for food shopping, educational programming, and special events.
- Commercial space including classrooms, labs, and offices for educational partners that offer high school culinary arts and health-related programs.
- Extensive educational programming that promotes public health.

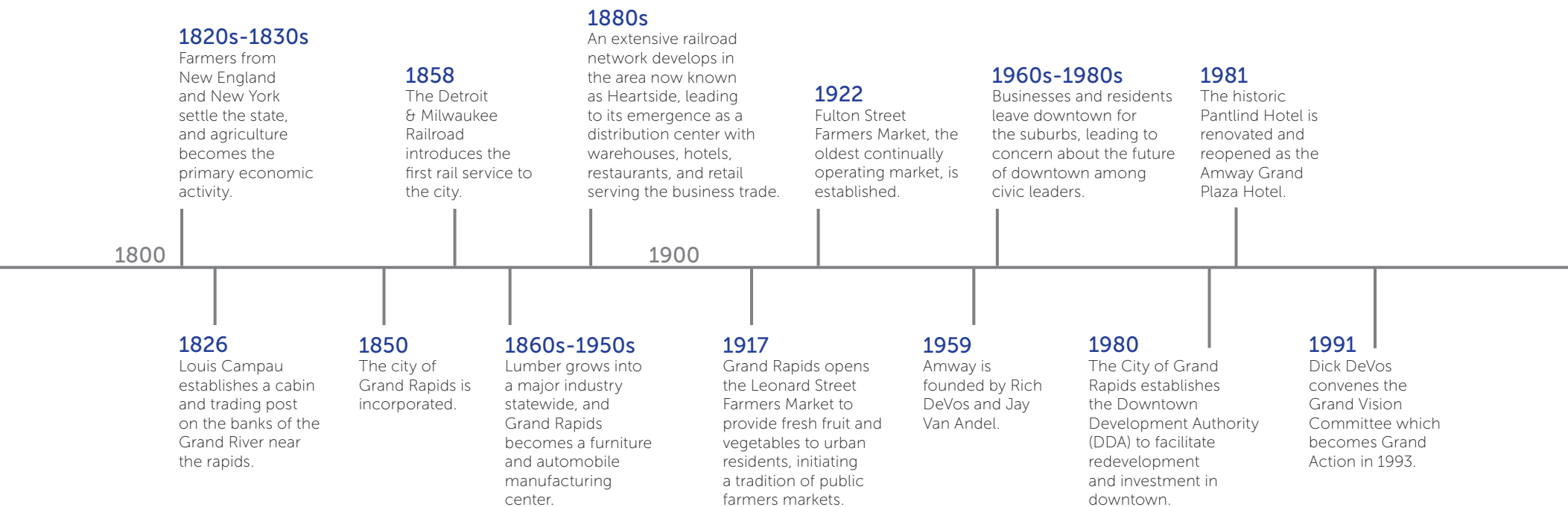




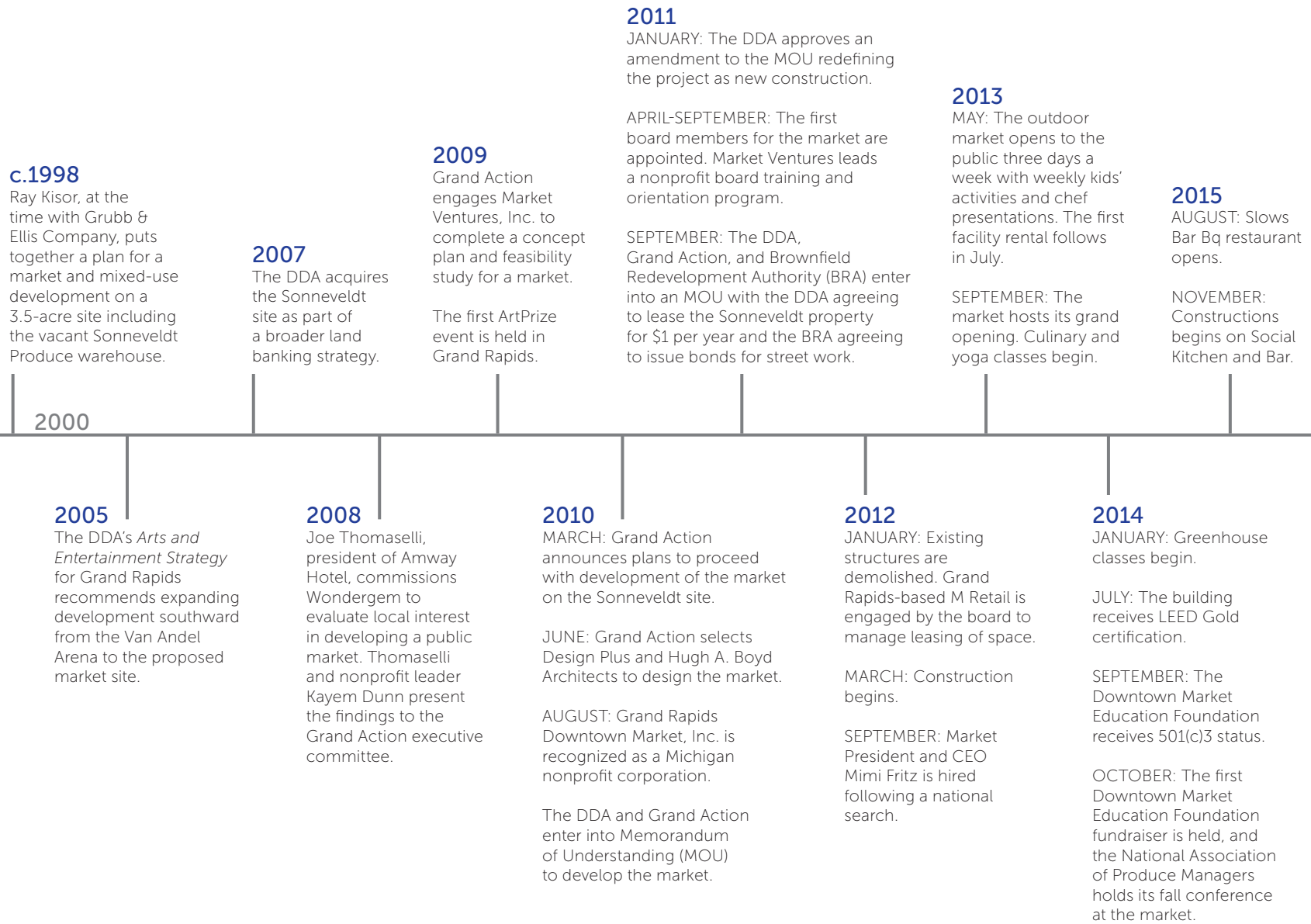
## Project Goals

- Support local entrepreneurship and innovation, in part by providing affordable vending opportunities for farmers and traditionally marginalized entrepreneurs, resource sharing, and one-on-one mentoring.
- Create hundreds of jobs and provide substantial economic impact.
- Strengthen and celebrate the West Michigan food system.
- Promote public health, particularly with innovative approaches to addressing the area's obesity epidemic.
- Bring diverse people together in an active public space through events, cooking demonstrations, culinary and nutrition classes, event rentals, community partnerships, and more.
- Extend downtown activity and development south from the Van Andel Arena.

## Chronology









## Project Description

### INTRODUCTION

Grand Rapids Downtown Market is a new downtown public space in West Michigan that celebrates regional food, supports its production and distribution, encourages local entrepreneurs, and educates the community about nutrition and healthy lifestyles. It is anchored in a progressive Midwestern community that values agriculture, civic engagement, and sustainability and is the latest in a series of public projects financed through public-private partnerships that have regenerated downtown Grand Rapids. The Downtown Market, like other recent Grand Rapids projects, is the product of a careful planning process initiated by a group of powerful business, philanthropic, and civic leaders who led investment in downtown and championed the market and its ambitious social agenda. Since it opened in 2013, the building, with light-filled public spaces that offer respite from long, gray West Michigan winters, has become a popular local and regional destination and point of significant community pride.

### CONTEXT

#### *Grand Rapids*

Grand Rapids Downtown Market is located in Michigan's second largest city, midway between Chicago and Detroit in the western part of the state. It is the urban center for a growing region of more than one million people, situated at the heart of a diverse, 11-county agricultural area. The community prides itself on strong traditions of civic involvement, entrepreneurship, and innovation and a culture of "Midwest nice."

The city was founded in 1826 by Louis Campau, who established a trading post along the east bank of the Grand River near the rapids. Incorporated in 1850, Grand Rapids developed as a center for automobile and furniture manufacturing over the next 100 years. But as traditional manufacturing declined in the 1950s and 1960s, advanced manufacturing, agriculture, education, and health sciences emerged as important economic drivers. Today Grand Rapids is home to more than 90 international companies, including Amway, founded in 1959 by Rich DeVos and Jay Van Andel; BISSELL; and Haworth, Herman Miller, and Steelcase, all major producers of office furniture. In 2015, Spectrum Health was the largest employer not only in Grand Rapids but in all of West Michigan.

As in many American cities, Grand Rapids' downtown emptied out during the 1960s and 1970s, although modest growth in overall city population continued. The city's corporate and philanthropic leaders, led by DeVos and Van Andel, responded by investing in downtown, beginning with the \$120 million renovation of the historic Pantlind Hotel into the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in 1981. Since then, the city's business community has raised and invested hundreds of millions of dollars in downtown projects that, like the market, were designed to attract and retain businesses and residents.

These efforts have succeeded in attracting additional commercial, institutional, and residential development to downtown and reestablishing the city as the urban center of the region. As of early 2015, there were 3,650 residential units in downtown, with more than 1,200 additional units approved and/or under construction. In 2011, the *Wall Street Journal's* MarketWatch recognized Grand Rapids as one of the 10 best places to live in the US, and in 2012 *Forbes* named it the best city for raising a family. Grand Rapids' location midway between Chicago and Detroit and its proximity to the Upper Peninsula and Lake Michigan 30 miles to the west make it a popular stop for visitors. According to the Downtown Market, the city attracts approximately 1.4 million visitors annually.



Market Ventures, Inc.



Grand Rapids Public Library

An early 20th-century farmer's market in Grand Rapids; a 1960's aerial view of the city.

Civic engagement is an important point of pride for Grand Rapids and its business community, which values collaboration and participatory planning processes. As one local leader put it, "Social consciousness is part of the Grand Rapids community." Corporate civic leadership in Grand Rapids has created a culture of philanthropy and history of public-private collaboration.

The city is home to ArtPrize, an international art competition and festival that takes place over two and a half weeks each fall, during which "art pops up in every inch" of a three-square-mile area of downtown Grand Rapids. ArtPrize was created in 2009 by Rick DeVos, grandson of Amway cofounder Rich DeVos, to encourage people in the community to get out and share ideas through contemporary art. Prizes totaling \$900,000 are awarded. Half of the winners are determined by public vote, the other half by a jury of art experts.

Agriculture and sustainability have long been important to the community. Grand Rapids is located at the center of a rich, diverse agricultural region dominated by small, independently owned farms. In 2009, there were 12,220 farms in the surrounding 11-county area (approximately 50-mile radius), most of which were small acreage farms. With the arrival of railroads in the 1850s, the city became an important food distribution center, and public markets became an integral part of the local culture. A local Progressive Era (1890-1920) initiative by the city to increase urban residents' access to fresh fruits and vegetables led to the 1917 opening of the Leonard Street Farmers Market, the city's first public market. The Fulton Street Farmers Market, established in 1922, is the oldest and largest continually operating market in Grand Rapids. In 2010, the city was named "most sustainable midsize city in the US" by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Civic Leadership Center and Siemens Corporation, and in 2009, the American Institute of Architects honored Grand Rapids for having the greatest number of LEED certified buildings per capita for any American city.

### *Heartside*

The Grand Rapids Downtown Market is just south of the downtown business district in Heartside, one of the area's most economically challenged neighborhoods and home to the city's highest concentration of food pantries, shelters, social service agencies, and unemployed and homeless individuals.

Also referred to as Arena South, Heartside is anchored to the north on Fulton Street by the Van Andel Arena and on the southern edge by the Downtown Market and adjacent Heartside Park. During the early part of the twentieth century, the area was a center for food and furniture warehouses and distribution. Many brick warehouses from the era remain and are gradually being repurposed to new uses, including affordable housing and lofts. With a growing concentration of artist homes, studios, galleries, and art events in the area, an effort is underway on nearby South Division Avenue to establish the district as the "Avenue for the Arts."

### *Demographics*

In contrast to Detroit, the population of Grand Rapids has remained relatively stable for the past 80 years. After experiencing rapid growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the population reached a relative plateau of 168,592, after which there has been modest growth along with a few brief periods of decline. According to the census, the city of Grand Rapids had 188,040 residents in 2010, 65% of whom were white, 21% African American, and 14% Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander, or one or more other races. The median household income in Grand Rapids in 2011 was \$36,408.

In Heartside, the population was 2,939, and median household income was \$24,585. Similar to Grand Rapids as a whole, 62% of Heartside residents were white, 26% African American, and 12% other races. Heartside and nearby Roosevelt Park and the South East Community are among West





Looking north from the market (top); the Avenue of the Arts along Division Avenue.

Michigan's most impoverished neighborhoods, with a collective poverty rate of 38% and unemployment rate of 32%.

Heartside is home to a number of social service agencies that assist low-income residents in the area, offering services and transitional housing for those struggling with homelessness, drugs, and mental illness. Local service providers attribute the area's need to the loss of businesses that relocated to the suburbs in the 1960s-1980s; displacement of residents in connection with downtown development, which fueled real estate speculation and resulted in the loss of several SRO (single-room occupancy) buildings which provided low-cost housing; and construction in the 1950s of the I-131 freeway, which divided neighborhoods.

There are several housing developments in the area surrounding the new market. The majority of these are affordable (including transitional housing for the homeless, mentally ill, and recovering addicts) and mixed-income, including two warehouse conversions across the street from the market. However, demand for market-rate and workforce housing in downtown Grand Rapids is increasing and pushing the market into Heartside.

## PROJECT HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

### *Vision*

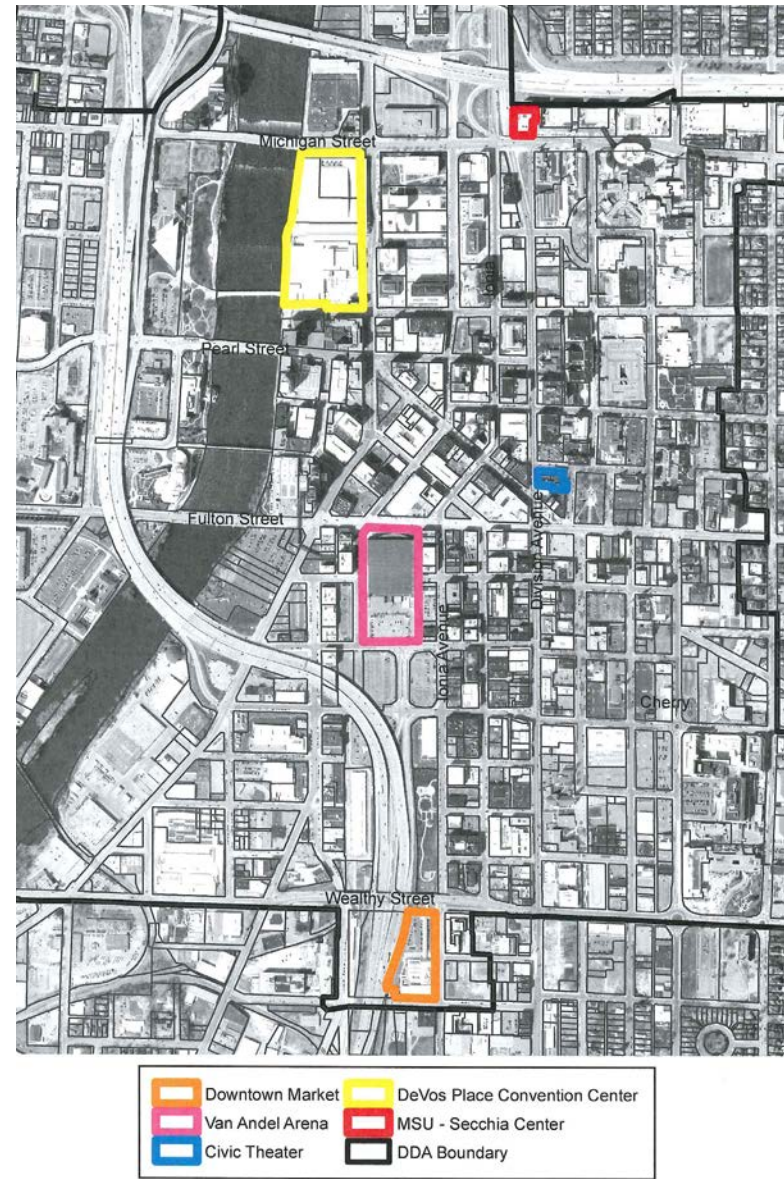
The Downtown Market was made possible through a public-private partnership led by Grand Action and the Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority. It is the product of a thoughtful, participatory planning process that involved the community and leading national consultants in public market development and design. Together they formulated a strategy that leveraged other investments in downtown and capitalized on the unique characteristics of Grand Rapids to yield extensive social as well as economic benefits. As a result of this process, the Downtown Market reflects the aspiration and values of the city.

### Grand Action

Grand Action is a collaboration of charitable foundations and public leaders credited with the transformation of downtown Grand Rapids over the past 25 years. It emerged from a desire to reenergize downtown with new investment following the gradual loss of retail businesses to suburban expansion in the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1991, Dick DeVos convened a group of more than 50 West Michigan civic leaders from academic institutions, businesses, and local government to explore the possibility of building an arena and expanding the convention center to generate economic activity. As part of its efforts to envision a renewed downtown, the group, which became known as Grand Vision, commissioned economic impact studies that identified untapped demand for entertainment, convention, and medical facilities. In 1993, the group changed its name to Grand Action and shifted its attention and resources to implementation of its vision. Since then, the organization has made investments in major projects like the \$75 million, 12,000-seat Van Andel Arena; renovation of the historic Meijer Majestic Theatre; the \$220 million DeVos Place convention center; and the headquarters for the Michigan State University College of Human Medicine.

Grand Action is now a nonprofit organization comprised of more than 250 business and institutional leaders co-chaired by John Canepa, Dick DeVos, and David Frey, all of whom were instrumental in the Downtown Market's development. Canepa is the consulting principle for Crowe, Horwath & Company LLP; DeVos is president of the Windcrest Group and former president of Amway International; and Frey is chairman of the Frey Foundation and previous chairman of Union Bancorp, Inc. (now JPMorgan Chase). The organization's primary objectives are "to identify downtown building and revitalization projects, to galvanize public opinion and support for these projects, and to design and implement funding strategies for each project, including securing enough private sector support to guarantee



Grand Action investments in downtown Grand Rapids.

funding from existing public funds.” Grand Action seeks to “Think Boldly. Plan Collegially. Act Urgently.”

Grand Action has been powerful and effective in leading investment in downtown development and assembling the public and private resources to make it possible. The organization is careful and thoughtful in its approach, completing thorough studies and due diligence before committing to new projects. Once the commitment is made, the expectation in the community is that it will succeed. As several people interviewed commented, Grand Action “doesn’t fail.”

#### *Downtown Development Authority (DDA)*

The Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a municipal development agency that uses incremental property taxes (TIFs) collected from downtown properties to finance public improvements. Since 1980, the DDA has invested about \$120 million in various improvement projects, including the Van Andel Arena and expansion of the DeVos Place convention center.

The board of the DDA, like that of Grand Action, is comprised of local business and community leaders, and the organization engages in thoughtful research (including identifying other projects and cities from which to learn) and participatory planning processes to inform its investment strategies. Since 1980, the DDA has completed more than a dozen studies and plans to guide investment in downtown Grand Rapids.

The DDA’s 2005 *Arts and Entertainment Strategy* offered an “action plan to guide the development and evolution of arts and entertainment in downtown Grand Rapids, both in the immediate term and for the next 10 years.” Increasing diversity and improving linkages were key goals that emerged from the study, along with the vision of expanding development southward from downtown into a new “contemporary” district south from the Van

Andel Arena to the current market site. In 2011, the DDA commissioned *Framing the Future: A Framework to Guide Future Planning and Investment*, a plan for downtown development. The “participatory community visioning and priority-setting process” yielded a “market-based vision for downtown and [...] a new construct for guiding DDA investments, decision making and organizational structure.” It reinforced the goal of extending downtown development towards the south and identified the Heartside district and its “innovative and edgy retail corridor” as one of four primary areas for targeted investment.

#### *Public Agencies*

Public agencies, including the City of Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids Brown-field Redevelopment Authority (BRA), the State of Michigan, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), provided critical support for the project, including funding for environmental cleanup of the site and infrastructure improvements such as new streets, sidewalks, and public transportation enhancements. Funding included a grant for the environmental cleanup, the Michigan Brownfield Tax Credits Program, tax increment financing, and low-interest community revitalization loans.

#### *Grand Rapids Downtown Market, Inc.*

In 2010, Grand Action established Grand Rapids Downtown Market, Inc. (GRDM), a Michigan nonprofit corporate entity, to operate the market and selected a board of directors representing Grand Rapids business and civic organizations. Although classified as a nonprofit, the corporation is not tax exempt. A separate 501(c)3 nonprofit, tax-exempt Downtown Market Education Foundation (DMEF) was created in September 2014 “with the goal of making a healthier community lifestyle through culinary and nutritional education, entrepreneur opportunities, and a place for local food production. The DMEF enables the receipt of donations and grants to support community programming at the Downtown Market.

In September 2012, following a national search, GRDM hired the market's first employee, President and CEO Mimi Fritz. Fritz, a native and resident of nearby Holland, brought two decades of design and marketing experience to the position. She has been an extraordinarily effective and nimble leader, successfully navigating a number of challenges associated with a growing startup organization within a relatively short period of time. In less than three years, Fritz has assembled a highly effective and talented 28-member team to support the growth and vision of the Downtown Market.

### *Creating a Downtown Public Market*

The idea of creating a public market in downtown Grand Rapids had been percolating for at least a decade prior to the initiation of development for the current market, and for a few years in the 1990s a temporary market operated downtown on Thursdays. In the late 1990s, Ray Kisor, a founding partner of Grubb & Ellis|Paramount Commerce, proposed a plan for a mixed-use development with a public market on the property known as the Sonneveldt site, where the current market is located. The proposal failed to take hold, but the concept emerged again in the summer of 2008 when Joe Thomaselli, president of the Amway Grand Hotel, initiated a conversation with local business colleagues about developing a downtown market in Grand Rapids and commissioned the hotel's public relations consultant Wondergem to evaluate local interest. At the time, Thomaselli served on the board of the DDA along with Kayem Dunn, a local nonprofit leader with experience in education, publishing, and accreditation. Dunn shared Thomaselli's interest in public markets and joined him in the initiative.

On October 22, 2008, Thomaselli and Dunn presented the Wondergem study to the Grand Action executive committee. The findings indicated that Grand Rapids residents had a strong interest in access to fresh food and the buy-local movement. Their report included examples of public markets in other cities and cited their benefits: attracting a diversity of people, encouraging gathering and socializing, activating public space

and street life, catalyzing redevelopment, providing access to local food and services, promoting healthy life styles, incubating small businesses, and creating jobs. Grand Action was convinced the idea warranted more exploration. Wondergem then identified potential consultants, including Market Ventures, Inc. (MVI), to take the next step.

### *Market Ventures, Inc.*

In 2009, Grand Action engaged MVI to complete a concept plan and feasibility study for an urban market. The study was led by MVI President Ted Spitzer and Senior Associate Hugh Boyd, FAIA. Both are national consultants in the development, design, and programming of new, award-winning urban markets, including the Milwaukee Public Market and 1999 Rudy Bruner Award Silver Medalist Portland Public Market in Portland, Maine. Their work was guided by an Urban Market Advisory Committee established by Grand Action and led by David Frey and Executive Director Jon Nunn.

The scope of the study included market research that gauged supply and demand; development of a merchandising plan; site selection and design concept; exploration of potential ownership, management, and marketing; financial analysis; and impact analysis. The MVI team also reviewed reports and studies supplied by Grand Action on arts and entertainment, the local housing market, the Fulton Street Farmers Market expansion, and regional food systems.

MVI conducted more than 100 interviews, talking with a diversity of local stakeholders including farmers and farmers market managers; food distributors and retailers; artists; developers; representatives of ethnic groups; public officials; and leaders from agriculture, education, healthcare, and nonprofit sectors. Overall, MVI found a high degree of enthusiasm for the concept, as well as a belief that the market could be a key component of a regional economic development strategy. The study acknowledged that



"Michigan has been a leader in the local foods movement nationally," and interviews revealed "a sophisticated recognition of critical issues," including the "need to pay ample attention to what's already going on" with existing farmers markets. The interviewees also indicated interest in education and a commercial incubator kitchen, the potential for the market to serve as a wholesale distribution hub, and a preference for a south side location.

Based on their experience and study of comparable markets, the MVI team identified five key criteria present in successful markets: a great site, a supportive physical environment, a local culture of public market shopping, professional management, and high-quality vendors. They also defined a successful market as one that can operate without subsidy after three years.

The team concluded that the proposed market should be "a 'real' place that reflects the region's unique food and farming culture as well as the distinctive qualities of place presented by downtown" while being informed by "national and regional trends with food retailing and local food systems." The report also identified the following goals that reflected the findings of Wondergem's earlier analysis:

- Create a dynamic downtown place that attracts the region's diverse residents and visitors.
- Strengthen and celebrate Grand Rapids' local food system.
- Catalyze redevelopment around the market.
- Provide opportunities for independent entrepreneurs.
- Promote healthy lifestyles and create a model of sustainable development.

## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Grand Action, with the assistance of the DDA and MVI, identified and evaluated 20 potential sites for the market in downtown Grand Rapids. Key criteria included visibility, accessibility, parking, supportive adjacent uses,



*The main entrance to Downtown Market on Ionia Avenue.*

size, availability and cost, potential to influence ongoing revitalization of downtown, and potential reuse of historic buildings and sustainable design opportunities. The search was then narrowed to three sites which were studied in more detail, including the Sonneveldt site on the south side and two riverside locations. In the end, there was a strong consensus for the Sonneveldt site, a triangular property occupied by a series of warehouse buildings once home to a food distribution operation and owned at the time by the DDA. This decision was based on the potential to make an investment in the south side and extend the "perception of downtown's boundaries," reuse historic buildings, and create a market district over time through development of adjacent vacant land and structures. At the same time it was acknowledged that the development would need to address challenges including the perception that it was outside the walkable downtown core and concerns about safety and adequate parking. The DDA agreed to lease the land to GRDM for \$1 per year for 99 years.

The development strategy resulting from the MVI study envisioned the market as “the region’s center of ‘local food excitement’.” To succeed, the market would need to “incorporate a complex set of functions generating multiple income streams; be tenanted with local, owner-operated businesses; incorporate food production; and be phased.”

Once the Sonneveldt site was selected, MVI moved forward with development of a preliminary design for the building, along with strategies for programming, operations, and financial analysis. Grand Action issued a request for proposals for design services and in June 2010 engaged local architectural and engineering firm Progressive AE in partnership with New Jersey-based Hugh A. Boyd Architect. An award-winning architect, Boyd had extensive experience in public market design, including the facilities in Milwaukee and Portland, Maine.

Indeed, the elegant three-story brick and glass Downtown Market building is reminiscent of the Milwaukee and Portland public markets designed and programmed by the MVI partnership of Boyd and Spitzer. Major components of the 138,000 square foot building include:

- a 24-vendor indoor market hall and two full-service restaurants
- a rooftop greenhouse
- a teaching kitchen featuring state-of-the-art technology and adjustable countertops
- a shared commercial incubator kitchen
- special event/banquet space with a demonstration kitchen that seats up to 200
- classrooms, labs, and offices for the market and educational tenants
- a 52-stall outdoor market shed

The initial plan was to reuse the existing structures on the site, which included five buildings dating from the 1890s to 1940s, ranging from one to four stories and constructed of brick, wood, and reinforced concrete.



*Views of the Ionia Avenue facade.*

However, upon further investigation, the design team discovered previously unidentified structural issues that would require several million dollars to address. These included foundation settlement related to poor bearing capacity of the underlying soil (mostly peat bog), damage from previous fires, and additional reinforcement needed to meet floor load requirements for new uses. GRDM decided to proceed instead with the development of a new building, adding approximately \$500,000 in construction costs.

The building hugs the southern edge of the 3.5-acre site and includes an attached, one-story covered outdoor market shed projecting north from the entrance into the parking lot. The main entrance to the building and first-floor market hall is on the north side facing downtown, opposite the outdoor market shed and parking lot. An additional market hall entrance is located on Ionia Avenue. There is a separate building entrance lobby off Logan Street SW that provides access to second and third floor offices and educational space as well as a loading dock and delivery area.

The market hall occupies the majority of the first floor along with two full-service restaurants and the delivery and loading area. The second floor contains classrooms, meeting rooms and offices for the market staff and educational tenants, as well as a teaching kitchen, a commercial incubator kitchen, a banquet/special event space with a demonstration kitchen, a greenhouse, and indoor and outdoor seating areas. The third floor has 9,800 square feet of rentable space that was not yet occupied by the end of 2015. The basement includes storage areas used by the market staff and tenants.

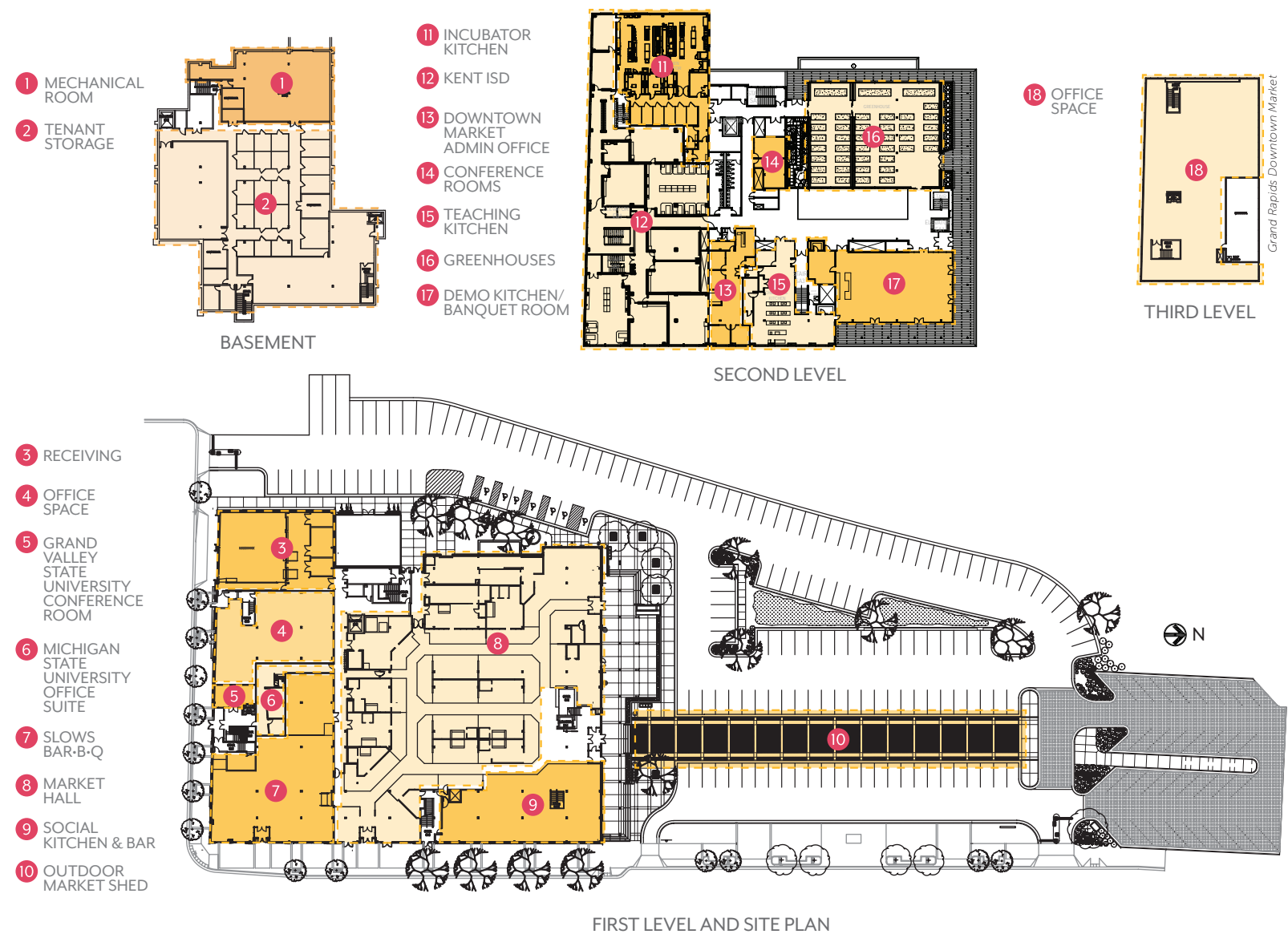
Public areas are clearly organized and welcoming. Most rooms have large windows that look outside or into the greenhouses, admitting generous amounts of daylight and offering views of adjacent activities. An open stairway and atrium connect the market hall with second floor offices and indoor and outdoor public areas, including a mezzanine that overlooks



*Rooftop greenhouse*

the market hall and landscaped outdoor terraces with tables and chairs. Timber salvaged from the original buildings on the site was incorporated into exposed trusses and wall paneling. High-quality materials were used throughout the building, reflecting the Downtown Market's civic purpose and Grand Action's commitment to quality and consideration of long-term maintenance.

More than 200 on-site parking spaces are distributed along the west side and north of the building in gated lots. Ten preferred parking spaces are available for low-emission and fuel-efficient vehicles. Free parking is available for market customers. The site is served by two bus lines including the new \$39 million Division Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Silver Line that provides express transit connecting downtown with points south and another route on Ionia Avenue that was relocated to enhance service to the market. Streetscape improvements including new road surfaces, sidewalks, and lighting were installed on adjacent streets by the City of Grand Rapids.





### Sustainability

Building sustainability was a key goal for the Downtown Market, which is the first LEED-certified public market in the United States and includes features that reflect its focus on food and public health.

Sustainability objectives for the design of the market included:

- Incorporating innovative approaches such as heating the greenhouse with excess heat from the market hall, implementing food waste composting, and capturing rain water for use in the greenhouses and landscaping.
- Minimizing operating costs in order to keep vendor rents as low as possible.
- Making sustainable elements visible to market visitors to add interest and excitement.

The Downtown Market is LEED Gold certified, receiving a total of 61 points. The sustainability consultants considered the project's focus on human health, energy design, reuse of a former urban brownfield, and access to public transportation to be key features. They pursued credits that reflected the market's focus on urban agriculture, food production, and increasing access to and education about healthy food and included an LEED pilot credit for local food production, the first in the US.

The Downtown Market's physical infrastructure includes a geothermal system with fifty 200-foot-deep wells in the parking lot, an 8,000-gallon rain harvesting system for greenhouse irrigation, 5,000 square feet of green roofs, 1,400 square feet of live walls, and a bio-digester. Tenant Design and Construction Guidelines instruct future tenants on green aspects of the building, and tenant work letters outline required water fixtures, light power density thresholds, and refrigeration systems that connect to the chiller loop.



Meeting rooms overlooking the greenhouse (top) and reclaimed wood paneling on the mezzanine.

Energy modeling was critical to the design of the heating and cooling system as well as seeking to reduce long-term operational costs. The hybrid system includes 64 heat pumps integrated with a heat exchanger and four boilers. The geothermal wells are designed to provide two-thirds of the market's heating and cooling needs. Two boilers supply heat for the greenhouse, which is operated by a separate control system, and for the snow melt system at the perimeter of the building, required by the city in high traffic public areas. According to the systems engineer, the system is designed to reduce energy use by 20% from that of a typical building.

A photovoltaic solar system was considered but determined not to be a cost-effective option at the time. The state-of-the-art facility includes computer programs that manage the complex heating, cooling, lighting, greenhouse shading and ventilation, and security systems, but it required a steep learning curve to use properly. According to the facility manager, the biggest challenge has been fine-tuning the systems to get the most efficiency and reduce utility bills. However, energy bills remain high. According to Fritz, the greenhouse and snowmelt system create substantial loads; in 2014, the green house alone cost approximately \$100,000 to operate, and the snowmelt system cost \$150,000. In part, this is because the greenhouse is increasingly used for special events, requiring additional heating and cooling, which was not anticipated when it was designed.

Reducing long-term operating and maintenance costs was one of the overall design goals and characteristic of Grand Action developments and the City of Grand Rapids, which, as one local leader observed, "doesn't shy away from making investments in public buildings." The Downtown Market features high-quality finishes, fixtures, and systems throughout, from "hidden" infrastructure like the sophisticated electronics that control lighting, heating and cooling, and greenhouse shading to more visible ones like the adjustable countertops in the teaching kitchen and stainless steel partitions and high-end fixtures and fittings in the restrooms.

## ACTIVITIES

The Downtown Market hosts a diversity of activities that revolve around food education, marketing and production, entrepreneurship, and healthy living. As one interviewee commented, "The building is secondary to the programming." Together the year-round indoor market hall and seasonal outdoor farmers market, teaching and commercial incubator kitchens, greenhouse, and educational and special event programming support the ambitious economic and social goals of the project, including creating a "center of local food excitement," and reinforce its identity as a civic gathering space and regional destination.

### *Indoor Market Hall*

The indoor market hall is the heart of the Downtown Market's operation. It is open Monday through Saturday 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sundays 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. According to staff and vendors, visitation peaks on Sunday afternoons around 3 p.m. Vendors are a popular attraction for guests attending meetings and special events and offer visitors options for last-minute gifts.



*Shoppers enjoy a wide variety of vendors in the Market Hall.*

The Downtown Market is intended to be a platform that promotes the rich agricultural community of Western Michigan. Therefore, as many products as possible are locally sourced. However, the Downtown Market also aims to offer a full shopping experience and includes vendors that sell cheese, wine, and olive oils from around the world and fish from outside the Great Lakes region. The hall has space for 25 tenants; 19 were in place at the market's opening in September 2013 and 21 in late 2015. Those tenants included:

- Aperitivo (imported and domestic cheeses, charcuterie, beer, and wine)
- Blue Spoon Soup & Spuds (operated by Goodwill)
- Bokay Flower Market
- Dorothy & Tony's Gourmet Popcorn
- Field & Fire Bakery
- Fish Lads
- Grand Traverse Distillery
- Love's Ice Cream
- Making Thyme Kitchen (prepared meals, soups, sides, and salads)
- Malamiah Juice Bar
- Michigan Pantry (Michigan-produced products)
- Montello Meat Market
- Old World Olive Company
- Penelope's Creperie
- Relish Green Grocer
- Rak Thai
- Simpatico Coffee
- Spice Merchants
- Sushi Maki
- Sweetie-licious Bake Shop
- Tacos El Cunado



Vendors include (clockwise from top): Fish Lads, Field and Fire Bakery, and Montello Meat Market.

The MVI study laid the groundwork for the types of businesses desired as tenants as well as the structure and design of the market hall. Grand Action engaged M Retail 18 months before the building was completed to lease the market hall. Fritz was promised a majority leased building when she was hired, which was not the case. Ted Spitzer worked to secure board approval to focus Fritz's attention on leasing the market hall, which had 80%



occupancy in time for the opening. Although Fritz and Muller succeeded in achieving a critical mass of vendors necessary for the opening, the effort drew Fritz's attention away from building the market's organization, programs, and staff.

Downtown Market staff now handle the majority of the leasing, assisted by a commercial leasing consultant and leasing committee that meets every three weeks. Rental rates are \$20 per square foot for restaurants and range from \$29 to \$35 per square foot for vendors. Leases include an additional percentage rent that kicks in once vendors meet a specified threshold of sales. The common area charge is \$5 per square foot, with an additional \$1 per square foot marketing charge. Five- to 10-year terms were established with initial tenants, four of whom have since left. In the spring of 2015, two vendor spaces remained to be leased.

Leasing staff work hard to attract and maintain a diverse and vibrant mix of vendors that support the goals and vision for the Downtown Market. This includes reaching out to established businesses within the area as well as tapping new entrepreneurs and people and businesses outside the city to meet the need for a particular type of product, such as convincing a Traverse City native living in Seattle to return to open Fish Lads. Staff members believe in taking time to find the right vendors, ensuring that their products meet the criteria and needs of the market, their philosophy aligns with the market, and their business practices are strong. This includes investing time and resources in cultivating and nurturing first-time operators and start-ups like Field & Fire Bakery and Malamiah Juice Bar, providing extensive design support with tenant fit-out, helping with start-up capital and loans, and on some occasions taking over businesses when operators failed to meet the market's standards.

The Downtown Market offers a variety of fresh and healthy food options in a neighborhood once considered a food desert and that does not yet have



*Vendors include (clockwise from top): Relish Green Grocer, Love's Ice Cream, Aperitivo.*

the population necessary to sustain a traditional grocery store. In order to make market products more affordable for low-income local residents, vendors accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamps. The Downtown Market also partners with local nonprofits to provide educational scholarships to low-income residents along with complimentary transit passes and "produce bucks" that can be used to purchase ingredients from Relish green grocer.





Jeffrey Grooters



Slows Bar Bq restaurant (top) and the seasonal outdoor market are popular destinations.

The two full-service restaurant spaces at the perimeter of the Downtown Market were the last to be leased. Although this resulted in less rental income for the market's first years of business, the general consensus is that it was worth the wait to secure the right tenants. Slows Bar Bq, a well-known traditional Texas-style barbecue from Detroit, opened in summer 2015. Social Kitchen & Bar, a popular Birmingham-based enterprise, will open a restaurant in the market in 2016. Both have been eagerly anticipated, and it is expected that their presence will increase the Downtown Market's popularity as a destination as well as market hall sales.

Vendors commented positively on the quality of the Downtown Market's infrastructure and management, including the investment in systems and equipment that made it feasible "to do something not possible elsewhere." They appreciated the collaborative, supportive environment that helped them feel "set-up for success" and more comfortable with taking the risk of starting up a new business. As one person observed, "The market doesn't let you fail."

### *Outdoor Farmers Market*

The 52-stall seasonal outdoor market offers space for farmers selling products from their own or a neighbor's farm. Downtown Market staff seek to attract a variety of vendors and have established guidelines and rules modeled on other farmers markets, including criteria for vendors and conduct. All food must be from Michigan and vendors must produce 80% of what they sell. Applications from artisans offering handcrafted items are also considered. Seasonal and daily vendors are welcome.

The outdoor market was the first portion of the Downtown Market to open in 2013 and remains an important and visible part of its operations. As the outdoor market entered the 2015 season, the manager acknowledged that staff were still learning, realizing that it takes time to build relationships and trust with farmers and producers and to establish a new venue in a

community with several existing outdoor markets. Market staff have made adjustments to the operating hours and rental cost structure from the prior season, including reducing the months of operation to focus on late spring through early fall and decreasing vendor fees by 50%.

### *Greenhouse*

The 6,000-square-foot rooftop greenhouse was envisioned as the “signature design element for the market” and is one of the most visible and popular spaces in the building. The light-filled space is attractive during the winter months when many days are overcast, and at night the illuminated glass enclosure serves as a glowing beacon. Greenhouse programming and use has evolved as Downtown Market staff have experimented with different ways of using the space to serve the public, seeking to leverage its popularity to generate revenue and offset operating costs.

According to Ben Bylsma, the greenhouse and green roofs manager, the primary purpose of the greenhouse when the Downtown Market opened was to grow plants. With the establishment of the Educational Foundation in 2014, the focus has shifted to educational programming, sharing the space with community partners, and renting it for events. In 2015, the greenhouse’s large open spaces were used for a combination of cultivation, educational programming—including fitness classes and gardening demonstrations—and a growing number of special events including corporate meetings and weddings. The space includes 24 benches used to start plants, the majority of which were rented to nonprofits and vendors like Well House, a Grand Rapids housing organization that uses the greenhouse to cultivate plants for community gardens. The Downtown Market is finding this approach to be a cost-effective and efficient way to share valuable indoor growing space and develop collaborative partnerships.



Grand Rapids Downtown Market

*The rooftop greenhouse is used for cultivation and educational programming.*



### *Teaching and Commercial Incubator Kitchens*

Food education and production are core activities supported by the Downtown Market's state-of-the-art teaching kitchen and commercial incubator kitchen. Both are designed to support a variety of programs to maximize their use.

Classes on cooking and nutrition are offered in the teaching kitchen which, according to Fritz, is the first in the country to feature adjustable height countertops that can be lowered for children. According to one cooking instructor, other facilities in the area "cannot beat the world-class teaching kitchen."

The Downtown Market's 5,000-square-foot commercial incubator kitchen includes preparation, production, and packaging and storage space available 24/7 for food start-up businesses. The market's incubator kitchen program also offers workshops, networking and collaboration opportunities, mentorship, business support, and technical assistance to help start-up entrepreneurs with the development, production, and marketing of food products.

The incubator program is managed by Crystal LeCoy, who has done an impressive job of establishing a new program along with policies and protocols in a relatively short period of time. The incubator program's rigorous application requires a business plan and liability insurance. LeCoy works closely with applicants to help them find the resources they need to meet the program's requirements. Once on board, participants receive access to workshops as well as a high degree of personalized support from LeCoy, including one-on-one coaching and mentoring to help with business planning and financing, production and packaging, labeling and marketing, and meeting necessary licensing and testing requirements. The Downtown Market offers discounted and scholarship rates to candidates who meet income criteria.



*Crystal LeCoy (top left), manager of the commercial incubator kitchen (bottom), meets with incubator tenants.*

In 2015, the incubator program hosted 16 tenants including fermented food and kombucha tea producers, a cold coffee brewer, and prepared food caterers. The incubator kitchen provides an opportunity for businesses to keep overhead costs low by minimizing investment of fixed capital. Tenants also benefit from working in the collaborative Downtown Market environment where they have access to classes, educational partners, and vendors and can network with other small businesses. This has resulted in opportunities to teach classes and cooperate with market vendors to source and use each other's products. LeCoy hosts biweekly meetings that give tenants the chance to connect with resources and each other. Program participants reported that they appreciated the high quality and capacity of the equipment, the pleasant light-filled working space, and the supportive staff. One person commented that "going any place else will be a step down."

As with other programmatic elements, operating the incubator kitchen program has been a learning process for the Downtown Market. Challenges include managing demand for the successful program (there is a waiting list of applicants) and kitchen space (including finding ways to fill less popular overnight hours), balancing the desire to provide individualized attention with staff capacity, and finding ways to help businesses that outgrow the space and are ready to move on. As of December 2014, 100 businesses had participated in the incubator kitchen program.

### *Educational Programming*

The Downtown Market offers a variety of programs that focus on healthy lifestyles to support its educational mission and reinforce its role as a gathering place. These include greenhouse and culinary programs that help people learn more about food as well as fitness and yoga classes. Programs are designed to attract all ages, income levels, and ethnic groups. They include summer camps and classes to introduce children, teens, and families to cooking and healthy lifestyles; hands-on adult classes and workshops

on food growing, shopping, preparation, budgeting, and nutrition; and Spanish-language culinary courses.

The Downtown Market also hosts events and workshops throughout the year in partnership with the city, local chefs, and vendors. In 2015, these included free Saturday morning cooking demonstrations and kids' activities, Monday evening workshops featuring market products presented in partnership with vendors, and a series in April offered with the Michigan Cider Association to celebrate Grand Rapids' inaugural Cider Week.

The Downtown Market also partners with local schools and community organizations, including Spectrum Health, to develop and market its educational programs. Market staff are eager to reach more people in the community, particularly local low-income residents, and are working with more than 30 neighborhood organizations and social service providers to identify topics of interest and overcome barriers to participation, such



*Classes and events are offered throughout the year.*





*Educational classes for children and adults take place in the teaching kitchen and classrooms.*

as the perception among many low-income shoppers that the market is “not for me.” They are finding word-of-mouth and outreach via community organizations to be most effective. The market has started offering tours of the building to introduce people to its amenities (as of early 2015, more than 2,000 people had taken part) and classes on the fundamentals of nutrition and cooking, such as knife skills.

The cost of cooking classes varies from \$30 to \$65 per session. The Downtown Market partners with local nonprofits to provide low-income

residents with educational scholarships that fund class fees and transit passes and offer \$10 in “produce bucks” that can be used to purchase ingredients from Relish Green Grocer. In the first year of the scholarship program, 231 participants received scholarships funded by Spectrum Health and more than \$1,400 in produce bucks were provided. The Downtown Market is on track to distribute 650 scholarships at the close of the fiscal year ending in June 2015. Scholarship recipients interviewed for this report appreciated the opportunity to offer their families better nutrition and reduce their dependency on prepared foods. They didn’t feel there was a stigma associated with being a participant and enjoyed using the produce bucks that encouraged their purchase of fresh produce. They acknowledged that not many families they know are aware of the Downtown Market and more could be done to promote its classes and camp opportunities. One found out about the market by volunteering for ArtPrize; another discovered it while researching summer camp options for her children. They enjoy attending classes and shopping in the market and are eager ambassadors who encourage their friends to visit.

Several nonprofit educational organizations rent space in the facility for offices, classes, and teaching demonstrations. These include the Kent Intermediate School District and Grand Valley State University (GVSU). GVSU, which has a main campus in Allendale and a secondary campus downtown, utilizes the test kitchen and meeting space for its hospitality and tourism management program. The market also hosts the Heartside Gleaning Initiative, which collects excess fresh produce from market vendors for distribution to local food pantries (more than 17,592 pounds of food were collected from the Downtown Market and Fulton Street Market during the 2014 season). The Kent Intermediate School District uses classrooms and the teaching kitchen for its Health Sciences Early College Academy and high school culinary arts program. As of late 2014, 300 students had participated. Michigan State University Extension has an office in the market with staff who work with local farmers and growers. The

program holds classes on culinary medicine and food safety and offers counseling and classes for farmers and vendors on creating and packaging retail products, employee training, and direct market sales.

Tenants pay a base rent for their space as well as a discounted rental rate for use of the teaching kitchen and meeting spaces. Educational partners gave the Downtown Market high marks for the quality of the facility, particularly the teaching kitchen, and its commitment to the community and education. The market's downtown location and combination of teaching, production, and retail facilities offer a unique environment for experiential learning that does not exist elsewhere in the region. It is not unusual for students in the high school culinary program to interview with and work for vendors in the market hall as well as the Downtown Market itself. Educational tenants and market staff have also collaborated in the development of new educational programs, such as a culinary medicine class offered in partnership with the medical school that filled within five minutes of registration opening.

A community advisory group comprised of about a dozen people from local nonprofits, businesses, and health organizations meets quarterly to focus on ways to increase diversity and inclusion at the Downtown Market. Members act as ambassadors for the market, reaching out to the more than 40 service organizations in the neighborhood and supporting the work of the educational foundation. It is clear that the Downtown Market is intended to serve a larger social purpose, and staff are eager to ensure that the building is welcoming.

Educational programming at the Downtown Market continues to evolve. Prior to the Downtown Market's opening, staff members created a list of over 300 potential classes based on market research, then narrowed the list down to ideas they thought would be of most interest to the community. In early 2015, 10 staff members were engaged in developing, managing,



Grand Rapids Downtown Market



The greenhouse (top) and banquet room are popular event venues.

and teaching programs. By all accounts the programs they offered were creative, innovative, and responsive to interests of customers, community organizations, and educational partners, and new options tailored to different audiences were in development. More recent offerings included a holiday open house featuring incubator kitchen products and workshops on cleaning and reduction of household toxins.

### *Events*

From the time of its opening, the Downtown Market has been a popular venue for meetings and events, including corporate gatherings and weddings. The light-filled building and rooftop greenhouse are attractive and appealing. The market hosted 176 events in 2014 and expected to host more than 200 in 2015. Although the Downtown Market was intended and designed to host events, the degree to which it is used by businesses for training and networking—taking advantage of the robust technology embedded in the building—was not anticipated. It has become clear that event rentals offer potential for additional revenue that Fritz and her staff are eager to leverage.

Market staff are also eager to increase the building's role as a community forum as events and meetings offer another way for people to see and experience the building. The Downtown Market hosts a variety of ad hoc and regular meetings of organizations that focus on health and well-being, food production, and sustainability, including the West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum and Local First.

### *Future Plans*

Start-up of the facility has been time and resource intensive. Fritz's need to shift attention on leasing the market at the start required putting the work of building the organization and staff on hold for six months. Thorough as the MVI study was, it did not include proposed programming for spaces like the greenhouse, and it has taken time to figure out how best

to use the spaces and balance revenue generation, operating costs, and the Downtown Market's social agenda. Concerned about burnout among start-up staff, Fritz is mindful of managing expectations and taking too much on at one time. In early 2015, she engaged consultant Bill Johnson from the Berean Group to assist with evaluating the Downtown Market's performance and developing a strategic business plan, and Fritz was in the process of restructuring staff to put personnel in places that support revenue generation such as special events.

## **FINANCING**

Properly capitalizing the Downtown Market's development, construction, and startup funds was a key goal identified by the MVI feasibility study and essential to the market's ability to be financially self-sustaining in the long run. Financing for the Downtown Market was assembled by Grand Action, which leveraged its relationships with business leaders and public agencies to raise the necessary funds. However, once underway, the project encountered a series of setbacks—including unanticipated building and financing challenges—that ultimately increased development costs and, in turn, raised operating costs and compromised the market's ability to generate income. All of this resulted in unexpected financial pressures on the organization and its president and CEO in the first year and a half of start-up. While there have been setbacks, market staff and board are proactively exploring ways to increase revenue and reduce operating expenses while continuing to meet the Downtown Market's ambitious social goals. By early 2015, there was cautious optimism that, with some fine-tuning of its strategy and operations, the organization would be on track to meet its goal of long-term sustainability within the next few years.

Six months prior to the Downtown Market's completion, Grand Action engaged Jim Pike from Fusion Business Services to take over the accounting for the project. According to Pike, it is typical for Grand Action to provide



in-house financial management for a project it sponsors until it is up and running, when the responsibility is transferred to the operator. After the transfer, the Downtown Market engaged Fusion for day-to-day accounting services. In early 2015, Fritz and Pike were in the process of restructuring the organization's financial systems to address its evolution and accurately reflect current operations. These efforts included assigning and finalizing costs associated with the Downtown Market's development and start-up, shifting educational programming revenue and expenses from the corporation to the foundation (as intended when the market was created), and moving the organization's fiscal calendar towards a calendar year. The final tabulation of development costs for the building was determined to be nearly \$29.5 million.

### *Development*

The budget and strategy for capitalizing the Downtown Market's development and sustaining its operations was laid out in the MVI report. Key to the financing strategy was the notion that the project be properly capitalized at the beginning. According to the MVI report, "In most communities the initial costs of developing a public market, including land, are paid by public or philanthropic funds, with the assumption that the public market will not carry debt service." This strategy assumed that start-up funding would pay for the building in full and, critically, allow for a cushion by providing support for the first three years of operation, at which point the market was expected to become self-sustaining.

The initial development cost estimate for the Grand Rapids market was \$27.1 million, including \$19.7 million in hard construction costs. Financing from New Market Tax Credits (NMTC)—a federal financing program established to bring private capital investments to low-income communities—was anticipated to account for more than 50% of development costs.

As development of the market progressed, several issues arose which increased the costs and complicated financing and fundraising for the project. The initial construction cost estimate was predicated on renovation of the existing buildings, and the financing strategy relied heavily on NMTC. The need to demolish the existing structures and build from the ground up resulted in an additional \$500,000 in construction costs. Failure to secure the expected tax credits late in the development process required additional fundraising and the use of last-minute loans, secured and in some cases provided by members of Grand Action, to bridge the gap. These unanticipated expenses and the loan financing resulted in increased operating costs and the kind of debt service the initial planning tried to avoid and created additional financial challenges in the market's first years of operation.

In the end, the development totaled nearly \$29.5 million, including \$24 million in construction costs, bringing the cost of the building to approximately \$172 per square foot. It is worth noting that construction costs included infrastructure, equipment, and tenant fit-out for market hall vendors (but not the two restaurants). These costs are usually passed along to tenants in comparable projects, but in this case were considered part of the public investment necessary to attract the right mix of vendors, support the goals of incubating and supporting entrepreneurship, and getting the market up and running. The Michigan Economic Development Corporation provided a \$1.5 million grant after the Downtown Market opened to support tenant fit out for the two restaurants.

Funding for the development came from private donors and foundations, the City of Grand Rapids, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the State of Michigan. Local public agencies contributed infrastructure improvements including new streets and sidewalks and enhanced public transportation access through the rerouting of bus routes.

More than half of the funds came from private donors and foundations including the Grand Rapids Community Foundation. State funding included a \$4 million loan from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (\$1 million of which was guaranteed by local foundations) plus nearly \$4.4 million in funding from state Brownfield Tax Credits. The City of Grand Rapids used \$200,000 from an existing EPA grant and received \$1 million from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to fund cleanup of the property. An additional \$184,000 was contributed by the Grand Rapids Parking Services Department (GRPSD).

**TABLE 1: DEVELOPMENT SOURCES AND USES**

*Sources*

Private Donor and Foundation Grants	\$13,588,087
Private Donor and Foundation Loans	\$6,445,612
Brownfield Tax Credits	\$4,380,953
Michigan Economic Development Corporation (loan)	\$4,000,000
DEQ, EPA, and GRPSD Grants	\$1,069,228
	<b>\$29,483,880</b>

*Uses*

Predevelopment/Startup*	\$784,287
Construction	\$24,090,365
Equipment, Fixtures and Furniture	\$881,054
Professional Fees	\$3,220,438
Fees, Permits and Testing	\$101,997
Land Costs	\$214,033
Liquor License	\$26,425
Interest	\$165,281
	<b>\$29,483,880</b>

*\*Includes MVI report and market personnel.*

A reconciliation of development costs prepared by the market's chief financial officer in 2015 is summarized in Table 1.

*Operating*

From its inception, it was assumed that the Downtown Market would be owned and operated by a new or existing nonprofit organization. The market is comprised of two business entities: the Grand Rapids Downtown Market, Inc. (GRDM), which owns and operates the building and market hall; and the nonprofit Downtown Market Education Foundation (DMEF), which received 501(c)(3) status in 2014 and is responsible for educational programming, including activities that take place in the greenhouse and incubator kitchen. In 2015, the Downtown Market was in the process of sorting out income and expenses for both operations and was working with Johnson on the development of a strategic plan for both entities.

MVI prepared five-year financial projections as part of its feasibility study, estimating annual income to range from \$1.73 million in year one to \$2.22 million in year five, with base rents averaging \$21 per square foot. Operating expenses were estimated to range from \$1.41 million in year one to \$1.6 million in year five. MVI recommended a "robust management team" of professional staff, budgeting approximately \$635,000 annually, and a generous allowance for marketing. The study projected a positive cash flow in year one, including a profit of just under \$250,000.

The plan was for the Downtown Market to become financially self-sustaining within a few years. This presumed that the building would be paid in full and fully occupied when it opened, which was not the case. By early 2015, the market hall had been fully leased and the expectation was that GRDM would begin to generate a modest profit in the 2015/16 fiscal year. The DMEF was expected to break even with income generated primarily through program fees, grants, and event rentals, and the expectation is that it will always require some level of grant funding to support its operations.

**TABLE 2: GRAND RAPIDS DOWNTOWN MARKET, INC.  
2015-16 OPERATING BUDGET**

<i>Revenue</i>	
Rent	\$1,061,885
Special Events	\$858,200
Operating*	\$334,495
Loan Payments	\$33,600
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$2,288,180</b>
<i>Expenses</i>	
Personnel	\$866,180
Occupancy	\$452,000
Administration	\$282,700
Other	\$259,400
Events	\$121,700
Promotion	\$95,100
Contingency	\$42,000
Merchandising	\$20,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$2,139,080</b>
<b>Total Net Income</b>	<b>\$149,100</b>

\*Includes ATM and parking fees, merchandising, and sponsorships.

According to the 2015/16 corporation and foundation budgets provided by the Downtown Market, the total projected cost to operate the facility and programs for the year is \$2,820,450. The 2015/16 operating budget for GRDM (Table 2) was just over \$2 million, with a projected profit of about \$150,000. Nearly half (46%) of the revenue is projected to be generated by rents and 38% from special events. Of the expenses, 40% was allocated for personnel and 21% for occupancy.

**TABLE 3: DOWNTOWN MARKET EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
2015-16 OPERATING BUDGET**

<i>Revenue</i>	
Programs	\$352,900
Grants	\$219,200
Fundraisers/Special Events	\$105,000
Greenhouse	\$3,600
Tours	\$1,200
	<b>\$681,900</b>
<i>Expenses</i>	
Personnel	\$414,770
Administration	\$95,500
Programs	\$92,600
Promotion	\$38,900
Building	\$24,000
Events	\$9,600
Contingency	\$6,000
	<b>\$681,370</b>
<b>Total Net Income</b>	<b>\$530</b>

The 2015/16 DMEF expense budget (Table 3) was just over \$680,000, a significant increase from the 2014 budget of just over \$270,000. That year, program fees, incubator rental, and special events generated more than 80% of revenue, with grants making up the balance. Expenses exceeded revenue by 20%. In 2015/16, program fees, incubator rental, and special events were expected to generate 68% of the revenue, with grants making up the difference. As of the beginning of 2015/16, the foundation had yet



to assume any occupancy costs except for modest expenses associated with greenhouse programming (mostly equipment and maintenance). As with the corporation, personnel costs make up the majority of expenses for the foundation.

In October 2014, the Downtown Market hosted the first Food A'faire, an annual fundraising event benefiting the Downtown Market Education Foundation. Fritz anticipates that market staff will pursue grants in the future to raise additional revenue.

## IMPACT

The Grand Rapids Downtown Market was off to a promising start in its second full year of operation. As the latest project in Grand Action's portfolio of investments in downtown Grand Rapids, the carefully conceived project embodies an ambitious social agenda and reflects the civic aspirations

of the community in its architecture and programming. Although there were development and financial challenges along the way that delayed its progress, the Downtown Market appeared to be on track to meet its goals.

While it is early to evaluate it in respect to all of the project goals, the Downtown Market is clearly making an impact on the community. Overall, the impression in the community is that the market is contributing to increased awareness and interest in the local and fresh food movement and is helping to grow local food businesses. The facility is becoming a popular local and regional destination and has helped to spur additional development at the southern end of downtown. One person referred to the whole market as "a big incubator." A 2012 *New York Times* article "A Michigan City Bets on Food for Its Growth" highlighted the ambitious goals for the project and its connection with city identity.

### *The Aspirational Small City*

There is a high degree of ambition and civic pride among the business and civic leaders in Grand Rapids. As Dick DeVos observed, Grand Rapids "wants to be a community of the future, not the past." Several people commented that "Grand Rapids is a special place," suggesting that there's something about the attitude and culture of the community, including its "vibrant and powerful tradition of corporate/private sector leadership," that has made the resurrection of downtown and projects like the Downtown Market possible. Another suggested that the city is essentially a small town and that people who are involved in the community tend to cross paths frequently with each other, making it easier to get things done.

### *The Power of Civic Leadership and Collaboration*

Several people cited the role of visionary leadership and the spirit of collaboration as something that sets Grand Rapids apart and contributed to the Downtown Market's successful development and completion.



Simeon Bruner presents the RBA plaque to President/CEO Mimi Fritz (left) and Kayem Dunn.

Leadership from the business and philanthropic sectors in particular has been key. According to one source, Grand Rapids has an unusually high level of wealth for a city of its size, and business and philanthropic leaders do not hesitate to use that wealth for the public good. Equally essential has been a high level of civic engagement and investment in community input and process. As one local leader explained, “The culture of Grand Rapids provides opportunities for all of us to participate.” These civic qualities are embodied in Grand Action, which was essential to making the Downtown Market a reality. The organization championed the idea of a public market, advanced the planning and development process, assembled the funding for its construction and start-up, and steered the project through challenges—such as the loss of anticipated NMTC funding—that very well might have derailed or diminished a similar project in another city.

### *Investing in Quality*

Grand Action focuses on building high-quality structures, investing in materials and systems that take into consideration long-term maintenance and life cycle costs. When the market project hit unanticipated financial hurdles, the leaders of Grand Action stepped in with additional resources to fill the gap, throughout the process maintaining its commitment to quality construction and fulfilling the market’s social agenda. As one person interviewed put it, “Grand Action doesn’t do projects halfway.” The MVI report noted that “if you look at some of the projects that Grand Action has done, they’ve changed the perception of all of downtown [...] if Grand Action takes this on [...] it would be something that would be an attraction and destination location.”

### *Building More than a Market*

Grand Rapids Downtown Market is more than a market. It incorporates an ambitious social agenda aimed at improving access to fresh food, supporting local agriculture and food production, and improving public health. The market does this by bringing people together—consumers,



State of the art features, such as adjustable counter tops (top), reflect the commitment to education and quality.

Grand Rapids Downtown Market

farmers and vendors, and educators—and making connections through classes and events in a beautiful public space. Partnerships with local service providers and scholarships increase access to educational classes and fresh food for low-income individuals and families, building human and social capital in the community.

According to MVI's Ted Spitzer, integrating educational programming, special events, and commercial office space into the Downtown Market offers several benefits. Even though the added complexity makes the market more difficult to manage, it helps to diversify revenue streams, reduce reliance on vendor rent, and foster innovation among vendors, who can open the door to wholesale business, reducing their reliance on retail sales. This is one of the lessons Spitzer learned from developing and managing markets in other cities, including the Milwaukee Public Market and the now closed Portland Public Market (1999 RBA Silver Medalist).

### *Creating a Beacon for the Community*

The carefully selected site and thoughtful building program for the Downtown Market complement existing development strategies designed to attract investment in a formerly neglected part of downtown. The well-crafted, LEED-certified structure with its rooftop greenhouse serves as a beacon, reflecting the aspirations and values of the community and signaling that something new is happening on the southern edge of downtown Grand Rapids. Inside, the combination of the market hall and restaurants, educational programs, and warm, welcoming spaces attract a variety of users including shoppers and diners, entrepreneurs, and children and adults participating in classes and events.

The Downtown Market's impact is reflected in its effect on downtown Grand Rapids as well as the recognition it has received for its design and construction and the national and international interest it has drawn from other market operators and those seeking to develop markets in other



*The market has become a beacon for the community.*

Mike Buck

cities. By spring 2015, the market had generated interest from over a dozen cities in the United States and Canada that are seeking to develop similar public markets.

## **ASSESSING IMPACT IN RESPECT TO PROJECT GOALS**

**GOAL:** *Support local entrepreneurship and innovation, in part by providing affordable vending opportunities for farmers and traditionally marginalized entrepreneurs, resource sharing, and one-on-one mentoring.*

The Downtown Market offers a broad spectrum of programs to support entrepreneurship and innovation and is working hard to reach low-income and traditionally marginalized populations. This is reflected in the careful cultivation, selection, and mentoring of market vendors; a comprehensive incubator kitchen program; and extensive educational and public programming. Across the broad Grand Rapids community, belief in and support for the market and its mission is strong.



Servers working at local restaurants reported using products from the market vendors including bread from Field & Fire Bakery. Incubator businesses and vendors reported using each other's products in demonstrations and other activities. The Downtown Market partners with Local First, an organization dedicated to supporting locally owned businesses, to host an annual one-day event that helps to promote community-supported agriculture.

***GOAL: Create hundreds of jobs and provide substantial economic impact.***

The MVI study projected that the market would generate \$24.9 million in total gross sales by market businesses once the market reached "stabilization" in year three, generating an estimated \$48 million in the region and 615 new jobs. In early 2015, the Downtown Market had been in operation 18 months, and businesses in the market had created 215 jobs. While it appears that the market is on track to reach its "stabilization" or break-even point in its third year and there is evidence that it is generating some economic impact, it is difficult to effectively evaluate its economic impact with the existing financial data.



*Programs promote fresh food and public health.*

***GOAL: Strengthen and celebrate the West Michigan food system.***

The Downtown Market's combination of programming—indoor and outdoor public markets, commercial incubator kitchen program, greenhouse, classes and workshops, and events—has been effective in establishing it as a place that strengthens and celebrates the West Michigan food system. The indoor market and outdoor farmers market feature vendors selling locally produced foods. The incubator kitchen program nurtures budding local entrepreneurs and producers. Cooking, nutrition, and greenhouse classes and workshops introduce and cultivate interest in local food and its production. A variety of events celebrate and increase awareness of local food production and vendors such as free cooking demonstrations and kids' activities.

***GOAL: Promote public health, particularly with innovative approaches to addressing the area's obesity epidemic.***

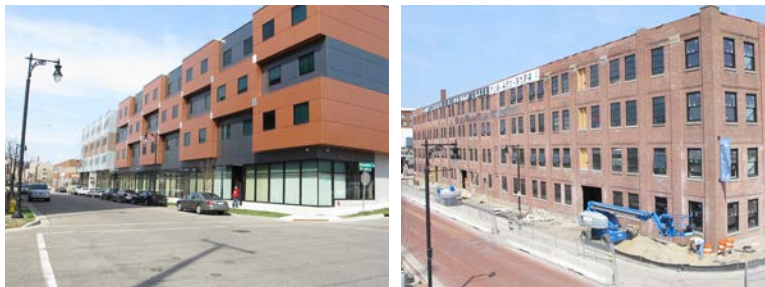
As part of its core mission, the market has an ambitious agenda for educational programming focused on health and nutrition. Programming includes classes on basic cooking skills, budgeting and nutrition, and fitness as well as scholarships that make the classes accessible to low-income individuals. Indoor and outdoor vendors provide access to fresh produce and organic products previously unavailable in the immediate community, and SNAP food stamps can be used by qualified individuals to purchase products from vendors. While conversations with Downtown Market staff, local social service agencies, and program participants suggest it is beginning to make an impact, it is not yet substantial and at this point is impossible to measure.

***GOAL: Bring diverse people together in an active public space through events, cooking demonstrations, culinary and nutrition classes, event rentals, community partnerships, and more.***

The Downtown Market has become a popular regional destination for shopping, classes, meetings, and tourists. It hosts a broad array of classes



and events that attract people living and working close by as well as from the outer suburbs. While the market is making an effort to reach a diversity of people through community partnerships and educational programming, it is still perceived by some as “not for me,” particularly among lower-income individuals. The outdoor market is considered to be more accessible. There’s growing recognition that there’s a “need to meet people where they are,” particularly those who are very low income, and



The market hosts art installations during ArtPrize (top); adjacent properties have been developed into housing (bottom).

that going to them and extending personal invitations makes a difference. This requires more capacity than was in place in early 2015. The Downtown Market recently started offering tours that introduce people to the facility and is exploring partnerships with local social service agencies to extend its outreach in the community.

A total of 4,526 people attended classes from September 2013 through November 2014. Of those, approximately 47% were from the city of Grand Rapids, 37% came from other cities in Michigan, and 1% were from out of state (15% did not provide zip codes). The students were 68% female and 22% male (10% did not identify their gender).

***GOAL: Extend downtown development south from the Van Andel Arena.***

In addition to the primary operational goals of the Downtown Market itself, the project sought to extend downtown development south from the Van Andel Arena into a neighborhood little accessed by most residents of and visitors to Grand Rapids. By all accounts, the market has succeeded in attracting new visitors to the district, drawing activity and development southward from the downtown core and increasing the use of Heartside Park. It has changed the perception of the area surrounding the market and the southern end of downtown among people living in Grand Rapids and its surrounding suburbs.

The Downtown Market provides an anchor for local residents and businesses in the Heartside neighborhood which, according to one business owner, “used to feel like a wasteland.” The market has also increased confidence in the area among developers and investors, although some suggested that interest had already started to increase prior to the Downtown Market’s opening. More than \$50 million in new investment was taking place in the neighborhood in the spring of 2015, including the conversion of two adjacent vacant warehouses into 170 units of affordable housing.

### Recognition

Grand Rapids Downtown Market has received significant local and national recognition, including the following awards:

- 2014 AIA New Jersey Design Honor Award in the "Built Open" category
- 2014 Excellence in Construction Award for Sustainable Building More than \$10 Million from Associated Builders and Contractors of Western Michigan (awarded to Pioneer Construction)
- 2015 Sustainability Project of the Year from the Association of Retail Environments

### SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Like the other 2015 winners, Grand Rapids Downtown Market tackles big issues, such as access to healthy food, education, public health, and reconnecting urban communities. The Selection Committee praised the project for leveraging the farm-to-table movement to create a "food hub" which appeals to a broad socio-economic spectrum of people and incorporates an ambitious social agenda. Less than two years after its completion, the Downtown Market is well known among people living in Grand Rapids and a source of significant civic pride.

In selecting it as a finalist, the committee noted that the Downtown Market has "a lot of things going for it," yet they considered the social impact goals and second floor programming to be the most compelling. They were excited about the vision to build human, social, and economic capital through connecting people and resources, education and skill building, and job creation. This combination of goals and programming distinguishes it from other RBA winners such as Pike Place Market, Swan's Marketplace, and Portland Public Market. Although the committee was excited about the project's potential to have a significant impact on a large number of people, they acknowledged that it was still fairly new and that more time would be needed to fully evaluate its impact.



Jeffrey Grooters

*The market has become a source of significant community pride.*

**“THE SELECTION COMMITTEE PRAISED THE PROJECT FOR CREATING A “FOOD HUB” WHICH APPEALS TO A BROAD SOCIO-ECONOMIC SPECTRUM OF PEOPLE AND INCORPORATES AN AMBITIOUS SOCIAL AGENDA.”**

The Selection Committee praised the thoughtful planning processes undertaken by Grand Action and DDA that set the stage for the market’s development. Like 2015 Silver Medalist Falls Park on the Reedy, they illustrate the impact and value of long-term, intentional planning for development. The committee noted that although the development process was largely “top down” and driven by Grand Action, the organization was careful to seek community input and buy-in and is actively seeking to be more inclusive and increase engagement in the future.

The committee referred to the Downtown Market as a “marquee building” and complemented the elegant design, attention to sustainability, and use of high-quality materials and state-of-the-art systems—all of which reflect the ambition and civic pride of Grand Rapids. Even so, they considered it to be extraordinarily costly, although the investment was calculated and consistent with Grand Action’s philosophy that buildings should be built to last and reduce long-term operating costs. The committee noted that the Downtown Market would not have been possible without Grand Action, which effectively served as a patron, and asked whether they would provide continued operational support. They expressed concern about ongoing financial stability and whether pressure to “make the numbers work” would lead the market to focus more attention on high-end customers at the cost of social programs. Excited as they were about the project, the committee suggested that the combination of the high cost of development and operations and the unique characteristics of Grand Rapids, including the pivotal role of Grand Action that made it possible, would make it difficult to replicate in other cities.

## RELATED RBA WINNERS

Public markets offer access to food, cultivate and promote local businesses, and provide gathering spaces for communities. There are many public markets among RBA winners, ranging from revitalized markets to new ones, often in conjunction with larger, mixed-use developments.



**PIKE PLACE MARKET** (1987 Gold Medalist) preserved a group of historic buildings on Seattle’s waterfront as a public marketplace selling local fish and produce. The project included the renovation of historic buildings on the waterfront, new mixed-use buildings, and careful management and programming to support the local residential population.



**SWAN’S MARKETPLACE** in Oakland, California (2001 Silver Medalist) is a \$20 million mixed-use development that involved the adaptive reuse of a historic downtown public market and incorporated new housing, commercial, and arts-related uses. The project attracted middle and upper income households to live and invest in the area without displacing existing residents and businesses.



**PORTLAND PUBLIC MARKET** in Portland, Maine (1999 Silver Medalist) aimed to showcase local food and agricultural vendors that would attract local shoppers and tourists and spur renewal downtown. Despite receiving widespread attention and accolades when it opened in 1998, the market was not financially sustainable and closed in 2006.

Additional RBA winners that address urban food issues include 2003 Silver Medalist Bridgemarket, a new, mixed-use urban marketplace housed beneath the Queensboro Bridge in Manhattan; 1991 Gold Medalist Greenmarket, a collection of farmers markets operating in five boroughs of New York that brings fresh farm products to inner-city neighborhoods; and 2013 Gold Medalist Inspiration Kitchens in Chicago, which offers healthy, affordably priced meals prepared by culinary workers in training.

More information about these and other RBA winners can be found at [www.rudybruneraward.org](http://www.rudybruneraward.org).



## Resources

This case study was compiled from information gathered from the project application, an extensive site visit in April 2015, discussions with the RBA Selection Committee, and research and interviews conducted during those processes and throughout the writing and editing of this book. Titles and positions of interviewees and URLs listed below were effective as of the site visit unless otherwise noted.

### INTERVIEWS

#### Staff:

Mimi Fritz, President/CEO  
Jacob Bandstra, Chef  
Sharonda Bridgeforth, Administrative Assistant (and neighborhood resident)  
Ben Bylsma, Greenhouse Coordinator  
Mike DeVries, Facility Manager  
Claire Duthler, Leasing Manager/Special Events Manager  
Jolon Hull, Office Coordinator/Outreach Coordinator  
Crystal LeCoy, Incubator Kitchen and Program Manager  
Shannon Sadoski, Education Manager  
Sarah Tupper, Private Event Manager  
Michele Van Dyke, Farmers Market Coordinator

#### Board of Directors:

George Aquino, Amway Hotel Group  
Wayman Britt, Kent County Administrator  
Juan Daniel Castro, Spectrum Health, Healthier Communities  
Lew Chamberlin, West Michigan Whitecaps  
Kayem Dunn, Kayem Dunn LLC  
John Green, Founders Brewing Company  
Brian Ryks, Gerald R. Ford International Airport  
Doug Small, Experience Grand Rapids  
Diane Stampfler, Promote Michigan

#### Advisory Committee:

Kris Larson, Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.  
Bill Kirk, Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.  
Juan Daniel Castro, Spectrum Health, Healthier Communities and  
Downtown Market Board Member

Marge Palmerlee, Degage Ministries  
Reb Roberts, Sanctuary Folk Art  
Eddie Tadlock, DeVos Place/DeVos Performance Hall/Van Andel Arena (SMG)

#### City of Grand Rapids:

George Heartwell, Mayor  
Greg Sundstrum, City Manager  
Kara Wood, Economic Development Director  
Wayman Britt, Kent County Administrator, Downtown Market Board Member  
Brian Harris, Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority Board

#### Design:

Hugh Boyd, Hugh Boyd Architect\*  
Craig Nicely, Progressive AE  
Eric Doyle, Catalyst Partners  
Keith Winn, Catalyst Partners  
Roger Maddox, FTC&H Engineers  
Jim Reimenschneider, JRA Design

#### Development and Financing:

John Byl, Warner, Norcross & Judd  
Dick DeVos, Grand Action\*  
Ron Foor, Fifth/Third Bank  
David Frey, Grand Action/Frey Foundation  
Bill Johnson, Berean Group  
Jon Nunn, Grand Action  
Jim Pike, Fusion Business Services\*  
Sarah Rainero, Michigan Economic Development Corporation, State of Michigan  
Diana Sieger, Grand Rapids Community Foundation  
Steve Wilson, Frey Foundation  
Jason Zylstra, DeVos Foundation

#### Programming and Leasing:

Ted Spitzer, Market Ventures Inc.\*  
Chris Muller, M Retail

#### Market Hall Tenants:

Mario Cascante, Tacos El Cuñado  
Anissa Eddie, Malamiah Juice Bar  
Yang Hang, Rak Thai  
Shelby Kibler, Field & Fire Bakery  
Amy Ruis, Aperitivo



**Incubator Tenants:**

Emily Helmus, Bloom Ferments  
 Jodie and Paul Krumpe, Cultured Love  
 Jason McClearen, The Everyday Chef  
 Holly McManus, Cooking Under the Moon  
 Kasey Spencer, Artisan Cuisine Catering  
 David Wentworth, Prospectors Cold Brew Coffee

**Education Tenants:**

Anavel, Kaselyn, Maddie, and Ryan, Kent Intermediate School District  
 culinary program students  
 George Dennis, Chef Instructor  
 Mike Hagerty, Kent Intermediate School District  
 Kendra Wills, Michigan State University Extension Office  
 Mark Rambo, Grand Valley State University

**Educational Program Participants:**

Quiana Thompson, scholarship program participant  
 Patricia Cannon, scholarship program participant  
 Sommer and Alice Grieser, class participants

**Community Partners:**

Brian Burch, ArtPrize  
 Kathy Crosby, Goodwill/Blue Spoon Kitchen (Downtown Market tenant)  
 Jill Graybill, Spectrum Health  
 Hanna Schulze, Local First of West Michigan  
 Lisa Sisson, Heartside Gleaning Initiative and Grand Valley State University

**Neighboring Organizations, Property Owners, and Residents:**

Mike Jacobson, Baker Lofts/Klingman Lofts  
 Jean Schaub, The Dwelling Place and Avenue for the Arts  
 Denny Sturtevant, The Dwelling Place  
 Joe Voss, Spectrum Industries

**Private Event Rental Clients:**

Jan Burns, Grand Rapids Community Foundation  
 Trista Harroun, PNC Bank  
 Helena Hudson  
 Cindy Smies, Mel Trotter Ministries  
 Carroll Velie, Varnum, LLP  
 Kim Voutila, Amway

*\*Interview conducted by phone.*

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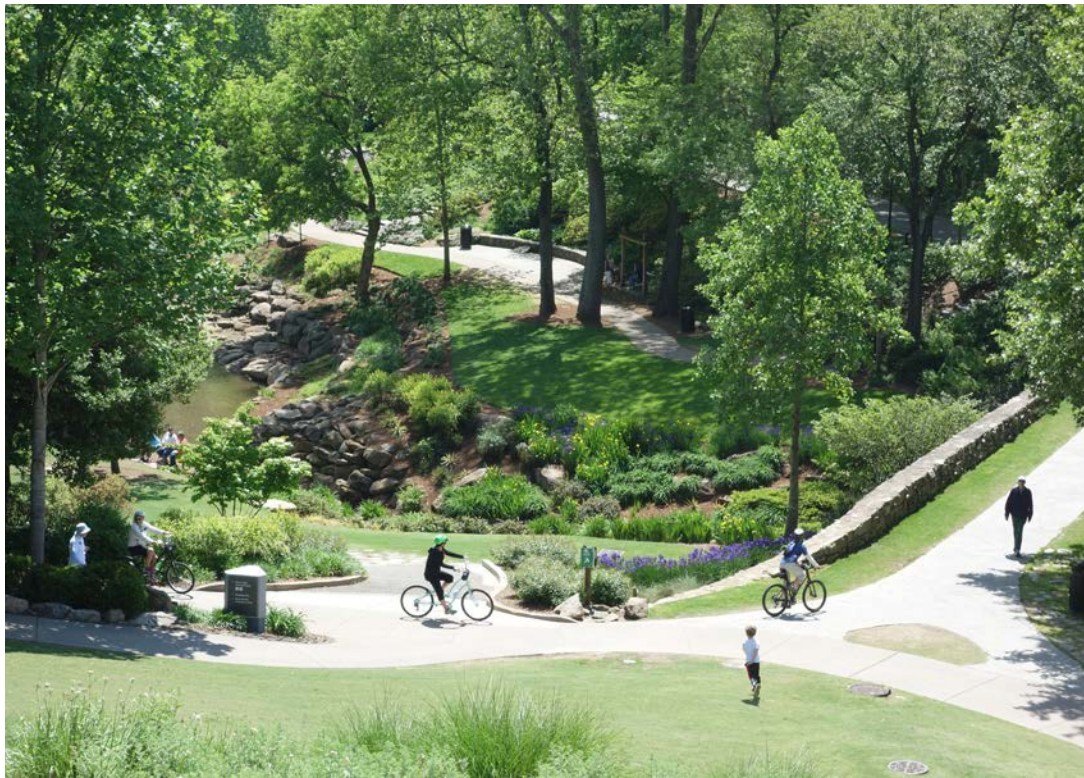
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Silver Medal Winner

## Falls Park on the Reedy Greenville, South Carolina

The transformation of a forgotten waterfall and river valley  
into an urban oasis and centerpiece for the city







## Overview

Submitted by: City of Greenville

Completed: 2004

Total Development Cost: \$13.5 million

In the center of downtown Greenville, South Carolina, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Falls Park on the Reedy is the transformation of a forgotten 40-foot-tall waterfall and overgrown river valley into an attractive urban oasis and centerpiece for the city.

Completed in 2004, Falls Park is the realization of a vision that began nearly 100 years earlier with *Beautifying and Improving Greenville, South Carolina*, a 1907 report sponsored by the local Municipal League that identified the Reedy River falls and gorge as "the most distinctive feature in the topography and landscape of Greenville." But decades of industrial discharge from textile mills along the river polluted the water, and in the 1960s, the falls were obscured by a four-lane vehicular bridge. The idea of liberating the falls and creating a park was advanced by the Carolina Foothills Garden Club, which led an effort to establish the park beginning in 1967. Twenty years later, the club engaged Washington, DC-based landscape architect Andrea Mereschak Mains of Land Design/Research to complete a master plan for the park. This sparked widespread collaboration among city gov-



**“THE PARK PUTS THE RIVER FRONT AND CENTER, REPURPOSING AN OVERGROWN AND FORGOTTEN VALLEY INTO A CENTERPIECE FOR THE CITY THAT HAS CAPTURED THE ATTENTION AND PRIDE OF EVERYONE IN GREENVILLE.”** —*2015 Selection Committee*

ernment officials and agencies, private sponsors, and local developers to create a well-designed amenity used by a broad cross-section of the city’s population. Over the next decade, the city assembled a team that included Mains to prepare the detailed designs for what would become a new 26-acre park.

Development of the park included removing the four-lane vehicular bridge built directly over the falls and replacing it with an elegant, curving pedestrian suspension bridge. The award-winning bridge, designed by Boston-based Rosales + Partners, appears to float above the river, offering a dramatic overlook of the falls. It has become a signature feature of the park and city. A series of stone steps, gently sloping accessible ramps, and an elevator provide connections between Greenville’s Main Street and the river valley 65 feet below.

Falls Park offers sweeping vistas and a network of winding trails interspersed with manicured greens and wooded valleys that connect the city with the river and support a diversity of activities such as walking and cycling, quiet contemplation, and picnics, as well as large events like the annual Reedy River Duck Derby. Plantings include a mix of mature trees and native plants, supplemented with vibrant annuals that provide splashes of color in key areas.

Falls Park was completed under the leadership of Mayor Knox White with public funding, largely comprised of proceeds from the city’s hospitality tax. The \$13.5 million investment has yielded impressive economic and social returns, influencing nearly \$600 million in development, including \$65

million in new waterside hotels, housing, offices, and retail at RiverPlace. It is part of a growing network of green spaces including the nearly 20-mile Swamp Rabbit Trail that links downtown with nearby parks, neighborhoods, and public amenities. Falls Park is well maintained and managed and has gradually adapted to changing needs over the decade since it opened, and a new section was dedicated in 2014.

The park has created a popular outdoor “living room” in the heart of downtown that attracts a wide range of both locals and tourists and has become the focus of the city’s civic identity. According to Mayor White, “The park raised the bar for the community’s self-identity and sense of pride.” More than a place to go, it’s *the* place to be.









## Project at a Glance

- A transformative, multi-use 26-acre park highlighting the Reedy River Falls.
- A centerpiece for the city that serves as the iconic image of a revitalized Greenville.
- Cleanup of a derelict stretch of the Reedy River.
- Removal of a highway bridge that covered the falls, replaced by a new pedestrian suspension bridge offering varied views of the newly “liberated” falls.
- Creation of a new outdoor “living room” for the downtown, city, and region, attracting a broad spectrum of the population for a wide range of scheduled and unscheduled activities.
- The extension of downtown development and activity to the park and well beyond, influencing nearly \$600 million in nearby development.







## Project Goals

- Convert a run-down area into an attractive park.
- Reclaim the birthplace of the city, regain access to the falls, and reverse ecological damage to the river and its banks.
- Provide access to the river, which lies 65 feet below Main Street.
- Offer active programming to attract a broad array of people, including both locals and tourists.
- Accelerate private development along the river and to the west and increase vibrancy and activity in downtown Greenville.



# Chronology

**1774**

The first trading post and grist mill are established at the base of the falls. The area remains Iroquois Nation territory until 1777.

**1800**

**Early 1800s**

Additional mills are constructed as industry grows.

**1812** The town of Pleasantburg is founded at the falls along the Reedy River.

**1817** McBee's Mill, later known as Camperdown Mill, is constructed on the west bank of the Reedy River.

**1851**

Furman University relocates from Winnsboro, SC to a 25-acre site overlooking the river in downtown Greenville.

**1900**

**Late 1800s**

Grist mills are replaced by textile mills, which gradually pollute the river.

**1907**

The report *Beautifying and Improving Greenville, South Carolina* identifies the Reedy River falls as "the most distinctive feature in the topography and landscape of Greenville."

**1938**

The Sara Crigler Garden Club is formed (renamed the Carolina Foothills Garden Club in 1952).

**1950s**

**1953** Furman University breaks ground on a new campus north of the city, eventually deeding six acres around the falls to the city in 1969.

**1956** Camperdown Mill closes.

**1960s**

**1960** Camperdown Bridge, four lanes wide and over 400 feet long, is built directly over the falls.

**1967** The Carolina Foothills Garden Club sets out to reclaim the Reedy River corridor and begins purchasing additional land for the park.

**1980s-2000**

Tommy Wyche assembles over 80 parcels adjacent to the park for future development.

**1970s**

**1973** Reedy River Falls Historic Park and Greenway, now consisting of 14 acres, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**1976** Falls Cottage, which dates from the 1890s, is restored by the Garden Club as the entrance to the park.

Mayor Max Heller and city leaders travel to San Francisco to meet landscape architect Lawrence Halprin.

**Late 1980s**

**1986** A plan for a performing arts center is developed and culminates in the Peace Center, which opens in 1990.

**1986-1987** The city and Garden Club facilitate and adopt a master plan for Reedy River Falls Historic Park that includes expanding the park to 26 acres around the falls.

**1989** A new downtown development strategy identifies Falls Park as the focal point for redevelopment and recommends removing Camperdown Bridge.

**Early 1980s**

**1981** Greenville completes the Main Street Project designed by Lawrence Halprin.

**1982** The last major source of industrial discharge into the river in the Greenville area is eliminated.

## Early 1990s

**1991** A redevelopment plan for RiverPlace, to be constructed on the parcels assembled by Tommy Wyche, is prepared.

### 1993-1995

Implementation of the park master plan continues; River Lodge, a stone shelter in the park, is dedicated.

Knox White is elected to his first four-year term as mayor.

### 2001

Greenville City Council unanimously passes a resolution to remove the bridge. The bridge is closed and no major traffic disruptions ensue.

2000

## 2002-2004

Construction on the park begins, including removal of the Camperdown Bridge.

A new master plan, sponsored by the City and County of Greenville, provides a framework for environmental remediation and development within a 16-mile stretch of the Reedy River, both up- and downstream from Falls Park.

The Garden Club establishes an endowment fund to ensure future maintenance of the park, eventually raising \$3.6 million.

**2004** Falls Park officially opens on September 10.

### 2009

Swamp Rabbit Trail opens.

### 2014

Falls Park celebrates its 10th anniversary.

Pedrick's Garden is dedicated on August 26.

### 1990s

\$500,000 is raised for the park by the Garden Club and matched by the city.

### Late 1990s

**1997** Elected to his second term, Mayor White makes implementing the park master plan and removing the Camperdown Bridge a major policy initiative.

An updated traffic study for removal of the highway bridge is prepared. While removal is deemed too costly, it is identified as a significant opportunity to be revisited.

**1998-1999** The city commissions a new master plan for Falls Park depicting the replacement of Camperdown Bridge with a landmark pedestrian bridge and public garden.

The Governor's School for the Arts opens on the site of Furman University's former campus overlooking the park.

### 2005

The first phase of RiverPlace opens, including parking, the river walk, and the fountain. The balance is completed in 2007.

### 2008

A master plan update proposes development of an extensive network of connected parks.

### 2010-12

The Peace Center is substantially renovated, in part to improve its relationship to the river.

### 2015

Greenville issues an RFP for the next iteration of planning on the Reedy River corridor.

The Harriet Wyche Garden (part of Pedrick's Garden) and Rose Crystal Tower are dedicated.





## Project Description

### INTRODUCTION

Falls Park on the Reedy River covers 26 acres in downtown Greenville, South Carolina. The river, falls, woodlands, manicured lawns, varied plantings, and facilities support a wide variety of recreational and leisure activities.

The project cleaned up a derelict stretch of the river, removed a vehicular bridge that covered the falls, and replaced it with a new pedestrian suspension bridge offering diverse views of the newly "liberated" falls. It has reclaimed Greenville's historic center along the river where the city was founded.

Falls Park has created a new outdoor "living room" for the downtown, city, and region. It attracts a wide spectrum of the local population (by age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status) as well as tourists, who now flock to Greenville and the park in droves. It has become the iconic image of a revitalized Greenville and the center of downtown activity. In fact, the park is so heavily used and successfully programmed that scheduled activities are being reduced.

Falls Park has been called a "game-changer" for the city, extending downtown development and activity to the park and well beyond. Leveraging the public investment some 40-fold, the \$13 million expenditure has generated (or at least influenced) nearly \$600 million in nearby development. It lies at the heart of a green network linked by the Swamp Rabbit Trail that connects many other neighborhoods, parks, and amenities to downtown Greenville.

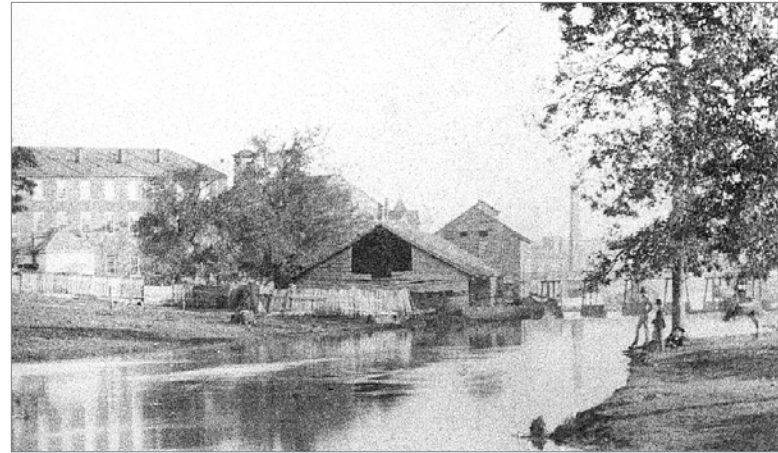
The park would not have come into existence without the extraordinarily effective efforts of a network of local leaders, including the Carolina Foothills Garden Club, whose members restored the first sections of the park and called for its expansion; Mayor Knox White, who developed the political support needed to remove the Camperdown Bridge and fund the park; Tommy Wyche, an environmentalist and philanthropist who, over almost 25 years, assembled the parcels of land that became RiverPlace; and a host of other local leaders who rallied behind downtown redevelopment and saw the park as the key to its success.

## CONTEXT

### *History of Greenville and Its Downtown*

What is now Greenville and Falls Park in particular was originally part of Iroquois Nation territory and inhabited by its Cherokee tribe. European settlers were forbidden to live there until 1777, when the Cherokee were forced to cede their land. The falls attracted the first European settler, Richard Pearis, to this region in 1768; he was married to a Cherokee woman and thus exempt from the prohibition on residence and land ownership. In 1774, Pearis established a trading post and grist mill at the base of the falls. Greenville grew up around the river and falls, which provided water and power.

Through the early and mid-nineteenth century, grist and flour mills grew to line the river. In the 1870s, the grist mills began to be replaced by textile mills. The first important textile mill was built immediately above the Main Street Bridge. This was McBee's Mill, situated where Liberty Bridge now touches down on the west bank of the river, right at the falls; its stone foundations are still visible there. McBee's later became known as Camperdown Mill, which expanded with a second mill across the river in 1875. Just south of the Camperdown Mills lay the future site of Furman University, which included an arboretum that would eventually become part of the park.



*Development along the Reedy River in the 1890's (top) and the Camperdown Mill (bottom).*

Photos: City of Greenville

Many of the mills were operated by New Englanders, giving Greenville strong ties to the North, though this did not prevent the implementation of Reconstruction-era segregationist Jim Crow laws and practices that persisted until the early 1960s (Jesse Jackson Jr. hails from Greenville and was active in protests there).

The textile mills gradually polluted the river with chemicals, including dyes that would turn the water different colors on different days. While exploiting it for industrial uses, Greenville turned its back on the river and its downtown developed up the hill, away from the river, along Main Street. Adding insult to injury, in 1960, the Camperdown Bridge was built directly over the falls, which as early as 1907 had been identified as “the most distinctive feature in the topography and landscape of Greenville.” The first formerly viable mill closed in 1956.

Around the same time, Greenville’s downtown district languished as citizens moved to the suburbs and out-of-town shopping centers replaced downtown retail businesses. The once-thriving Poinsett Hotel, for example, became derelict and later served as a retirement facility (but was completely refurbished and opened as a Westin in 1999).

In the 1970s, under the leadership of Mayor Max Heller, the city initiated a downtown renewal project focused on improving the streetscape along Main Street and making it more pleasant and attractive. Heller had fled from Vienna to Greenville in 1939 to avoid Nazi persecution and had a vision of creating European-like walkable streets in Greenville. In the mid-1970s, Heller and other city leaders visited renowned landscape architect Lawrence Halprin in San Francisco. Halprin’s firm was subsequently hired and proposed narrowing Main Street from four lanes to two, adding plantings, and creating parks and plazas in the central core. Much of the plan was implemented, though its immediate impact was limited as changes had not yet reached a critical mass. Like the 1907 report, Halprin’s 1974 plan also states that “probably the most important [feature] is the river itself and what it does and is to the downtown area” and points out its potential even though access to it is “difficult and tortuous.” The report argues that “the thing which is important is that something dramatic should be done. We feel that the place where that drama should start is right down by the river. That is where the new Greenville of the 21st century could be

born.” The plan indicates that the falls and river banks should be restored as a city park. In addition to exemplifying the commitment to design quality and urban improvement that have long characterized Greenville, the plan was another reminder of how central the falls are to the city—and how long it took to “liberate” them.

In the 1980s, Greenville implemented a downtown master plan that utilized public-private partnerships in which the city invested in the infrastructure and private entities developed the projects, including hotels, offices, and retail. The Hyatt Regency Hotel is an example; the city paid for the plaza in front of it.

A decade later, another public-private partnership redeveloped an industrial area adjacent to the river at the southern edge of downtown, creating a performing arts complex known as the Peace Center (named for the family



*Main Street in downtown Greenville.*





The Peace Center now opens to the river (top); a popular farmers market draws people downtown near the park.

that provided the core funding). After the park was built and additional development took place on the far bank of the river, the Peace Center reoriented itself to open to the river, building a new wing with a glass wall facing the river and a plaza leading down to the water. In this decade, much more investment and development was made in the vicinity of Falls Park, including offices, condominiums, and retail.

### *Health of the City*

Greenville has succeeded in attracting jobs and in-migration, effectively reversing the suburban flight of the 1970s, when around 20,000 residents moved out of the city. The National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded Greenville the Great American Main Street Award in 2003 and 2009. Since then, it has received considerable recognition as a livable and successful city.

For example, in 2012 *CNNMoney* identified Greenville as one of the top 10 fastest growing cities in the US, *Bloomberg* named it the third strongest US job market in 2010, and *Forbes* called it the thirteenth best American city for young professionals. In 2011, the *Wall Street Journal* named Greenville one of the top 10 best places to live in the US, calling it “another one of those ‘smaller big cities’” and noting that “downtown is also a draw, thanks in part to recent improvements to the city park” and featuring a photo of the falls. Falls Park has been highlighted in several other publications, including *Southern Living* magazine and the *US Airways Magazine*.

Major corporations with a substantial presence in Greenville include Michelin, BMW, Lockheed Martin, 3M, Honeywell, Fluor, General Electric, and Hubbell Lighting.

There is also a thriving downtown farmers market which is a regional draw. Typically, there are 75 vendors that fall into one of three categories: farmer/producer/grower, crafter, or processor and commercial vendor.

All products must be the actual work of the crafter and produced within a 100 mile radius of Greenville. On its 2015 spring opening day, the market, which is operated by the city, was packed with people of all kinds. Though early in the year, there was still a substantial amount of produce, including strawberries and leafy green vegetables, and a wide variety of other homemade and handmade items. The market is highly organized and achieves an orderly, uniform appearance with standard white tent awnings and banner identification signage for each vendor.

Greenville's commitment to quality—on both the part of city employees and consultants—has fostered a very livable downtown rich with cultural and recreational amenities. Not surprisingly, this success has resulted in rising property values and rental rates in some city neighborhoods, which has generated some concerns about the city's ability to maintain economic diversity.

Much of Greenville's success is likely attributable to a very long-standing commitment to improving the city, county, and business climate through concerted planning efforts seen as far back as the 1907 plan and continuing with major studies up to the most recent, *Greenville Vision 2025*. Some of these plans are described below, and they all reflect an ongoing concern with the aesthetic as well as the economic health of the city.

### *Geography and Demographics*

Greenville is in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, approximately halfway between Atlanta, Georgia and Charlotte, North Carolina, along a major interstate highway.

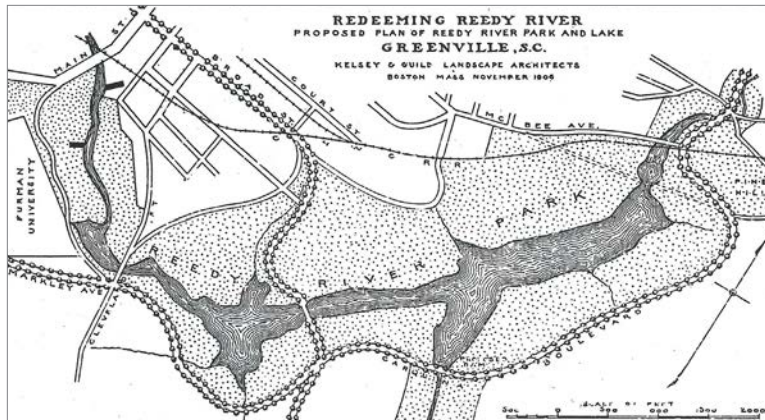
The city of Greenville's population was about 62,000 in 2015 while the county's was about 492,000—the largest and fastest growing in the state. The Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin metropolitan area is the state's most populous at about 850,000 residents.

Like most southern cities, Greenville had to deal with the impact of integration on a historically segregated community. While there are still many predominantly African-American inner-city communities, some of which about Falls Park, Greenville is statistically slightly more diverse than the rest of the state—30% of the population is African-American compared to 27% statewide—and on certain measures of integration (racial balance in census tracts, for example), the Greenville metropolitan area performs relatively well both nationally and compared to other southern locations.

### **PROJECT HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP**

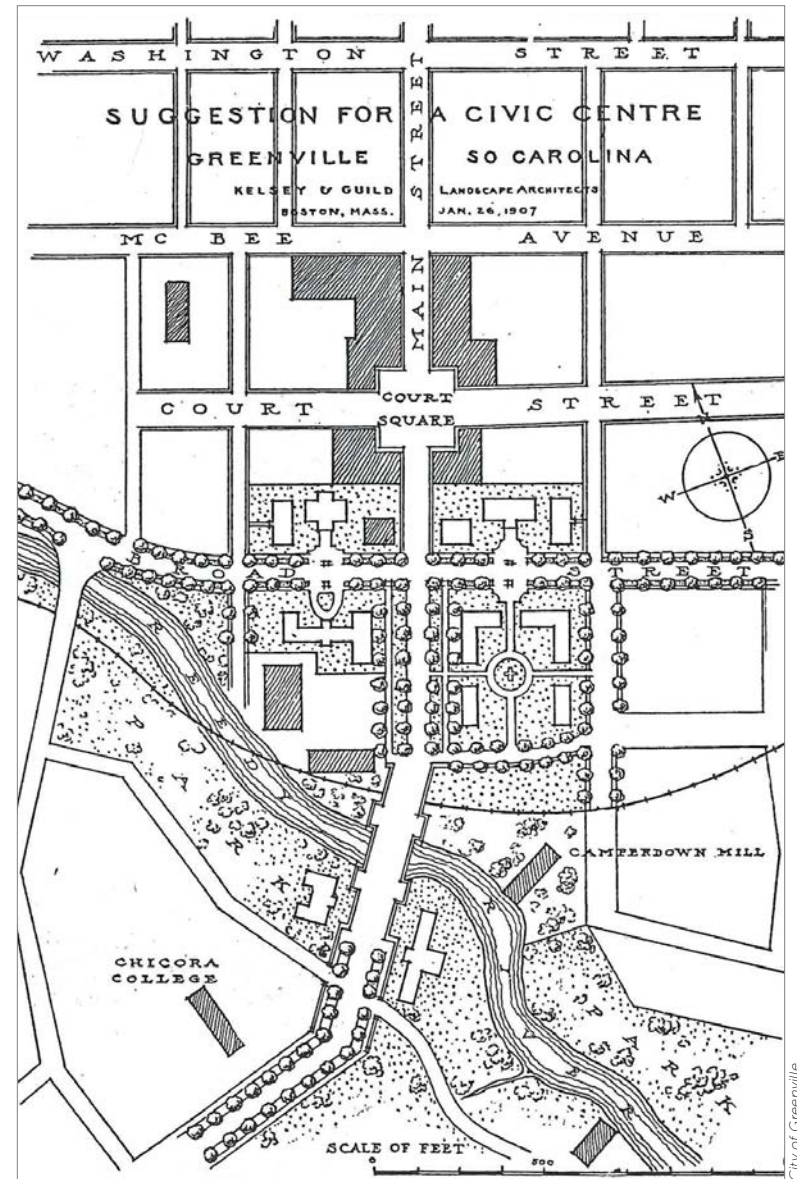
The history of the falls and their surroundings closely parallels that of the city; in fact, the two seem inextricably linked. It is a trajectory that comes full circle from a pristine attraction, to an exploited and polluted nuisance eventually hidden by a vehicular bridge, back to a treasured resource finally "liberated" and once again a major scenic attraction. It is also a story with many interesting twists and turns, contributed to by a wide range of civic leaders.

In 1907, a report titled *Beautifying and Improving Greenville, South Carolina*, prepared for the Municipal League, identified the river with its falls and gorge as "the most distinctive feature in the topography and landscape of Greenville." The report lamented that the view of the falls was "rapidly being destroyed and wasted" and recommended that the city take over the area to create a lake and park, "redeeming the Reedy River." The report included images from parks in Boston, Cleveland, and New York City that are strikingly similar to Falls Park today. It also expounded upon the virtues of investing in civic infrastructure (a city plan; public buildings, parks and playgrounds; streets, sidewalks, and bridges; and trees and other landscaping) and asserted that "a community's civilization and character may be fairly gauged by the extent and character of its service for the public good (such as public art and architecture, schools, streets, parks, playgrounds,



libraries, etc.).” While the report did not directly influence the current design of Falls Park, it marks the beginning of a process that, while it took almost 100 years, remained true to the spirit it extolled in 1907.

The modern history of Falls Park begins in 1967, when the Carolina Foothills Garden Club spearheaded efforts to reclaim the long-neglected site of Greenville’s birthplace and to restore its natural beauty along the banks of the Reedy River. The City of Greenville endorsed the project and resolved to establish and maintain a park. Furman University, whose campus was once nearby, donated the land which became the first six acres of the park and included its botanical garden and arboretum with many specimen trees. Other land grants from adjoining property owners soon followed, and over the next two decades, the Garden Club, in partnership with the city, continued to protect, expand, and develop the area. In 1975, Falls Cottage, a small house and now home of Mary’s Restaurant located on Main Street near the entrance to the park, was acquired and restored by the club.



Excerpts from the 1907 Beautifying and Improving Greenville South Carolina report suggesting the creation of a park along the river.



City of Greenville



*Falls Cottage (left), prior to its restoration, is now home to Mary's Restaurant.*

In the late 1980s, a series of studies and master plans focused attention on the falls and the areas surrounding the park. One in particular, funded primarily by the city and the Garden Club, covered the 26 acres around the falls and featured scenic overlooks, nature trails, a "land bridge," riparian plantings, and six specialty gardens, including a rock garden. This formed the basis for the city to move forward with redeveloping the park in the late 1990s.

### *The Camperdown Bridge*

One of the most striking challenges in creating Falls Park—and perhaps the most compelling aspect of its story—was the Camperdown Bridge, a four-lane vehicular overpass built right over the falls in 1960, almost completely obscuring their view from street level. At the time, the falls and river were a polluted eyesore, so it may not have been seen as much of an issue to obscure them. However, as efforts to reclaim the area progressed, the falls came to be recognized (again) as a great potential asset to the city. Mayor Knox White, in particular, recognized the importance of the falls and the need to liberate them so that they could be seen and enjoyed. But the overpass was owned by the state highway department and a fixture for many commuters in and out of the city, and the feasibility of removing the bridge was the subject of a major controversy.



City of Greenville

*The Camperdown Bridge, built in 1960, obstructed views of the falls.*

Though many master planning studies from the 1980s called for the bridge to be removed, a 1990 traffic engineering study prepared by Post, Buckley, Schuh & Jernigan projected a cost to motorists of over \$3 million per year in delay time if the bridge were removed. Eventually this finding came to be questioned, but at the time it made removal of the bridge seem infeasible, if not foolish, as dozens of newspaper stories and editorials made statements along the lines of “why remove a perfectly good bridge?” It became politically risky to even mention its removal.

Reinforcing these doubts, the US Department of Transportation, in a 1991 letter to the city, cited a number of impediments to the removal of the bridge, including the possibility that the federal highway funds used to construct it might need to be repaid.

On the other hand, the 1999 Sasaki Associates *Master Vision Plan for the Reedy River Corridor* included a major expansion of Falls Park together with removal of the bridge. And the detailed RTKL *Vision Plan: Reedy River Falls* completed by Andrea Mereschak Mains around that time showed the great benefits of removing the bridge and replacing it with a light pedestrian one, thus “freeing” the falls.

The new park plans and a shift in the composition of the city council convinced Mayor Knox White, as he began his second term, that the time was right to press for removal of the bridge. In 2000, a resolution unanimously passed by the council supported removal, and the city formally requested that the state and federal governments transfer ownership of the bridge to Greenville.

Mayor White then made an appointment to meet with Betty Mabry, the new state Department of Transportation director, by chance learning that she was a member of another garden club and that Carolina Foothills Garden Club and prominent Greenville family member Harriet Wyche knew her.

A strategic phone call from Wyche convinced Mabry to come to Greenville, and once she saw the situation, she immediately agreed to support the transfer of ownership.

In 2002, construction started on the park with the demolition of the Camperdown Bridge, including the removal of almost 3,000 tons of concrete. Falls Park was completed and opened in 2004.



Vision plans completed in 1999 (top) led to the demolition of the Camperdown Bridge in 2002.

City of Greenville



### *Leaders and Community Partners*

The strength of connections among local leaders in Greenville is impressive. It became evident as the story of this project unfolded that there are very strong and effective social, economic, and political ties among community leaders. This is probably a product of many factors: the size of the community, shared values among leaders, and social institutions such as the Carolina Foothills Garden Club that bring local leaders together for easy communication. Many come from wealthy and influential families who have been in the area for many decades. Thoughtful and successful, they appear to share strong values related to improving the quality of life and success of Greenville, allowing them to compete one day in business and cooperate for civic improvement the next. When a promising vision is put forward, these leaders are able to coalesce around it to make it happen. This appears to have occurred in the case of Falls Park, with the Carolina Foothills Garden Club as the institution through which most of the families and organizations came together.

The relatively small size of Greenville appears to contribute to its ability to mobilize resources to get things done, facilitating communication and coordination among key players and the potential to unite behind goals which serve the common good. There even seems to be a certain pride in the fact that a community of this size has been able to accomplish so much in Greenville (including many other developments, quality-of-life improvements, the attraction of significant industries, and the resulting population growth).

The following groups and individuals contributed most substantially to creating Falls Park:

**Carolina Foothills Garden Club:** Founded as the Sara Crigler Garden Club in 1938, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club is responsible for a long list of civic improvements and beautification projects throughout the city. It is

a member of the Garden Club of America. The name of the group may conjure up genteel and wealthy white ladies gathering for tea sandwiches, but the club, led initially by Harriet Wyche and then by Anna Kate Hipp and Pedrick Lowery, showed toughness of purpose and strong resolve as members restored the initial six acres of the park (doing much of the labor themselves), commissioned landscape architect Andrea Mereschak Mains to prepare a master plan, and led the fundraising effort for the Falls Park Endowment. The club maintains an ongoing role in Falls Park through the endowment and the recent expansion they sponsored as memorials to Harriet Wyche and Pedrick Lowery.

**Furman University:** The first parcel of the park came from Furman University, which donated six acres around the falls to the city after it moved its campus north of Greenville. This land was then adopted and landscaped by the Garden Club. Most of the remaining original campus is now the site of the Governor's School For the Arts, which borders Falls Park to the south.

**Tommy and Harriet Wyche and Bob Hughes:** The Wyche family played a variety of important roles as supporters of Falls Park. Committed environmentalists, they were reported to have assembled thousands of acres in the Blue Ridge Mountains and deeded them to the public for conservation. Harriet Wyche spearheaded the campaign for the park in the 1960s. Tommy Wyche worked with dozens of owners over almost 25 years to assemble parcels just up-river and adjacent to the park and held them until a suitable development was proposed by Bob Hughes around the time construction on the park began in 2002. This development eventually became RiverPlace, an office and condominium complex that incorporates entrances to the park and a connection along the Swamp Rabbit Trail. Hughes, a strong supporter of Falls Park (and member of the board for the Governor's School), felt that the park greatly improved his development, which he was able to reorient toward the river. Hughes was also instrumental in helping city leaders develop a vision of what was



possible for Greenville and Falls Park, traveling to Europe and around the country to see inspirational projects that might expand the horizons of what could be accomplished in Greenville.

**Greenville City Council and Mayor Knox White:** First elected mayor in 1995, White has been reelected every four years since and was instrumental in making the Falls Park project happen. The comments of out-of-town visitors he took to see the falls convinced him that the highway bridge should be removed. He took significant political risks but was able to get the city council to vote to remove the Camperdown Bridge and crafted a public-private partnership to create the park. Mayor White has led many other important redevelopment and improvement projects and recently was made an honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

**Community Foundation of Greenville:** This nonprofit foundation played a variety of important roles in supporting Falls Park, including contributing money to the park's construction; holding, investing, and dispersing funds from the endowment; and administering the construction contract for Pedrick's Garden and Harriet's Garden, two recent additions to the park.

**Paul Ellis:** The former director of the city's Recreation and Parks Department, Ellis was one of the earliest and strongest proponents of Falls Park and worked to coordinate its design and construction.

**Landscape Architect Andrea Mereschak Mains:** Washington, DC-based Mains worked for 15 years on the full range of Falls Park concepts and plans, starting in 1986 when she was commissioned by the Carolina Foothills Garden Club to prepare the first master plan and culminating with the final design documentation in 2002. Mains and the several firms she was associated with over the years provided continuous planning, design, and construction services for the park.



*Looking north from the falls towards Main Street and RiverPlace.*

**Landscape Architect and Design Team Project Manager Tom Keith:** A Greenville landscape architect with Arbor Engineering, Keith coordinated the design team of architects, landscape architects, bridge designers, and engineers. Keith is credited with playing a significant role in the on-site supervision for all the site components, including walls, walks, boulders, and plantings.

**Bridge Architect Miguel Rosales:** Boston-based bridge architect Rosales led the design of the Liberty Bridge. Internationally recognized for this specialty, Rosales has built iconic bridges for many communities in the US and abroad.



City of Greenville

Falls Park Expansion Plan

## DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Greenville has, and has had, a significant commitment to planning, and always in a collaborative, inclusive manner. In fact, it might be difficult to find another city of its size that has taken planning so seriously, not only commissioning highly qualified (and sometimes world-renowned) planners and designers, but actually following their advice and implementing proposed projects, even when it takes decades. More than a few of these planning studies either focused or at least touched on Falls Park and the Reedy River, including the plans outlined in Table 1.

### Process

As is evident from the table, many plans focused on the potential value of the park to the city. The 1989 *Downtown Development Strategy* by Land Design/Research (LDR) is particularly rapturous about this potential, saying the falls “are a priceless asset for the city of Greenville, and potentially its single most important tourist attraction. This area can and should form the focal point for a resurgence of development. The Reedy River could become an attraction as significant as the canals in San Antonio or the parks in Savannah.” Specific recommendations include implementation of park renovations, study of a botanical garden there or elsewhere, study of traffic alternatives that would allow removal of the Camperdown Bridge, preparation of a specific development plan for surrounding sites, and moving forward with the redevelopment of the West End area adjacent to the park.

Landscape architect Andrea Mereschak Mains, lead designer of Falls Park, was part of LDR, the firm that prepared the 1989 study. LDR was working on the planning of the Peace Center for the Performing Arts in 1986 and 1987 when it was approached by the Garden Club for assistance in designing a small area within the park. When Mains came to Greenville to meet her potential clients and visit the site, she immediately saw the potential of the falls and the park as a whole and, rather than just design a little garden, she proposed a master plan for the entire park—and the club accepted and

funded her work. That plan had many of the features of the final design but did not yet envision removal of the Camperdown Bridge.

Between 1987 and 1992, Mains and the LDR team developed design and construction drawings for multiple phases of implementation of the park improvements that enhanced accessibility and management. These included building an earthen and stone “land bridge” to cover exposed sewer lines and a pond, followed by stone paths, the Falls Overlook, the main entrance, Falls Cottage rock garden and upper garden, and other plantings.

In the late 1990s, Sasaki Associates was commissioned to prepare the *Reedy River Corridor Vision Plan*. This plan identified many principles and strategies that were followed in the next phase of planning for Falls Park, highlighting the park as one of the key open space elements and supporting its expansion and continuing improvements. The plan specifically called for the removal of the Camperdown Bridge, saying it “obscures and insults” the falls, and suggested it be replaced with a pedestrian bridge across the river.

In 1999, the city commissioned RTKL Associates, where Andrea Mains was then practicing, to prepare a new design for Falls Park illustrating the replacement of the vehicular bridge with a pedestrian one and preparing construction documents for the park expansion with walkways, stairs, and terraces. RTKL (and later Arentz Landscape Architects, when Mains moved there) teamed with Greenville-based Arbor Engineering, which assumed the lead role on the project. Arbor was selected for both its knowledge about and passion for the project. It was a successful collaboration that included local landscape architect Tom Keith, who coordinated the design team’s efforts and supervised construction.

The design team held work sessions with the city and a citizen advisory panel and enlisted the help of other experts. These included urban designer and landscape architect Robert Gorman; bridge designer Miguel



TABLE 1: MAJOR PLANS AND STUDIES

<i>Year</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Key Recommendations</i>
<b>1907</b>	Beautifying and Improving Greenville, SC	Kelsey and Guild, Landscape Architects	Identifies falls as Greenville's most significant feature and recommends creation of a park and lake there.
<b>1968</b>	Downtown Development Plan and Program	Marcou O'Leary and Associates with Hammer, Green, Siler Associates	Focuses on main area of downtown but recognizes park as needing attention and potentially forming a connector to fringe areas including the former Furman campus.
<b>1974</b>	An Urban Diagnosis for Greenville, SC	Lawrence Halprin & Associates	Proposes street improvements along Main Street and suggests a park at the falls.
<b>1981</b>	Greenville Central Area Action Plan	Crane Associates, Inc.	States the intention to "bring an end to over 70 years of frustrated efforts to reclaim the river" with a marketplace and housing.
<b>1987</b>	Master Plan: Reedy River Falls Historic Park	Land Design/Research	Focuses on development around Falls Park and points out its value as an amenity, but with little emphasis on the park itself.
<b>1989</b>	Downtown Development Strategy	Land Design/Research	Identifies Falls Park as the focal point for redevelopment and recommends removal of the Camperdown Bridge.
<b>1989</b>	South Sector Master Plan: Downtown Greenville	Land Design/Research	Identifies development potential of specific parcels adjacent to Falls Park (a 1998 follow-up reiterates the goals for Falls Park).
<b>1999</b>	Vision Plan: Reedy River Falls	RTKL Associates	Incorporates replacement of the Camperdown Bridge with a landmark pedestrian bridge and public garden and plans for park expansion.
<b>1999</b>	Master Vision Plan for the Reedy River Corridor	Sasaki Associates	Includes a major expansion of Falls Park and (again) suggests removal of the Camperdown Bridge.
<b>1999-2002</b>	Falls Park Expansion Plan: Phase I	Arbor Engineering with Andrea Mereschak Mains, landscape architect; Miguel Rosales, bridge designer; and others	Includes detailed design and planting plans for Falls Park, park structures, and Liberty Bridge (note that several phases of work on the park had already been completed).
<b>2002</b>	The Reedy River Master Plan	Clemson University Center for Community Growth and Change	Provides guidance for environmental remediation and development along the river corridor.
<b>2008</b>	Downtown Greenville Master Plan Update	Sasaki Associates	Envisions a "green necklace" system of connected parks linked by what became the Swamp Rabbit Trail.

Rosales, in conjunction with the German-based engineering firm Schlaich Bergermann; and, later in the design process, architect Richard Williams, who designed the park's restaurant and restroom facility, tent canopy, park overlook, and access elevator. Graphic designer Greg Rose was brought in to design the park's entrance signs, information plaques, and wayfinding system. Robert Miller, a Greenville landscape gardener, oversaw plant selection and installation. The detailed plan for the park was developed over several years beginning in 1999 and construction began in 2002, following a period of fundraising and acquisition of approvals.

As Falls Park moved toward realization, further studies elaborated on the potential connections through the park, both up and down the Reedy River corridor. These include the 2002 *Reedy River Master Plan* by Clemson University, which focused on environmental remediation, and the 2008 Sasaki Associates *Downtown Greenville Master Plan Update*, which expanded the vision to include a "green necklace" reminiscent (at least in terminology) of Boston's park network.

### Challenges and Goals

The park's design responds to a number of challenges and goals. The challenges included:

- Determining how to make it inviting for users to venture down into the park and not feel like they were descending into a hole—a significant challenge given the very substantial changes in grade from street level to the river 65 feet below.
- Restoring the degraded landscape that was covered in kudzu and otherwise damaged by neglect and abuse.
- Removing the four-lane vehicular bridge in order to liberate the falls and provide pedestrian and bike access to the park from a number of directions.
- Providing handicapped access to as much of Falls Park as possible.

The design goals were to:

- Provide views of the falls from a variety of angles and locations.
- Establish an east-west axis to complement the main north-south orientation of the park and provide connections to districts that did not previously have them.
- Create a variety of settings with different scales and characteristics to support a wide range of group sizes and activities and to respond to the varied microenvironments of the site.
- Utilize native plantings near the river and in the farther reaches of the park while planting colorful annuals and perennials closer to street entrances.

### Description

Falls Park consists of 26 acres of carefully planned and meticulously maintained public space starting at Main Street in downtown Greenville and running toward the southeast with a branch toward the west. It expands around the restored river gorge and falls, with pools of varying sizes above and below the falls where the river widens and slows. Much of Falls Park is wooded, with many mature trees. Between the more forested areas are large and small expanses of grass which provide settings for diverse activities and groups of varied sizes.

The park's layout and design are particularly effective at working with and enhancing existing natural features such as streambeds and banks, rock outcroppings, overlooks, open areas, and sunny and shady zones. The design succeeds impressively in capturing the magic of the place (the *genius loci*) and making it available to the visitors whether they become aware of it or not. One strategy employed in the design was to make the park more obviously designed and managed closer to the heavily used entries off Main Street and more naturalized as visitors proceed further into it and find more solitude. Other strategies—which follow, in essence, the principles of quality landscape design—include the use of natural, local stone and



*The terraced garden at the Main Street entrance (top) provides views of the main lawn and activities below.*

timber, which reference the historic mill construction as well as New Deal-era improvements; the successful integration of and transitions between places of varying scale and character, such as sunny and shady, scaled for large groups or more intimate; and the quality of the plant material selections and maintenance, including the increasing use of naturalized native plants, a shift from the early non-native splashes of color thought to be necessary to attract visitors.

Falls Park has five main entry points. The principal entry is from Main Street, where a small plaza with a sculptural fountain provides a gathering place for people to meet before they enter the park. An elevator is available to take people down to the next level, where Passerelle Bistro is strategically placed to be both convenient to the street and offer a dining terrace that provides excellent views of the park and the pedestrian bridge. From there, stairs and ramps lead in several directions, including toward the river. At the lower level is a small amphitheater where visiting tour guides and teachers can address their groups and a terraced rock garden with views of the lawns and activities unfolding below (these were early features in the park's development). From there, visitors can access the Liberty Bridge or proceed deeper into the park.

Another main entry is at the opposite end of Liberty Bridge leading from the intersection of East Camperdown Way and Falls Street, which used to run across the Camperdown Bridge. On the way to the bridge there are terraces and overlooks at street level and another important sculpture. These overlooks, along with the bridge, provide some of the best and most dramatic views of the falls directly below.

A lower-level entry at the north end of Falls Park passes under the Main Street Bridge, where there is a seating area with tables. This heavily used path leads from RiverPlace and the Peace Center for Performing Arts into the park; its elevation is just above the level of the river before it goes over



the falls. The path then ramps downward, passes close to the other end of Liberty Bridge, and runs along the main north-south axis of the park.

A fourth entry point is at the opposite end of Falls Park and leads in from the south, connecting to a pedestrian and bike trail from Cleveland Park farther down the Reedy River and passing through the planned Cancer Survivors Park near this entrance.

Finally, there is a relatively circuitous path through Falls Park that begins at its western end at Pedrick's Garden and Harriet Wyche's Garden, the most recently completed additions to the park, and continues through the historic Furman botanical garden and arboretum into the main part of the park.

The northern and southern entries connect Falls Park to a major regional greenway with bike and walking paths leading to other parks and attractions as well as connectors to many neighborhoods, including disadvantaged inner-city areas. This is the nearly 20-mile Swamp Rabbit Trail, in part a "rails to trails" conversion. The trail is a significant part of the city's recent and future open space and development planning strategy. This plan is articulated in Sasaki Associates' 2008 *Downtown Greenville Master Plan Update*, which envisions a "green necklace" system of connected parks (a concept reminiscent of Boston's Emerald Necklace, perhaps not surprising given the location of Sasaki's headquarters in nearby Watertown, Massachusetts).

Close to the Main Street entry is Falls Cottage. Built in 1897 for the supervisor of the Camperdown Mill, it had been abandoned until 1972, when the Carolina Foothills Garden Club partnered with the city to restore it. Now it houses Mary's Restaurant, which features traditional Southern cuisine and regularly hosts weddings and receptions overlooking the park.

Moving down into Falls Park from the Main Street entrance are several lawns and seating areas. The first is rather steeply sloped and often has kids



The dining terrace at Mary's Restaurant (top) and adjacent landscaped hillside and lawn.

sliding and rolling down it. This lawn provides a vantage point overlooking the main lower lawn where there is a stage supporting a variety of performances as well as a substantial flat area for viewing performances and other activities. The stage is supplied with power and lighting.

Much of the change in elevation coming down into the park is achieved via natural stone stairs or ramps. The stone is native granite and echoes both the native river boulders and the building materials used in earlier projects. While much of the park meets ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility standards, the city is working to make it completely accessible.

Opposite the main lawn is another large, flat grassy area which borders the river and is heavily used for picnics, with benches and tables provided along the edges. All the areas described so far have substantial beds of annuals, which are replaced at least twice a year to provide a colorful welcome to park visitors. This section of the park, which features quiet pools formed by a small tributary to the Reedy spanned by a natural stone bridge, is planted with Siberian irises. The view up toward the falls and the bridge makes this a particularly attractive location for picnics and lawn-friendly games such as Frisbee.

Further into the park, the landscape is much more naturalized, with native plants and large trees. At this edge of Falls Park, on the former site of Furman University, is the Governor's School for Arts and Humanities, a public, residential, tuition-free high school that attracts talented students from around the state. Close to the school is the site of the former Furman Botanical Garden and Arboretum, with many specimen trees planted by the Greenville Garden Club in 1932. It is situated in an attractive canyon that leads up to Pedrick's Garden, with a small brook, rock outcroppings, and a grotto. The Governor's School opened in 1999, when access to the park was difficult and the area was considered to be dangerous at night. Now the school fully appreciates having Falls Park serve as its backyard.



*A small brook and trails connect the lower lawn with a wooded ravine.*





*Landscaped areas and rock outcroppings provide access to the pools below the falls.*

Turning to the left (or southeast) from the stone bridge, visitors enter a more densely wooded area and then come to the Old Mill Garden and River Lodge, a natural stone and timber pavilion which effectively incorporates remnants of the Vardry Mill. Both venues can be reserved for large parties and host many weddings, with vehicular and service access via an otherwise abandoned street that used to provide access to Furman. Along this street, visitors pass a landmark tree, an American beech with many of its roots exposed along the bank of the hill that rises above the paving. Here, visitors often stop to be photographed and marvel at how the tree came to be this way and how it survives.

The lower falls and various smaller pools can be reached from this area. There, massive boulders protrude along the banks and form enticing places

to climb and from which to view the river and falls. The landscape designers effectively incorporated these attractive natural features into their plan.

A little farther on, the Swamp Rabbit Trail exits Falls Park, passing the site of the future Cancer Survivors Park, a project that has been anticipated for a substantial period but, in spring of 2015, was still very early in its realization. The design concept includes a variety of active and contemplative spaces themed as a "healing garden." The concept is displayed on a billboard at the side of the trail, together with a fundraising appeal.

From this site, the trail heads a mile or so toward Cleveland Park. Highly utilized by residents of surrounding neighborhoods, including some of the city's historically African-American and lower-income neighborhoods, Cleveland Park features amenities for picnicking and three children's playgrounds. This serves as a prime example of how the Swamp Rabbit Trail and its laterals connect many of the city's neighborhoods to the park system.

To the west after crossing the stone bridge (or, alternatively, past the stage and up the ravine) is Pedrick's Garden. This most recently opened portion of Falls Park lies along Vardry Creek, a tributary to the Reedy, behind the commercial area of South Main Street near the West End Market and the Governor's School. Adding 3.5 acres to Falls Park, it is a partly flat area, some of which was created by building a substantial retaining wall. The garden is a memorial to Pedrick Stall-Lowrey, a Carolina Foothills Garden Club member instrumental in the creation of the park. It consists of a series of peaceful, contemplative spaces themed around sunflowers. Low planter walls with benches divide Pedrick's Garden into three defined areas: a main circular lawn, a circular fountain, and another circle dedicated to fellow club member and park proponent Harriet Wyche showcasing a 13-foot-tall rose-colored crystal made by renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly. A footbridge, using a single massive pre-existing bridge pillar to support it





Footbridge (top) to Pedrick's Garden (middle), Rose Crystal Tower and Untitled sculptures (bottom left and middle), and historical plaque.

mid-span, connects to the far side of the ravine and to trails that lead into Falls Park. Pedrick's Garden was designed by Julie Moir Messervy Design Studio and constructed by Craig Gaulden Davis, a local firm. The construction contract was administered by the Community Foundation of Greenville to expedite contractor selection and administration. It cost approximately \$3 million.

### Public Art and Historical Plaques

Greenville has a strong commitment to public art, and there are high-quality installations in many locations throughout the city. At Falls Park, there are two other major pieces in addition to Chihuly's *Rose Crystal Tower*. Strategically placed to mark major entrances to Falls Park, they were selected and paid for by the Falls Park Endowment and approved by the relevant review boards. There are two such boards, one for the park with four artist-members who recommend pieces for approval by the second city-wide group, the Arts in Public Places Commission, appointed by the Greenville City Council.

The first piece, a commissioned sculpture by artist Bryan Hunt, is found at the Main Street entrance. The sculpture, *Falls Lake Falls* (the first edition of which is installed in Tokyo), is a fountain representing two falls with a lake in between, clearly conveying a message relevant to Falls Park.

The second piece, *Untitled 2002-2003*, is a red steel sculpture by Joel Shapiro, an artist with an international reputation who is represented by the Pace Gallery in New York. Commonly referred to as the dancing or running sculpture (or the "Running Gumby"), it is across from Liberty Bridge at the overlook leading to the bridge.

There are also a dozen historical plaques throughout the park strategically located in places that relate to the events or epochs they describe. These plaques are highly informative and were created with the help of a graphic

designer who was part of the design team. Many visitors were observed to pause and read them. Three more were planned for installation in 2015.

### *Liberty Bridge*

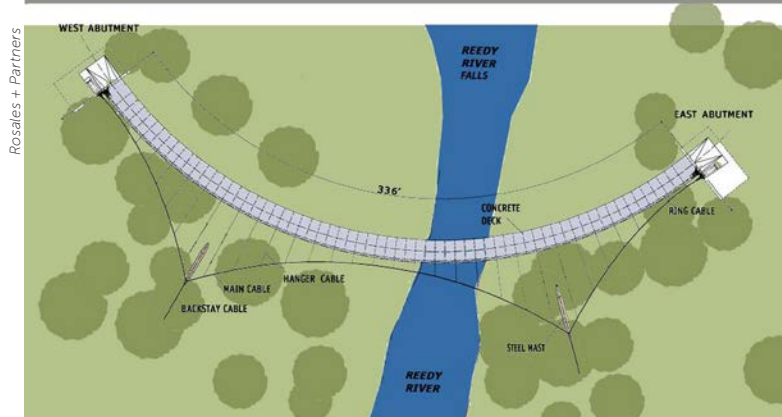
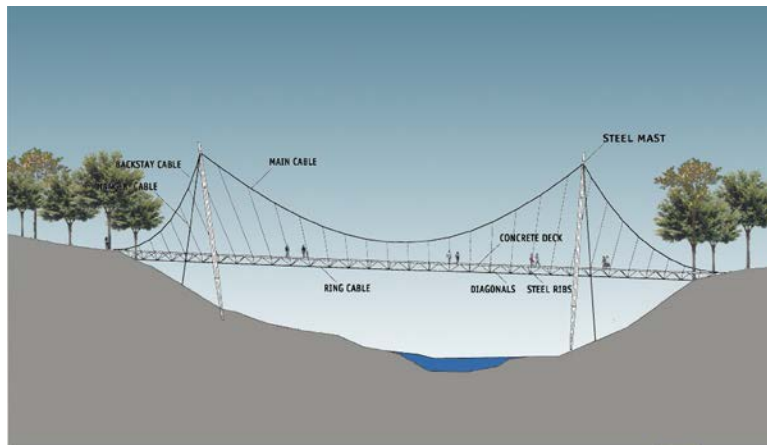
The concept of a pedestrian bridge was a key feature of the proposed park design since the Sasaki *Reedy River Corridor Vision Plan* and RTKL's *Vision Plan: Reedy River Falls*, both completed in 1999. Around that time, local developer Bob Hughes contacted architect and sculptor Santiago Calatrava

and traveled to Europe to meet with him and see his bridges. Later Hughes instigated a similar national and international tour by 80 civic leaders representing the city and the Greenville Chamber of Commerce, who also visited some examples of riverfront parks that had featured in downtown redevelopment schemes. Because Calatrava's fee was felt to be too high, the park design team searched for other options. They brought in three other designers to be interviewed, including Miguel Rosales of Rosales + Partners (at the time Rosales Gottemoeller and Associates). Rosales stood out based on his prior work and the clarity of his statement that the key goals for the bridge design should be to respect the falls, blend with the adjacent landscape, and contribute to the visibility of the falls. He followed through with a philosophy of elegance, economy, and simplicity of design and turned out to be an excellent team player.

Key bridge design objectives were to:

- mark the center of the park, much as a steeple might mark the center of a town or village;
- dramatize the falls;
- serve as viewing platform for the falls;
- provide a pedestrian link between the east and west sides of the river; and
- be transparent and elegant—a floating ribbon in the landscape.

The suspension-cable bridge, engineered by the German-based firm of Schlaich Bergermann & Partners, is approximately 345 feet long with a clear span of approximately 200 feet (61 meters). Gently curved, it is supported by twin towers, each 90 feet tall and inclined 15 degrees away from the bridge. The towers and cables are on one side only, downstream from the falls, built on the foundations of the old vehicular bridge. The 12-foot-wide deck is cantilevered from that side so that the falls side is open with an unobstructed view. The deck rises gently, with a 3% slope up toward Main Street in order to resolve the differences in elevation.



*The bridge marks the center of the park and provides a viewing platform for the falls.*



The bridge's curve serves many purposes. It is more compatible with the natural setting than a straight bridge might be, it moves the central part of the span farther from the falls, and it continuously shifts the viewing angle to give a variety of perspectives when looking at the falls. In addition to providing a link across the river, the bridge's most significant contribution may be its respect for—and even enhancement of—the falls.

The bridge towers are just visible above the tree tops after nearly 15 years of growth. Still, they do mark the center of Falls Park to some extent. Somewhat springy or bouncy when few people are on it, the bridge does not feel like it moves at all when fully loaded.

The structure is illuminated at night by LED lighting in its handrails and shining up from underneath (including onto the masts), making it appear to glow with an almost ethereal blue light.

Constructing such a bridge posed many challenges, including the accuracy of the site survey, the close tolerances on cable length, and the need to tension the cables while the deck is otherwise supported. Many of the parts were manufactured in Germany, and there were errors in the cable lengths requiring some to be replaced before the final erection. This problem, however, caused only a brief delay.

The name Liberty Bridge honors Liberty Corporation, which donated \$500,000 to Falls Park, and its founder W. Frank Hipp and his family. Anna Kate Hipp, a relative, was among the Carolina Foothills Garden Club's most active participants in working on and raising funds for the park.

The bridge was initially budgeted at \$2.5 million, but bids came in at \$4.5 million. The bridge's unusual design and the fact that it was the first unilateral curved suspension-cable bridge in the United States might have contributed to the higher construction bids. While this might have killed



Rosales + Partners



Lighting illuminates the bridge and its elegant design at night.



another project, the city was willing to absorb the over-run largely through financing based primarily on Certificates of Participation (a commonly used municipal finance instrument) paid for by relatively abundant revenue from hospitality taxes.

### *Flood Control*

There are flooding issues along the Reedy River. In the area of the park and falls, the river is reported to become a raging torrent during periods of high rainfall. There are also constraints imposed by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) that seek to ensure that no improvements or changes to the landforms will cause an increase in the elevations to which water rises during a flood. The park's design responded to these issues through a combination of removing impediments within the stream bed and reinforcing the bank with large boulders and rip-rap. It reportedly took several iterations to get it right, so powerful is the force of the waters. Just upstream, construction of a dam between RiverPlace and the Peace Center also helps by reducing silting as well as the force of the water as it comes over the falls. Park maintenance crews also learned that they could not expect certain plants or paving materials to survive within the flood zone and have replaced pavement and changed the location of some plants.

### *Maintenance*

Greenville is fully committed to keeping Falls Park in top condition and it is very well maintained. While there is a maintenance program specified in the master plan, the park maintenance team has discovered over time how to alter and fine-tune the plan to best care for various areas and features of the park. The lawns, for example, need and receive more aeration than normal due to the heavy traffic volume. Annuals are planted twice a year in spring and early summer, including about 20,000 bulbs such as tulips and hyacinths, which are treated as annuals and replaced each year. Falls Park is cleaned and trash removed every morning.



*Regular maintenance (top) includes planting annuals and bulbs.*

The material used for paving and planter walls throughout Falls Park is typically a native stone, integrating the new construction with the historic. As a result, many walkways and stairs are uneven and pose challenges to mobility-impaired visitors. Ramps are provided to meet ADA accessibility requirements, but the Recreation and Parks Department's goal is to further improve access.

A dedicated crew of six employees takes care of Falls Park, and the budget (which includes seven other staff members who maintain RiverPlace and Main Street) is over \$1 million per year. Larger capital improvements are supported by special earmarks or from the Falls Park Endowment.

#### *Future Initiatives and Plans*

The principal future plan related directly to the park's design is the Cancer Survivors Park just outside the southeast entrance between Church and Cleveland Streets. A 6.8 acre site has been set aside and conceptual plans developed with an estimated construction cost of \$6 million.

Cancer Survivors Park is intended to transform an inaccessible and overgrown area of the Swamp Rabbit Trail into gathering spaces and walkways that will provide a place of healing for visitors. The plan includes a central pavilion, specialty gardens, and sculptural and educational elements. It is anticipated that when construction is complete, regular maintenance will be taken over by the city. Ongoing programs will be run by Cancer Survivors Park Alliance, formerly Patients First, the lead organizer of the project.

In addition, the city is actively working to acquire land adjacent to the Swamp Rabbit Trail along its northern branch in order to expand parkland and recreational amenities.

Several initiatives related to Falls Park and its environs fit into Sasaki's 2008 update of the master plan for downtown. One of the plan's key principles,



*The Swamp Rabbit Trail connects the park with neighboring communities and development.*

creating a "green necklace," was intended to strengthen links to better-defined urban districts and entry points. Falls Park is a key feature of the necklace, which integrates important open spaces into a continuous system along which there have been expansions including the Kroc Center recreational complex and the adjacent A.J. Whittenburg Elementary School, which has an engineering-focused curriculum, developed on reclaimed brownfields just north of Falls Park.

Beyond the Sasaki master plan, in late 2015, the city published a request for proposals for the "Reedy River Redevelopment Area and City Park Planning Projects," intended to complete important park and open space improvements together with adjacent affordable housing and other initiatives to improve equitable access to recreation and other facilities.





*Lawns and shelters offer a variety of options for informal and formal gatherings.*

## ACTIVITIES

### *Patterns of Use*

Patterns of use at Falls Park are, of course, seasonal. While the park is open and maintained all year, the months from November through February are relatively quiet. Falls Park is officially open from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., but there are no gates and the hours are not rigidly enforced, especially along the main pathways including Liberty Bridge and the Swamp Rabbit Trail. In fact, the path across the bridge is said never to be closed, a tribute to level of safety that park guests now enjoy.

Typically, there is a succession of activities over the span of a day. Runners start jogging through the park by 5 a.m., followed by more casual walkers. Mid-morning might find groups of young mothers pushing strollers as well as a group listening to a lecture in the amphitheater. At lunchtime on weekdays, many office workers from downtown as well as individuals and families visit Falls Park, often bringing their lunches and sitting on benches or a lawn. In the afternoon, groups of elementary and middle school children can be seen touring the park with their teachers, and on evenings and weekends, special events such as concerts draw additional crowds beyond those enjoying the park for recreational use. During the high school graduation season, many graduates are reported to visit Falls Park to be photographed there, reinforcing the park's iconic stature.

Levels of use of the Swamp Rabbit Trail (not just through Falls Park) are tracked by the Greenville Health System, as use of the trail is associated with substantial health benefits. As the trail has expanded and become better known, its use has increased. Fiscal year 2013 (the most recent year for which statistics are available) showed a 20% increase over 2012. Total annual users are estimated based on a sample of counts on 16 days, four during each season. In 2013, over 500,000 users were projected. Men account for about 60%. African-American users account for approximately 8% (compared to 18% of the county population).





*The annual Reedy River Duck Derby draws a crowd.*

A high percentage of users are cyclists. Not surprisingly, the highest levels of utilization are on mild, sunny weekend days. Almost 10% of users surveyed said that “transportation” was a primary purpose (getting to school, work, or somewhere else), but the vast majority use it for recreation. The high levels of use and resultant crowding in certain areas were reported to prevent some people from visiting the trail more frequently, though the city is continuing to install amenities such as bus stop shelters with the intention of enhancing use of the trail as a transportation route.

Because the Reedy River is not navigable in Falls Park, there is no boating officially permitted on the river, though when water is high, some adventurous kayakers will go over the falls. While the river is much cleaner than it was a few decades ago, there are still concerns about bacteria counts resulting from agricultural runoff and sewer and septic outflows upstream, and there are advisory notices warning that swimming could make you sick, but not prohibiting it. The city and other agencies are working to improve the quality of water that runs into the Reedy through riverbank restoration, installation of bio-swales, and a storm water ordinance.

### *Programmed Activities*

Greenville’s director of public information and events, who oversees park programming and the farmers market, noted that before Falls Park, there was no special place for events, so the city would typically close a street. Since opening the park, events have been moved there and were initially used to draw visitors to Falls Park. In fact, the city planned for a year before opening the park to ensure that it would be successful. However, within two years, events were no longer needed to draw people; they just came on their own. In fact, demand has become so great that the city has decided to limit the number of permitted events.

All public events in the park must be nonprofit and free. Examples include Shakespeare in the Park (Thursday through Sunday afternoons, mid-May to July, at the stage), free concerts with a variety of types of music to attract a diverse demographic (also at the stage), and bike races that typically start at, end at, and/or run through Falls Park.

One weekend each May, the Reedy River Duck Derby, a major fundraiser for the Rotary Club, takes place in the park. Thousands of rubber ducks, most sponsored by a donor, are released all at once from above the falls. They float in groups over a variety of routes down the river and over the falls and are collected at the bottom. The first ones to arrive generate prizes for their sponsors. This event is hugely popular and very well attended. Many thousands of people throng to every vantage point—overlooks, banks of the river, and particularly Liberty Bridge, which can become so crowded with spectators that it is barely possible to traverse it.

### *Use of the Park*

Although statistics are not available, Falls Park appears to be used by people of a variety of ethnic groups, ages, and income levels. With the Swamp Rabbit Trail and its lateral feeder trails, access has been improved to many inner



*Park design and effective policing contribute to sense of safety.*

city neighborhoods. The city intentionally offers programs that encourage diversity, such as scheduling concerts with different kinds of music—jazz, blues, rock and roll, country—to attract a variety of users. All events are free.

In the spring of 2015, African-American visitors to Falls Park reported feeling comfortable there and visiting frequently. A small group of high school senior girls from 30 miles away encountered on the bridge on a Saturday night said that they come here often because it's the only "happening place" in the area.

Particular areas and even the entire park may be reserved for private events, providing additional revenue for the park. The modest rental fees make Falls Park an affordable venue option. For example, the River Lodge (hosting a maximum of 100 people) can be reserved for three hours for just \$150-200; the Amphitheater (maximum 200 people) can be rented for four hours for just \$375; and the entire park (maximum 650 people) can be reserved for a mere \$800, \$1000 on a weekend or holiday.

### *Safety*

Greenville appears to be pursuing progressive and effective policing strategies to make and keep Falls Park safe. The city expends much effort on community involvement and relations and recently implemented a bike patrol. Two to four police officers patrol the park and vicinity on foot or bikes, with more officers on hand for special events and weekend evenings. There is a city-wide curfew of 10 p.m. for minors.

While the area around the falls was described as being a crime-ridden drug haven before Falls Park (with, for example, four stabbings in a prior year), no serious crime problems are reported to have taken place in the park since it opened. Park visitors seem to feel safe walking even into darker and less visible parts of the park at night, perhaps in part because it is well used and there are lots of "eyes on the street."

## FINANCING

### Development Costs

The design and construction of Falls Park cost \$13,445,000, which was funded by the City of Greenville over a multi-year period in three primary phases (see Table 2). At 26 acres, the cost to build Falls Park was approximately \$11.85 per square foot.

### The Falls Park Endowment

Initially amounting to \$3.6 million, the Falls Park Endowment was established in 2002. Led by Pedrick Stall-Lowrey and Anna-Kate Hipp, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club raised the funds in a campaign offering naming rights to featured elements of the park. For example, a \$500,000 gift by the Liberty Corporation (Hipp family) bought naming rights to Liberty Bridge.

**TABLE 2: DEVELOPMENT BUDGET BY PHASES**

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Years</i>	<i>Budget</i>	<i>Uses</i>
Phase 1	1999-2000	\$380,000	Design and improvements
Phase 2	2001-2002	\$2,200,000	Design, physical improvements at the park, demolition of Camperdown Bridge
Phase 3	2002-2003	\$10,065,000	Liberty Bridge, river improvements, gardens, lawns, Woodland Walk (now part of Swamp Rabbit Trail), and activity spaces
Later Items		\$800,000	Added project expenses
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$13,445,000</b>	

Since its establishment, the endowment fund has been administered by the Community Foundation of Greenville. A three-person board, consisting of two representatives from the Garden Club and one from the city, determines how funds may be spent. According to Bob Morris, president of the Community Foundation, initial expenditures included a fundraising consultant and the administrative support services to solicit, acknowledge, and track pledges. It also paid for signage and for the production and

**TABLE 3: DEVELOPMENT SOURCES AND USES**

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Central Business District Tax Increment Fund	\$1,830,000
Certificates of Participation (COPs Series 2001)*	\$10,850,000
Greenville Water Commission	\$200,000
Hospitality Tax Fund	\$215,000
Other Appropriations	\$350,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,445,000</b>
<i>Uses</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Bridge Demolition	\$575,000
Pedestrian Bridge Construction	\$4,500,000
Stream Restoration	\$200,000
Landscaping	\$1,300,000
Hardscape and Buildings	\$5,000,000
Design and Construction Management	\$1,680,000
Miscellaneous	\$190,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,445,000</b>

*\*Note: COPs are paid for from the proceeds of the city's hospitality tax, which funded the majority of park construction. This 2% tax is levied on meals and beverages, generates more than \$8 million per year (and is projected to grow), and must be used for tourism-related expenditures.*



installation of brick paving and teak benches. The fund paid \$220,000 for the Bryan Hunt sculpture and contributed \$300,000 to Pedrick's Garden and \$150,000 for Harriet's Garden. The largest grant from the endowment was \$358,000 for the Joel Shapiro sculpture. Total distributions have been just over \$1,000,000, and the balance as of early 2015 was \$3,200,000. The endowment is the recipient of rental income from the two restaurants in Falls Park: Mary's at Fall's Cottage and Passerelle Bistro, which pays a percent of its gross, typically in the range of \$35,000-40,000 per year.

### *Operations and Maintenance*

In 2003, the city established a Falls Park division within the Recreation and Parks Department budget with crews assigned to the park, RiverPlace, and Main Street. The annual operating budget was \$1,070,741 in fiscal year



*Looking up across the main lawn towards Mary's Restaurant.*

2014-15, a 36% increase from two years prior, and covers 13 full-time staff members, six of whom focus on the park. Key goals for park operations and maintenance include ensuring that Falls Park remains safe, attractive, and inviting for public use by establishing a regular program of grounds maintenance, continually upgrading or replacing park amenities, and maintaining Falls Park as a centerpiece attraction for the community and for drawing additional visitors to Greenville.

### **IMPACT**

It would be difficult to overestimate the impact of Falls Park on Greenville. The park completed a critical link in the revitalization of downtown, extending its reach considerably to the west. It provides a major attraction for area residents and visitors, offering a variety of activities and attractive venues. It recaptured the falls, Greenville's greatest natural asset, and has become emblematic of the city's ability to reinvent itself. It has also served as the catalyst for very substantial economic development.

### *Economic Impact*

Falls Park has spurred a significant amount of public and private investment in projects directly or indirectly related to the park. The City of Greenville's Economic Development Department identified nearly two dozen projects completed or under way by 2015 with a total development value of more than \$585,781,000 (see Table 4). Leveraged on the \$13.5 million capital cost of the park, this is an economic multiplier of over 40.

Another measure of economic impact is the reported 78% downtown hotel occupancy rate, a figure that reflects the attraction of tourists and business visitors. Two new hotels were under construction or in planning in early 2015. In addition, gross business sales around the West Side increased 65% from 2000 to 2008, and property tax revenue in the area increased 300% from 2002 to 2012.

TABLE 4: RELATED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

<i>Year</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Project</i>
<b>1992</b>	\$4,166,000	West End Market: Mixed-use project including a public market, restaurants, and offices
<b>1998</b>	\$18,000,000	Governor's School for the Arts: New residential campus overlooking the park
<b>1999</b>	\$57,800,000	Poinsett Hotel: Renovation plus new parking, offices, retail, and condos
<b>2002</b>	\$11,000,000	200 East Broad Street Office Building
<b>2005</b>	\$67,400,000	RiverPlace: Phases 1 and part of 2a, including parking, riverwalk, and fountain
<b>2006</b>	\$11,438,000	Pendleton West: Affordable single-family development and office
<b>2006</b>	\$30,311,000	Baseball stadium and adjacent office building with shops and restaurants
<b>2007</b>	—	Riverplace: Phase 2a offices and condos
<b>2007</b>	\$8,100,000	Swamp Rabbit Trail
<b>2009</b>	—	NEXT Innovation Center
<b>2010</b>	\$46,500,000	Main at Broad: Courtyard Marriott, offices, restaurant
<b>2010</b>	\$16,000,000	AJ Whittenberg Elementary School
<b>2011</b>	\$46,000,000	Salvation Army - Ray and Joan Kroc Center
<b>2012</b>	\$16,816,000	Riverwalk project: Retail, offices, and apartments
<b>2012</b>	\$23,000,000	Peace Center for the Performing Arts: Extensive renovation to improve relationship to river
<b>2014</b>	\$31,000,000	RiverPlace: Phase 2B with Embassy Suites, condos, retail, and continuation of riverwalk
<b>2014</b>	\$18,250,000	400 Rhett Apartments: 150 units
<b>2015</b>	\$99,000,000	Camperdown Project: Mixed-use development with dine-in movie theater, hotel, offices, 200+ apartments, condos, and retail (estimated cost)
<b>2015</b>	\$25,000,000	LINK Apartments West End: 215 units
<b>2015</b>	\$56,000,000	Southridge: Mixed-use development
	<b>\$585,781,000</b>	<b>Total</b>



*The park has attracted additional investment along the river including Riverplace and the Peace Center.*

### *Awards and Recognition*

Falls Park on the Reedy has been the recipient of a number of awards, including:

- American Horticultural Society Urban Beautification Award, 2007, to the Carolina Foothills Garden Club.
- International Bridge Conference, Arthur G. Hayden Medal, 2005, to Liberty Bridge for "a single recent outstanding achievement in bridge engineering demonstrating innovation in special use bridges such as pedestrian, people-mover, or non-traditional structures."
- Outstanding Civil Engineering Achievement Merit Award, American Society of Civil Engineers, 2006, to Liberty Bridge.
- Southeastern Horticultural Society, Virginia Hand Callaway Award, 2009, to Falls Park.
- Urban Land Institute Urban Open Space Award Finalist (one of six), 2010, to Falls Park on the Reedy.

- Waterfront Center Excellence on Waterfront Awards, 2008, for Falls Park on the Reedy and the Liberty Bridge (Park/Walkway/Recreational category).
- YWCA Amy Kay Stubbs Women of Achievement Award, 2009, presented to Carolina Foothill Garden Club members Anna Kate Hipp and Pedrick Lowery for their work on the Falls Park Endowment Campaign.

Approximately 100 official delegations with a total of around 1,800 members have come to Greenville from 15 states and three foreign countries to visit Falls Park. Joe Riley, former mayor of Charleston (and 1989 RBA Selection Committee Member), is reported to have called the park "the finest public space in South Carolina."

Beyond its recognition and economic impact, the Falls Park project reaches well beyond the Greenville community by offering a number of lessons that may be valuable for other cities to consider.

### *Capitalizing on Local Assets*

When official visitors come to Greenville and exclaim that Falls Park is great but they don't have a feature like the falls, they are told to figure out what they do have and work with it. "Find your falls" is Greenville's message to others, inspiring them to capitalize on the unique features and assets of their city.

### *Leadership and Vision*

Both of these factors are essential to the conception and implementation of a project. In Greenville, leadership came from several directions: the Carolina Foothills Garden Club, the mayor, enlightened citizens, and developers. Garden Club members imagined what the derelict area around the river could become. The mayor and others were able to visualize what the falls would be like without the bridge, and White was able to develop



strategies to win support for its removal. Gradually, others realized how great an attraction the falls and park could become, and developers moved forward to support and capitalize on that momentum. Such leadership cannot be conjured up where it does not exist, but leaders with vision can learn from Greenville's experience and enlist the support of key constituents.

### *Patience and Persistence*

A 1907 study called for capitalizing on the falls, and 60 years later, in 1967, the Garden Club initiated what turned out to be a 40-year process. Building on a series of small accomplishments, leaders never stopped pushing toward their ultimate goal, which continues to evolve with the creation of new links to the park along the Swamp Rabbit Trail and new development in its environs. While leadership changed over time, commitment to the project remained strong. One visionary community member, Tommy Wyche, led an effort to assemble 82 separate land parcels along the river with dozens of different owners into a partnership that strengthened all of them and opened new opportunities for development adjacent to the park. His innovative strategy—bringing in parcel owners as partners with a valuation based on their own appraiser's report—took almost 25 years. Wyche waited until the time was right and he found a developer he trusted, finally selling the land to Bob Hughes, who Wyche felt would “do the ‘right’ thing.”

### *Exploiting Public-Private Partnerships*

Falls Park capitalized on cooperation between public and private entities. Members of the Garden Club, city leaders and departments, the design team, and many private developers collaborated effectively to get the project done. Each played its appropriate role in terms of providing leadership, vision, and resources for the mutual benefit of all and the common good. The public investment of about \$13.5 million helped stimulate private investment of more than \$585 million as of spring 2015.



*A view of the river and Peace Center from Main Street.*

### *Social and Physical Connections*

“Connections” is an important theme of this project. Social connections among civic leaders made their collaboration more effective; now the park is viewed as a physical space that brings together people from all over the city and from all backgrounds—urban and suburban, various classes and races, locals and tourists—in what is referred to as “the city’s living room.” Connections have also been strengthened between downtown and the formerly underdeveloped area west of the park as well as to the surrounding neighborhoods. A new plan for extending the park is in process. One of the explicit goals is to use the park extension as a way of creating more access for less advantaged neighborhoods while not necessarily stimulating gentrification. The Liberty Bridge and the Swamp Rabbit Trail both support connections, while the park serves as a magnet. This level of connectivity contributes to a healthier city.



*The lower falls and pools.*

### *Instilling a Culture of Quality*

Why was this project so well done and why is it so well programmed and maintained? Largely because there is a culture of quality, commitment, and doing things the best way possible cultivated by leaders at city hall. This is said to have been instilled by the city manager and mayor who, for example, have implemented “Greenville Cares,” a hotline for inquiries and problems; follow-up is evaluated as part of each city department’s performance review. The park “raised the bar” on this culture of quality and showed that the city could do things really well.

### *Learning from Outstanding Precedents and Thinkers*

Just as officials from other cities now come to Greenville, local leaders toured other cities with rivers, parks, and pedestrian bridges in the US and Europe during the early planning stages. They consulted planners and de-

signers with broad experience and recognition, including Lawrence Halprin and Santiago Calatrava. All of this stretched their vision of what might be possible in Greenville.

### *Establishing a Stable Funding Stream*

The City of Greenville is able to ensure adequate and sustainable funding for maintenance and programming in Falls Park by virtue of its thoughtful creation of a secure and stable funding stream. Given the park’s impact on attracting tourism, the city allocates income from its hospitality tax to the park. This revenue stream also pays off the debt incurred for the capital expenditures to create the park and build Liberty Bridge.

## **ASSESSING IMPACT IN RESPECT TO PROJECT GOALS**

### *GOAL: Convert a run-down area into a park.*

This rather modestly-stated goal has been achieved—and with great success. “Before” photographs show a ravine choked with kudzu and littered with trash. It was reportedly a magnet for drug use and related crimes of violence. Now, it is a beautiful park filled with locals and tourists and a popular venue for many activities and community celebrations.

### *GOAL: Reclaim the birthplace of the city and reverse ecological damage.*

The falls were the original site of European settlement in Greenville, and the city grew up around the falls and the river as the settlers built water-powered mills and housing for the workers. But the river was polluted by the textile mills and the falls were obscured in the 1960s by a vehicular bridge. While the pollution was gradually mitigated as the textile mills closed, the area surrounding the falls was overgrown, filled with trash, and generally deteriorated.

The removal of Camperdown Bridge “liberated” the falls and exposed them again for people to view and enjoy. The mitigation and repair of ecological damage to the river, the riparian habitat, and the surrounding woodlands and meadows are very far along. There are reports of fish in the river again, though they are not edible because of contaminated runoff from upstream.

**GOAL:** *Provide active programming to attract a broad array of individuals, both locals and tourists.*

There is an effective mix of city-sponsored and privately-sponsored events which attract varying numbers of people to Falls Park, and there are many other opportunities for activity which keep the park active. The park and the falls in particular are a popular stop for tourists and an important part of what draws them to visit Greenville.

**GOAL:** *Accelerate private development along the river and to the west and increase vibrancy and activity downtown.*

Reclaiming the falls and building Falls Park have clearly contributed significantly to private and public development in these zones. Main Street has filled in toward the park, and the area to the west, which was reported to have been close to derelict before the park, is now home to extensive commercial and residential development, including affordable housing and a minor league baseball stadium.

### SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The Selection Committee praised Falls Park on the Reedy as a beautiful and transformative project that creates an important new civic space in the city of Greenville. They noted the park’s significant physical, social, and economic impact and the role of leadership and vision, long-term planning, and quality design in making it possible. Falls Park puts the river front and center, repurposing an overgrown and forgotten valley that once served industry into a centerpiece for the city that has captured the attention and

pride of everyone in Greenville. The committee commented that Falls Park is “a truly urban project that illustrates the importance of integrating green space into the urban realm” and enhances the “connectedness” of the city.

The committee noted the role of vision and long-term, intentional planning, including attention to quality design, which informed the park’s development. It is the result of over 100 years of thoughtful planning initiatives that engaged well-known designers and firms from across the country. The committee observed that the project illustrates the value of establishing and advancing benchmarks for quality, such as seeking comparable projects in other cities and Calatrava for inspiration for the bridge design. They agreed that the park is very well designed, with an overall scale that people can relate to and attention to details and materials which help integrate it



*The terrace and Passerelle Bistro below the Main Street entry.*



“FALLS PARK PUTS THE RIVER FRONT AND CENTER, REPURPOSING AN OVERGROWN AND FORGOTTEN VALLEY THAT ONCE SERVED INDUSTRY INTO A CENTERPIECE FOR THE CITY THAT HAS CAPTURED THE ATTENTION AND PRIDE OF EVERYONE IN GREENVILLE.”

into the natural and built environment. The committee also praised the new pedestrian bridge, observing that its design is a bold statement that “makes the place.”

Like the other 2015 winners, Falls Park required significant collaboration among multiple players to come to fruition: the city, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club, and various business leaders, individuals, and institutions all had different leadership roles and were critical in connecting and assembling resources over time. The committee observed that among the five winners, Falls Park stood out for the most involvement from government and the public sector and would not have been possible without the consistent leadership of the city. The committee praised the courage that it took to remove a “perfectly good” vehicular bridge, particularly the mayor’s strategy and patience to wait for the right time and use of political capital to make it happen.

There was some discussion as to whether a project completed ten years ago would be considered innovative. In the end, the committee agreed there was “a lot going on” with much to learn and that it was an important story to celebrate and share. Most of all, the committee agreed that the project illustrates the value of the mayor’s “find your falls” approach to uncovering and discovering what makes a city special and creating something that is unique to its place.

## RELATED RBA WINNERS

Many cities were built on riverfront sites, often to exploit their potential for transportation or to power water-driven machinery. While transportation persists on major rivers, water power has largely been supplanted, and the related industrial uses have made way for open space. A number of similar waterfront projects have been RBA winners and provide an interesting contrast to Falls Park.



**LOUISVILLE WATERFRONT PARK** (2013 Silver Medalist) is located along a much larger river and city, with a similar array of uses and relationship to downtown. One major difference is in how automobile bridges have been handled. In Louisville, highways and their bridges enter the city by traversing the park, and rather than attempting to remove them, the park was designed around them.



**BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK** (2011 Silver Medalist) along the East River serves an urban area of an entirely different scale than Greenville or Louisville. This park serves a much more local function and its impacts, while impressive, are not citywide. Still, the project transformed a derelict site (as did the others), applied sustainability concepts, and responded to the needs and concerns of local residents.



**SOUTH PLATTE RIVER GREENWAY** (2001 Silver Medalist) in Denver extends downtown open space for many miles along a river with hiking trails and bike paths and connects to a series of parks. Passing through the edge of downtown and reclaiming abandoned rail yards, the Greenway offers a variety of recreational opportunities and stimulated adjacent development.

Civic Space Park (2011 Silver Medalist) in Phoenix, Millennium Park (2009 Silver Medalist) in Chicago, and Providence River Relocation Project (2003 Silver Medalist) in Rhode Island offer additional examples of how investment in new public spaces and infrastructure can increase downtown vitality and catalyze additional development.

More information about these and other RBA winners can be found at [www.rudybruneraward.org](http://www.rudybruneraward.org).

## Resources

This case study was compiled from information gathered from the project application, an extensive site visit in May 2015, discussions with the RBA Selection Committee, and research and interviews conducted during those processes and throughout the writing and editing of this book. Titles and positions of interviewees and URLs listed below were effective as of the site visit unless otherwise noted.

### INTERVIEWS

City of Greenville:

Knox White, Mayor

Amy Doyle, City Councilor

Lillian Flemming, City Councilor

Susan Reynolds, City Councilor

John Castile, City Manager

Sarah Cook, Grants Coordinator

Dwayne Cooper, Engineering Services Manager, Department of Public Works

Jordan Franklin, Falls Park Garden Manager

Michael Kerski, Planning and Development Manager

Edward Kinney, Senior Landscape Architect

Ken Miller, Chief of Police

Angie Prosser, Director of Public Information and Events

Dana Souza, Director of Parks, Recreation and Sustainability

Kevin Stiens, Parks and Recreation Business Manager

Ginny Stroud, Community Development Director

Dale Westermeier, Deputy Parks and Recreation Director

Nancy Whitworth, Deputy City Manager and Economic Development Director

Megan Young, Parks and Recreation Administrative Assistant

Designers:

Andrea Mereschak Mains, Landscape Architect, formerly of RTKL and LDR

Jay Martin, Arbor Engineering

Miguel Rosales, Principal, Rosales + Partners

Ed Ziegler, Architect, Craig Gauden Davis Architects

Businesses:

Bob Hughes, Hughes Development Corporation

Nate Lipscomb, Greenville Drive

Bob Morris, Community Foundation of Greenville

Charles Reyner, Windsor Aughtry Corporation

Carl Sobocinski, Table 301 and Passerelle Bistro

Chris Stone, Greenville Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Community:

Robert Benedict, PhD, Director of Masters in Real Estate Program,  
Clemson University

Bruce Halverson, PhD, President, South Carolina Governor's School for the  
Arts and Humanities

Nancy Fitzer, Education Director, Upstate Forever (conservationist organization)

Barry Nocks, PhD, Professor of Planning, Clemson University (also serves on city's  
design review board and led the Clemson study of the Reedy River Master Plan)

Carolina Foothills Garden Club:

Anna Kate Hipp

Betty Stall

Martha Pellett

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Liberty Bridge





Silver Medal Winner

## Uptown District Cleveland, Ohio

The collaborative redevelopment of a mixed-use urban corridor linking arts, education, and health care institutions and adjoining communities





## Overview

Submitted by: Case Western Reserve University

Completed: 2015

Total Development Cost: \$200 million+

Uptown District in Cleveland, Ohio, is the redevelopment of a corridor linking art, educational, and health care institutions with surrounding neighborhoods. It is a sustainable, transit-oriented development located at a convergence of neighborhoods four miles east of downtown.

A truly collaborative effort, Uptown District has transformed two blocks of Euclid Avenue and is part of a broader urban district in the heart of University Circle. What was once a collection of vacant and underused properties is now a community gateway and destination. Bookended by two cultural institutions, Uptown District features outdoor gathering spaces, retail shops and restaurants, student and market-rate housing, and public transit connections.

Envisioned as an arts and entertainment district, Uptown District was designed to create “connective tissue” linking Cleveland’s educational and cultural corridor with downtown and adjoining communities. A design charrette and urban design guidelines completed by Chan Krieger and Associates (now NBBJ) informed the massing and design principles of the development, which now includes mid-block passageways and an internal “alley” that provide visual and pedestrian connections between Euclid Avenue and adjoining buildings, plazas, and parking. The downtown and neighborhood linkage was ultimately improved through the development of Rapid Transit Authority (RTA) rail stations both south of and within

Rien Van Rijthoven



**"UPTOWN DISTRICT IS THE PRODUCT OF A SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATION AMONG INSTITUTIONS AND PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERS WHO REMAINED COMMITTED TO A STRONG DESIGN AGENDA THROUGH YEARS OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT."**

*—2015 Selection Committee*

Uptown as well as by the popular HealthLine bus system on Euclid Avenue that connects Uptown District with downtown and East Cleveland.

Uptown District is a continuing focus of the Cleveland Foundation's Greater University Circle Initiative, a public-private partnership between leading anchor institutions, philanthropic organizations, financial institutions, community groups, and the City of Cleveland. Launched in 2005, the initiative seeks to leverage institutional resources to improve a four-square-mile area that is home to key cultural institutions such as the Cleveland Museum of Art, Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), and University Hospitals and connect the district with surrounding neighborhoods.

Completed in 2015 and costing more than \$200 million, Uptown District consists of multiple projects around a core "Wall" development in the heart of the district. The \$70 million Wall was constructed in two phases, with major financing provided by the Cleveland Foundation, New Market Tax Credits, and the City of Cleveland. The project continues to evolve and still more development is anticipated.

The sleek, aluminum-clad buildings of the Wall were designed by San Francisco-based Stanley Saitowitz of Natoma Architects and developed by MRN Ltd., a local, family-owned real estate company responsible for Cleveland's successful East 4th Street district. The ground floors host retailers and restaurants, including nationally and locally owned businesses such as the Barnes & Noble CWRU Bookstore, the Corner Alley bowling and entertainment venue, and Constantino's, the area's only grocery store. Upper floors include contemporary, market-rate rental apartments and

student housing for the Cleveland Institute of Art, whose expanded and renovated campus frames the northern edge of Uptown District.

The Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, designed by Farshid Moussavi, anchors Toby's Plaza, a large public space at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Mayfield Road. Designed by Field Operations, the plaza features public art installations as well as programs and events that draw people to the district and reinforce its emerging identity as the community's "living room."

Uptown District highlights the role of anchor institutions in catalyzing and leading community change. The development has drawn national attention for its design and collaborative, institution-led approach and has affirmed the value of taking risks to invest in a long-term vision with broad community benefits. The area "was a no-man's-land for 40 years," explains John Wheeler, former senior vice president for administration at CWRU. Uptown District, he said, "rose out of necessity...We couldn't tolerate what was there any longer." People in the area refer to Uptown's "rock and ripple effect"—activity in the district has led to additional interest and development in the area and increased pride in Cleveland as a whole.



Scott Pease (left); CWRU (right)





## Project at a Glance

- The development of a mixed-use hub in the center of University Circle, Cleveland, and a gateway to numerous cultural, educational, health care, and arts institutions.
- A multi-party collaboration led by mature anchor institutions within University Circle that integrates education, art, housing, and retail programs into a vibrant public realm.
- Revitalization of 8.2 acres of formerly vacant and significantly underutilized land on both sides of Euclid Avenue from East 117th Street to Cornell Road.
- Over \$200 million in total investment with over 223,500 square feet of new development, including an iconic new building for the Museum of Contemporary Art, renovation and expansion of the Cleveland Institute of Art, student and mixed-income apartments, and new transit stations.
- 158 market-rate apartments and 130 beds for Cleveland Institute of Art freshmen, along with ground-floor retail shops.
- A transformative project attracting investment in abutting neighborhoods and reinforcing catalyst investments by anchor institutions.







## Project Goals

- Create mixed-income housing to attract a diversity of residents and students to the area.
- Create retail space that attracts both locally owned and national retail establishments.
- Emphasize signature architecture and placemaking with world-class design.
- Promote connectivity through the design of public spaces and transit.
- Take full advantage of the convergence of art, education, and health care institutions as a source of creative district revitalization.
- Create a sustainable, state-of-the-art development with partnerships and programs that ensure vitality and longevity.



Scott Pease

# Chronology

**1796**

The Connecticut Land Company founds Cleveland's first settlement.

1800

**1826**

Western Reserve College is founded in Hudson, Ohio, about 30 miles southeast of Cleveland.

**Mid-late 1800s**

With the 1827 opening of the Ohio-Erie Canal and expansion of railroads, iron-ore and coal-rich Cleveland becomes an industrial powerhouse.

**1877**

The Case School of Applied Science is founded.

**1885**

The Case School of Applied Science (later the Case Institute of Technology) locates adjacent to the Western Reserve University campus.

**1882**

Western Reserve College moves east of downtown Cleveland to an area that would later become University Circle and assumes the name Western Reserve University.

The Western Reserve School of Design for Women is founded. In 1949, it takes the name Cleveland Institute of Art.

1900

**1914**

Frederick H. Goff founds the Cleveland Foundation, the first of over 700 community foundations now in existence around the globe.

**1950**

Cleveland's population peaks at just over 900,000 people, then diminishes to less than 400,000 by 2010 as residents migrate to suburbs.

**1957**

The 34 institutions in University Circle cooperate to complete a master plan and recommend the creation of what ultimately becomes University Circle Inc. (UCI).

**1968**

The Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (MOCA Cleveland) is founded in a Euclid Avenue storefront.

**1967**

The Case Institute of Technology and Western Reserve University merge to create Case Western Reserve University (CWRU).

**2003**

Ronald B. Richard is named President and CEO of the Cleveland Foundation. He begins to shift the organization's focus from responsive grant making to proactive, program-related investments that support the foundation's strategic goals.

2000

**2004**

CWRU and UCI host a design charrette featuring Frank Gehry and Laurie Olin, followed by a commission to Chan Krieger & Associates to develop urban design concepts and guidelines for Uptown District.



## 2006

Former city council representative Frank G. Jackson becomes Cleveland's 56th Mayor.

MOCA Cleveland hires Foreign Office Architects and its principal architect Farshid Moussavi to design the museum's new building at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Mayfield Road.

MRN Ltd. is selected as the developer for Uptown District and recruits Stanley Saitowitz of Natoma Architects to create the design.

## 2008

Nationwide economic downturn affects previous financial commitments to the Uptown project; MRN pursues additional funders and separates the project into two phases.

The Regional Transit Authority of Cleveland (RTA) completes the HealthLine Bus Rapid Transit project, with stops at East 118th and East 115th Streets and Cornell Road, considered a crucial link to downtown redevelopment.

## 2013

CIA begins construction on the new George Gund building, allowing CIA to consolidate all activities on one campus on Euclid Avenue.

Ground is broken for the new RTA Little Italy-University Circle Rapid Station.

## 2014

Phase 2 of Uptown District opens.

The new RTA Cedar-University Rapid Station opens.

## 2005

CWRU completes construction of Village at 115, located just northeast of Uptown along E. 115th Street and separated from the main campus by a "desert" of vacant land.

The Cleveland Foundation launches the Greater University Circle Initiative focused on transit-oriented development, housing, education, economic inclusion, and safety.

Barrie Projects develops *Attitude Is Everything UPTOWN: A Catalog of New Ideas for University Circle*, funded through a UCI consortium.

Chris Ronayne leaves his position as Chief of Staff and Director of Planning at the City of Cleveland to become President of UCI.

## 2007

Barbara R. Snyder becomes President of CWRU, inheriting a substantial operating deficit. Snyder launches a period of impressive growth in admissions applications, fundraising, fiscal stability, and new campus construction.

Planning and design begins for a new University Circle transit hub consolidating bus loop and rail service to the north side of Cedar Hill as a gateway to University Circle.

## 2010

Construction begins on Phase 1 of Uptown District. Under President Grafton J. Nunes, the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA) develops plans for a campus consolidation and expansion in tandem with Uptown development.

## 2011

MOCA Cleveland breaks ground on its iconic new building in Uptown.

## 2012

MOCA and Uptown District Phase 1 open. Construction for Phase 2 begins opposite Phase I, southwest of Euclid Avenue.

Construction begins on the RTA Cedar-University Rapid Station, a transit hub replacing the 1956 Cedar Hill station.

## 2015

The new RTA Little Italy-University Circle Rapid Station opens.

CIA completes its \$75 million Uptown District campus.



#### POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1A. "The Wall" Phase I
- 1B. "The Wall" Phase II
2. Toby's Plaza and Uptown Alley
3. Museum of Contemporary Art
4. Cleveland Institute of Art
5. Triangle Apartments
6. Commodore Place Apartments
7. University Hospitals
8. Case Western Reserve University
9. Village at 115
10. Little Italy-University Circle Station

## Project Description

### INTRODUCTION

Cleveland's Uptown District is an evolving mixed-use area which, at the time of application to the Rudy Bruner Award, involved more than \$200 million in improvements that blend retail shops, public space, dormitory and market-rate as well as low- and moderate-income housing, and arts programming with adjacent neighborhood and transportation enhancements. All of these elements are aligned with strategic objectives of community and anchor institutions including Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), University Hospitals, the City of Cleveland, the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA), the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (MOCA), University Circle Inc. (UCI), and the Cleveland Foundation. Located on an 8.2 acre site within University Circle, Uptown is four miles east of downtown Cleveland.

While the scope of the district continues to evolve, there are seven distinct projects that are most prominently featured in the RBA application and together total more than \$200 million in investment. The core of the development is the "Wall," which lines both sides of Euclid Avenue between Ford Drive and East 115th Street with housing and retail space. The Wall, developed in two phases, includes 158 apartments, 130 beds for CIA freshman students, and 80,000 square feet of retail.

The Wall provides an armature bookended by the new 80,000-square-foot atrium building addition to the CIA that fills the block facing East 115th Street east of Euclid Avenue and a new 34,000-square-foot MOCA building at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Mayfield Road.

Two new transit stations provide connections to Uptown District in addition to the HealthLine bus rapid transit system serving the area since 2008. The existing Rapid Transit Authority (RTA) Cedar-University stop was replaced by a bus-rail hub on the southern border of CWRU where Cedar Glenn Parkway crosses the rail lines, and a new rapid rail station was built at the border of Little Italy and University Circle on Mayfield Road across from Tony Brush Park. A third station in the Buckeye-Woodhill neighborhood at 105 Euclid Avenue, just south of Uptown, further enhances connectivity within University Circle.

The Commodore Place Apartments renovation of a 12-story 1924 hotel provides 198 mixed-income apartments above a retail base at Ford Drive and Euclid Avenue while CWRU Triangle Apartments provide student housing with ground-floor retail. Finally, Toby's Plaza and Uptown Alley create the outdoor public realm linking MOCA and CIA.

Development of Uptown District involved a complex collaboration with several partners sharing significant financial risk. It was a classic example of doing together what none of the collaborators could do by themselves. For example, CWRU invested in property to acquire site control, then engaged local firm MRN Ltd. as lead developer while working in tandem with UCI, the Cleveland Foundation, and the City of Cleveland.

The Uptown District corridor connects nearby development that arose simultaneously, including a new MOCA building and the consolidation of two facilities into one by CIA. None of this work was a sure thing as a stand-alone project, but together all are now on a healthy footing.

Throughout its development, the project employed the creative talents of very accomplished planners and designers. The partners who commissioned the work avoided what they describe as a "good enough" approach to design development and took considerable pride in engaging Frank Gehry, Laurie Olin, Chan Krieger and Associates (now NBBJ), Stanley Saitowitz at Natoma Architects, Farshid Moussavi, James Corner of Field Operations, and Anton Germishuizen of Stantec at various stages of the process. These professionals from around the globe did not collaborate with each other in the delivery of Uptown District but did work within the broad parameters of clear diagrams, general guidelines, and an emerging shared vision communicated by their clients for the district and its abutting neighborhoods.

Uptown District outcomes are still evolving, and the absence of impact data suggests it is too soon to tell what the full benefits will be. That said, Uptown District has added significantly to the appeal of CWRU and the Cleveland Institute of Art to prospective and current students. Neighborhood advocates say the project has influenced investments in quality of life, and the City of Cleveland views Uptown District as a significant economic engine.

## CONTEXT

It was 1796 when the Connecticut Land Company founded its first settlement as what is now known as Cleveland. The area's economy did not flourish until after the War of 1812 and the opening of the Ohio and Erie Canal. The land was rich in iron ore and coal, and the evolution of transportation options from canal to steamboat to rail helped to make the region prosperous. By the 1860s, John D. Rockefeller and his co-investors had founded Standard Oil and Sam Mather was making steel. Cleveland soon became an industrial powerhouse, with affluence and influence that enabled Frederick Goff to establish the Cleveland Foundation in 1914, the



first in a movement of community foundations that now number over 700 worldwide. During this pre-Depression era, the wealth created by industry also established a rich sports, arts, and cultural legacy that persists to this day and underpins the partners in University Circle and what eventually became Uptown District.

Cleveland grew and prospered up to the Great Depression when over one-third of the workforce found itself unemployed for over three years. But the city's economy recovered and continued to grow along with its population until the 1950s. Then, like most of the more than 60 US legacy cities (cities of over 60,000 that lost over half of their population in the post-World War II period), Cleveland began a slow decline during which half of its nearly one million residents fled to the suburbs or elsewhere. From 1976 through 1987, the city went into default and was under the authority of a fiscal control board. Cleveland was the first such city in the United States to face this problem since the Great Depression. The city's downtown and several surrounding neighborhoods were left with high vacancy rates, continued disinvestment, and large pockets of poverty. Very similar stories are told in Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Buffalo. Today Cleveland, like many other legacy cities, can see the promise of a new day as businesses and residents return to the city.

Uptown District forms the urban spine of the area known as University Circle and offers evidence of the city's shift toward a more prosperous future. University Circle began along Euclid Avenue when Nathaniel Doan, one of the original surveyors from the Connecticut Land Company that founded Cleveland, settled there in 1799. By the 1870s, Doan's Corners flourished and expanded into Cleveland's second downtown, with stores, small industries, churches, a hotel, and a post office. In 1882, the first college in northern Ohio, Western Reserve University (which took its name from the surrounding region, known at that time as the Western Reserve of Connecticut), relocated to the area. Case Institute of



Western Reserve Historical Society



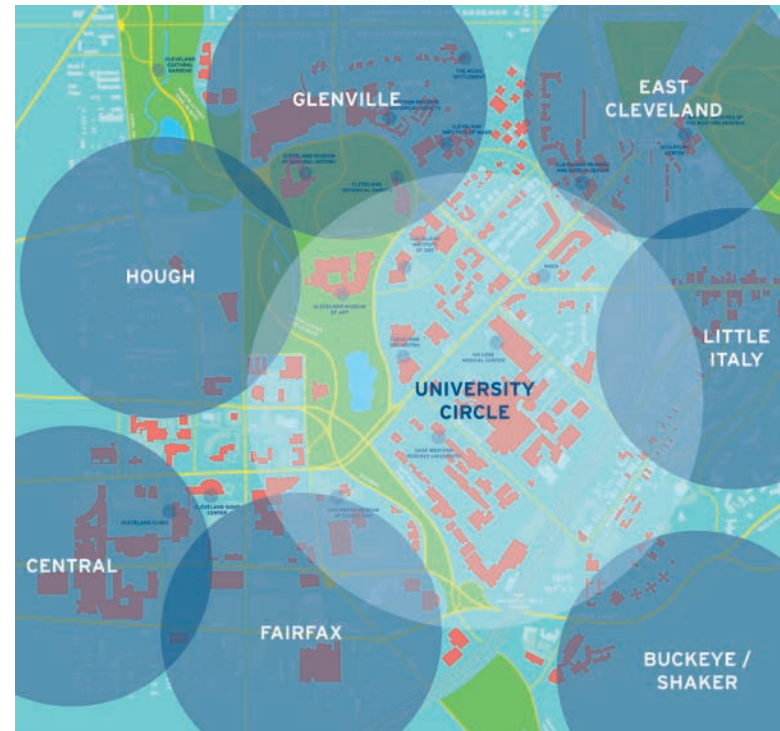
Case Western Reserve University

The Doan's Corner area in the 1920's (top) and Case Western Reserve University campus.

Technology followed in 1885, bolstering the area's growth. By the early 1900s, the Western Reserve School of Design for Women (now the Cleveland Institute of Art) also moved to University Circle, and the concept of developing a world-class arts and cultural center came to life. The Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland Orchestra's Severance Hall, the Cleveland Botanical Garden, and others all opened or moved into the area during a rapid stage of post-turn-of-the-century growth that continued through the 1930s. University Circle began to establish itself as a center for innovation in health care, with the 1921 opening of the Cleveland Clinic less than a mile away and the 1931 arrival of University Hospitals. On top of educational, arts, and cultural institutions, the hospital network became another feather in the cap of Cleveland, and all of these institutions were located proximate to one of Cleveland's major arteries, Euclid Avenue.

Yet the positive social and economic environment of University Circle did not hold for the seven surrounding neighborhoods of this cultural incubator. The residential areas, like the city as a whole, saw the first signs of decline in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This is when the well-to-do of these neighborhoods, primarily white residents, migrated to the suburbs, drawn by abundant new housing, the expanding interstate highway system, and easy access to mortgage loans. Meanwhile, lower-income, predominantly black residents remained behind in the city, often in neighborhoods deteriorating from disinvestment.

Many of the neighborhoods surrounding University Circle are economically similar. Over 33,000 people live in what has come to be called Greater University Circle, which includes Buckeye-Shaker, Central, Fairfax, Glenville, Hough, Little Italy, and a portion of the separately incorporated East Cleveland. These neighborhoods are among Cleveland's poorest, with the median household income below \$25,000 and unemployment topping 15%, more than double the rate for all of Cuyahoga County.



University Circle Inc.



The Greater University Circle neighborhoods (top) include Little Italy (bottom right) and residential areas.

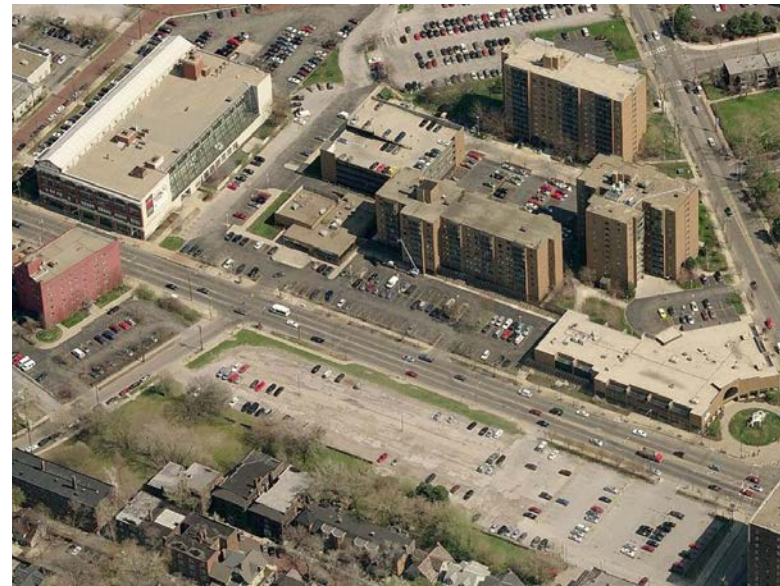


Residents of the adjacent neighborhoods are also racially segregated. In nearby Glenville, for example, the population is 98% African American. The core team of institutions collaborating on Uptown District (UCI, CWRU, the Cleveland Foundation, the City of Cleveland, MOCA, and CIA) sought to improve upon this demographic narrative by promoting a variety of economic inclusion efforts. At the moment there are no policies in place that would limit gentrification in the area, although it is a common topic of discussion in, for example, the work by Neighborhood Connections, a non-profit organization funded largely by the Cleveland Foundation and offering a small grants program intended to help stabilize these neighborhoods.

The area now known as Uptown District was originally centered on Doan's Corners, the lively intersections of Euclid Avenue at East 105th and East 107th Streets. During its height in the nineteenth century, Euclid Avenue bustled with streetcars and trolleys that brought Clevelanders from downtown to the most exciting theaters, restaurants, and shopping promenades of the day. The intersection of Euclid Avenue and East 105th Street is said to have been the home of one of the country's first traffic lights, invented by Clevelander Garrett Morgan in 1922.

At the time of Uptown District's inception, however, 85% of retail space in the area was vacant or seriously underutilized. University Circle had been a site of serious disinvestment for almost 40 years due to the migration of urban residents to the outlying suburbs of Cleveland, whose population steadily declined to 389,521 by 2014.

But signs of life downtown and in University Circle were signaling a return to the urban core. The area that became known as Uptown was thought to be well positioned to build on this trend in urban resettlement.



*Aerial and street views of the Uptown District site prior to development.*

Case Western Reserve University



As early as 2004, CWRU had begun exploring the possibility of engaging collaborators to create a contemporary, mixed-use district. The area targeted was at the intersections of Euclid Avenue at Ford Drive and East 115th Street, which was seen as having the potential to reclaim the historic vibrancy of Doan's Corners due to the range of existing institutions, including CWRU and CIA, as well as MOCA's interest in relocating there. Philanthropist Peter B. Lewis grew up nearby and had spent much time in the neighborhood as a boy, prompting his interest in its revitalization. Support from Lewis, CWRU, and other partners led to the design charrette with Gehry and Olin in 2004.

Today, Uptown District is situated nearly in the center of University Circle. The Greater University Circle area, including abutting neighborhoods, provides roughly 60,000 full-time jobs, and nearly 2.5 million people visit each year. The diversity of the institutions in this section of Cleveland may be the best asset of University Circle and Uptown. University Hospitals is immediately east of the district, with Cleveland Clinic less than a mile away. These two health care institutions are two of the largest employers in Cuyahoga County.

Meanwhile, the dense concentration of art and cultural institutions frame the area's cultural viability, and the purchasing power of employers has been leveraged to increase local spending policies. For example, in 2009, the Cleveland Foundation launched Evergreen, a group of cooperatives that are owned by and employ previously unemployed or underemployed individuals from Uptown's contiguous, economically challenged neighborhoods. The Evergreen Cooperatives provides commercial laundry services to hospitals and nursing homes, fresh produce to local institutions and businesses (including dining halls at CWRU), and solar panel installation to institutions.

## PROJECT HISTORY AND LEADERSHIP

### *Mission and Vision*

In collaboration with other University Circle institutions and the City of Cleveland, CWRU sought to develop a shared vision to revitalize the area of Euclid Avenue stretching from Ford Drive to East 118th Street. The 2005 call for qualifications and proposals, issued by CWRU, broadcast the opportunity for a university arts and retail district, later branded simply as "Uptown," as follows:

Develop this district into a dense and vibrant mixed-use urban center, which will attract and serve a diverse population of individuals from a very wide service area including residents of adjacent neighborhoods, students, staff, and faculty of CWRU, University Hospitals of Cleveland, the Cleveland Clinic, the Cleveland Institute of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and all other surrounding institutions and neighborhoods in the Northeast Ohio region.

### *History and Evolution*

While Uptown District is rooted deep in the history of Doan's Corners going back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this contemporary incarnation is better benchmarked against the origins and evolution of what is now called University Circle Inc.

In 1956, the then 34 institutions that occupied University Circle cooperated with civic leader Elizabeth Ring Mather, who provided funding for Adams, Howard and Greeley out of Boston to prepare a master plan for the area. The intent was to guide the evolution of what was already an impressive array of educational, art, cultural, and health care institutions in the district. One of the key recommendations of that planning effort was the creation of what became the University Circle Development Foundation (UCDF). UCDF evolved into an organization supporting collaboration among over 30 organizations including the best of Cleveland's cultural, medical, and

educational institutions. By 1970, UCDF became University Circle Inc. (UCI), with an increased focus on shared services among members and supporting a clean, safe, and friendly University Circle environment with increased advocacy for its surrounding neighborhoods. This successful collaboration strengthened UCI with still more institutions joining the organization and prospering through the pursuit of shared agendas. By 1990, the 1957 master plan was updated with a still stronger focus on neighborhood partnerships and promoting mixed-use development. UCI's website refers to this and further actions by its board as moving from "care taking" to being a "catalyst for development."

In many ways, Uptown District is a chapter in a long history of anchor institution cooperation in Cleveland. Other chapters include the UCI five-year action plan instituted in 2007 and running in parallel with the development of Uptown, as well as the publication of *Cleveland's Greater University Circle Initiative: Building on a 21st Century City through the Power of Anchor Institution Collaboration* in 2013. This latest effort is billed as a partnership between philanthropy and anchor institutions and the public sector and was funded by the Cleveland Foundation.

## LEADERS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Key institutional leadership came from Case Western Reserve University, MRN Ltd., and the Cleveland Foundation, all in concert with University Circle Inc., the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, the Cleveland Institute of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the City of Cleveland.

### *Case Western Reserve University*

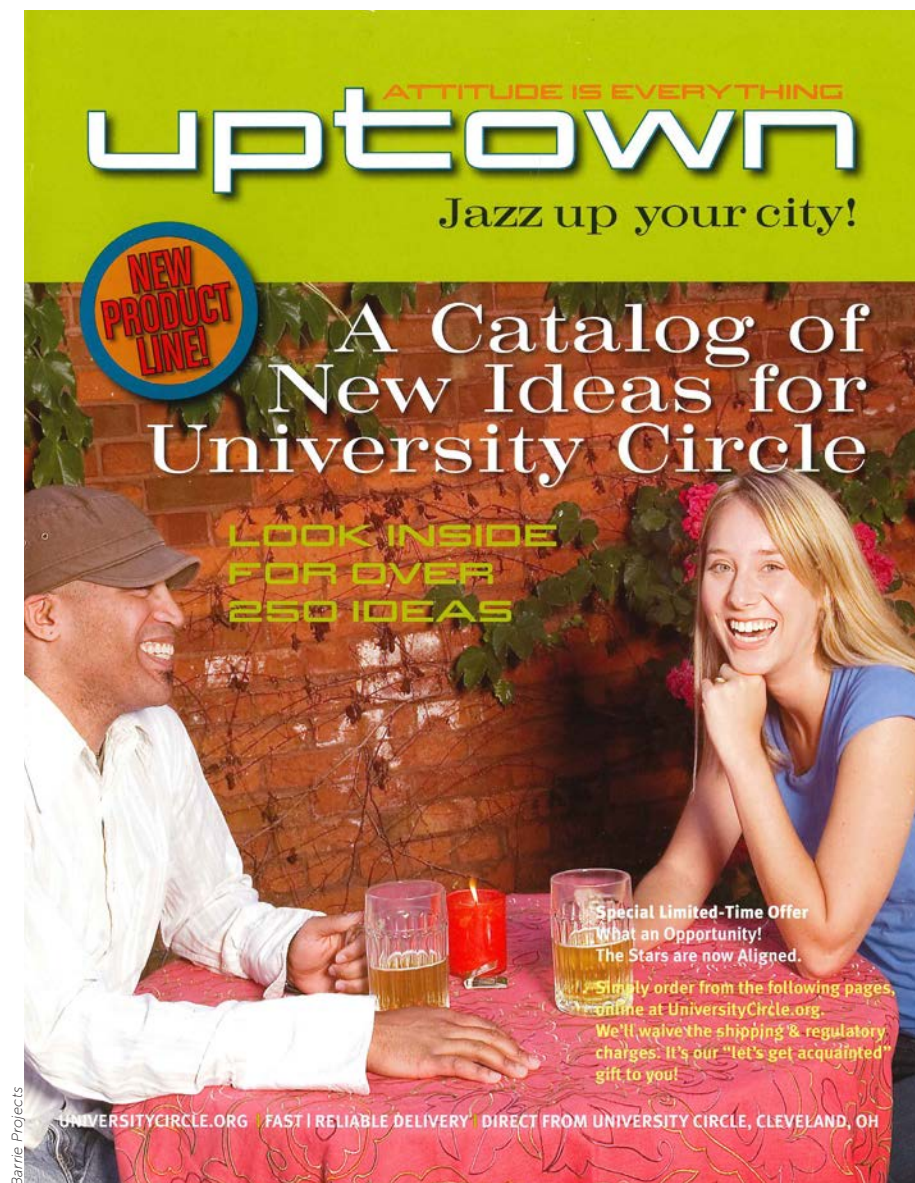
The university's leadership on this effort demonstrates the value of higher education institutions collaborating with public and private partners in a shared mission to bring energizing development to their communities. In 2004, President Edward Hundert (2002-2006) initiated a land bank to

help ensure the site control required to create a viable campus district and improve CWRU's competitive position in attracting students.

A key element of the university's plans to improve admissions and student life was the \$126.4 million Village at 115, apartment-style student housing surrounding the school's football field and track. Begun in 2003, the project represented the first new student housing in decades and initially was envisioned as the first of several phases of construction in the larger area known as North Residential Village. The modernization of student housing space made the largely drab area of Euclid Avenue just a couple of blocks south of the village look even less impressive—some even called the stretch a "desert." The university and a broad coalition of institutional leaders realized that a more comprehensive master plan would be necessary to encourage growth and revitalization of the area. Such coordinated development would also reinforce the quality of place CWRU and CIA—located nearby—use to attract and retain students and staff.

CWRU took its precedent from a similar action taken to develop the mixed-use area adjacent to the Yale campus in New Haven, Connecticut. President Hundert aspired to invest in a "campus town" like the one his alma mater had recently achieved. CWRU began to work with UCI president Chris Ronayne, former chief of staff and director of planning for the city, to find potential developers to build condominiums and student housing and bring viable retail into the area in one fell swoop.

An important part of the initial strategy for CWRU and UCI included land banking through the purchase of property for Uptown District. One such CWRU purchase required \$30 million for property commonly referred to as "the triangle" that is bounded by Mayfield Road, Euclid Avenue, and East 115th Street; this land was assessed at \$20 to \$23 million. With the investment in the Village at 115 complete, one of the board's highest priorities was to help address the "desert" on Euclid. CWRU later invested an additional



The Attitude is Everything UPTOWN catalog presented hundreds of possibilities for Uptown.

\$2 million by purchasing a site necessary for the second phase of Uptown District. This site, bounded by Euclid Avenue, Ford Road, and East 115th Street, held a large parcel previously owned by CWRU that had been sold for \$1, removing what was then seen as a worthless asset as well as a liability to the campus. The repurchase, along with the purchase of land above assessed value, were both ways CWRU helped to underwrite the project, much like the program-related investments by the Cleveland Foundation.

For the next stage of the project development, the university worked with stakeholders and brought in Alex Krieger of Chan Krieger & Associates (now NBBJ) to develop an urban design study. Krieger's team was charged with looking at the fabric and usage of the area on the perimeter of the campus from the perspective of the neighborhood residents. The study ultimately provided a fresh look at the area, generating urban design guidelines that informed the massing of the district, its open space plan, and the pedestrian links that permeate the district.

The aspiration for an uptown education, arts, and retail district gained additional support with the publication of *Attitude is Everything UPTOWN: A Catalog of New Ideas for University Circle*, which referenced the Krieger study but cautiously avoided prescriptions in favor of cataloging over 250 ideas. It is interesting to note that the glossy 32-page document does not contain a single map or drawing illustrating development proposals. Instead, it presents a "shoppers catalog" of images from Cleveland and elsewhere and descriptive text that offers a variety of examples of vibrant urban places and activities to help people imagine what Uptown could be. Published through UCI, the catalog was the creation of Kathleen Barrie of Barrie Projects and was funded by Peter B. Lewis, the Gund Foundation, the 1525 Foundation (now the Kent H. Smith Charitable Trust), UCI, and University Hospitals in addition to CWRU. It was an innovative approach that sustained forward momentum without requiring what might be perceived as a commitment to any one way to accomplish the richness



identified in hundreds of precedents cataloged in the publication. Indeed, the visioning process fundamentally changed the tenor and the transparency of the project.

The next step in the development of Uptown District was the creation of an extensive request for qualifications and proposals (RFQ/RFP) from those who would seek to be lead developer for the parcels held by CWRU. The RFQ/RFP was issued in 2005 by CWRU and referenced much of the work leading up to it. In 2006, the award was made to MRN Ltd.

After President Hundert stepped down in 2006, CWRU started rethinking the Uptown District development strategy. The board and new President Barbara R. Snyder proceeded with the initial vision of redeveloping the so-called “desert” that was adjacent to the university.

Still, the project went through five difficult years before the initial ground-breaking in 2010. CWRU was experiencing some of its most difficult fiscal challenges in recent decades, culminating in a budget deficit of \$40 million by 2005-2006, due in part to Hundert’s land banking strategy. As project planning and implementation progressed, Snyder and the CWRU Board of Trustees were clear that they were too financially invested in the project to pull back, even in the face of the housing crisis that hit the country in 2006, the substantial banking failures of 2008, and the subsequent economic turmoil that affected every player in the project. Despite the risks, CWRU and its partners remained committed to a successful outcome for Uptown District.

#### *MRN Ltd.*

The university and its partners were clearly not the only ones at risk in the Uptown District adventure. The designated developer, MRN Ltd., is a family-owned, family-run business consisting of Rick Maron and his two sons, Ari and Jori. MRN is well known locally for its successful East 4th Street



*MRN's East Fourth Street development in downtown Cleveland.*

development, which became one of the most popular restaurant and bar destinations in downtown Cleveland. One of the primary roles of MRN was to secure financing. The post-2008 economic downturn made this even more complicated, requiring a lot of financial wrangling, multiple sources of loans, and the phasing of land purchases from CWRU.

John Wheeler, who was then the senior vice president for administration at CWRU, was the project manager who ultimately issued and managed the RFQ/RFP for the developer. While part of Wheeler's job was to minimize risk for the university, he was also the one who returned to his board with shifts in the project budget and scope caused by changes in finance strategy and related program modifications. MRN approached Chicago-based Mesirow Financial Holdings to help provide funding for what was then to be

a condominium rather than a rental apartment-based residential program. Mesirow eventually pulled out when the bottom started to fall out of the housing market in 2006.

It took well over a year, but MRN did acquire a new backer in local Cleveland condominium developer Nathan Zaremba, who also eventually pulled out when a drugstore tenant decided to not proceed—forcing MRN to create a rental strategy to finance the project. Fortunately, Wheeler had the benefit of a supportive CWRU board and president who understood the effects of the economy on the work ahead and persevered as the project changed. For example, the condominium project became apartments, a drug store (self-financed) became a grocery store, and a five-story project was reduced to a three- and five-story project in the same footprint. CWRU stepped up by entering master leases with the Barnes & Noble university bookstore and the grocery store. This step meant that the university would shoulder the financial risk and guarantee revenue for developer MRN. The project thus went forward, and both CWRU and MRN assumed still more risk as MRN carried on as sole developer.

MRN also had a strong commitment to both Uptown and Cleveland. The company had never done a project this large, and watching its financial backers drop out one by one followed by the continued reduction in the scope of the project was daunting. MRN never intended to develop and turn over the keys; the company took pride in operating its properties and saw a sustained commitment to success as the only option. The financial and programmatic contributions of the rest of the stakeholders encouraged risk taking and created the confidence and climate necessary for the project to proceed. Program-related investments by the Cleveland Foundation, City of Cleveland incentives and its ability to remove bureaucratic obstacles to development, commitments to transit by the RTA, and the Cleveland Foundation's ambitious Greater University Circle Initiative all demonstrated long-term commitment to Uptown District development and programming.

### *The Cleveland Foundation*

While the anchor institutions held fast, the commitment of the Cleveland Foundation involved over a decade of investments in virtually every aspect of Uptown District, including transit; planning for MOCA, CIA, and CWRU; investments in the stabilization of the surrounding neighborhoods; and more.

The Cleveland Foundation board describes seven priorities: one is the place-based Greater University Circle Initiative while the other six are all broadly programmatic, serving the whole city. These six priorities address neighborhoods, education, economic development, human services, arts and culture, and community-responsive grant making. After the arrival of CEO Ronald B. Richard in 2003, the foundation had almost \$2 billion in assets and began to aggressively move from funding grants responsively to actively cultivating and targeting investments. When Richard started this process in 2003, 90% of the foundation grants were responsive; by 2011, the foundation was doing 50% targeted grant making; and by the end of 2014, targeted grants rose to 70% of total expenditures. This has meant over \$10 million in targeted direct support for Uptown over the life of the project, including \$6 million in program-related investments to CWRU for Phases 1 and 2 and another \$1 million in a grant supporting planning and incentives for CIA consolidation. The MOCA move to Uptown District was supported by \$1.6 million and RTA relocation studies, and planning and support for UCI round out this strategic philanthropy at work in Uptown. Overall it is an impressive level of support that was critical to making Uptown District a reality.

But the numbers and program categories are only a part of the Cleveland Foundation story. Foundation staff and leadership worked with community-based organizations, city leadership, and anchor institutions as conveners and facilitators. The Cleveland Foundation is described by senior community leadership as the behind-the-scenes organizers of a well-managed party: You don't see them, it is not their party, but the party comes off seamlessly

because of all the background work. Ronald Richard is credited with telling a story about his wife working at the School for the Arts with 14 year olds and realizing that none of her students had been to the museum across the street even though admission was free. When asked why, she was told by the students, "It is not for us." She brought her fury home, and Richard began meeting with the people who could open the right doors. When those doors opened, it was the institutions that took the bow.

Richard and his team at the Cleveland Foundation have been elevating their game year after year since he arrived. For example, Lillian Kuri, program director for arts and urban design (formerly the foundation's program director for architecture, urban design, and sustainable development) works closely with other program staff responsible for neighborhoods, housing, youth, and economic development to achieve the full potential of Uptown District. This coordination extends to include investments related to Neighborhood Connections, a group that offers small grants in Greater University Circle neighboring communities. Neighborhood Connections has provided over 2,063 grants totaling \$7.14 million since 2011 and is creating stronger host communities as part of University Circle and Uptown. The Cleveland Foundation is credited as being the team that "brought everyone together" for Uptown District in an organic way.

### *The City of Cleveland*

It is clear that the City of Cleveland also understands the strength of collaboration, as evidenced by a boldly collaborative approach to economic development. The core of this may be found in Mayor Frank G. Jackson, who assumed office in January 2006 after serving on the Cleveland City Council from 1989-2006, including three years as council president. During Jackson's first campaign for mayor, he reportedly told his electorate that if he couldn't restore hope to the ailing city within 200 days of taking office, he would consider himself a failure. There is ample evidence that hope has been restored. Jackson is the first mayor to serve three terms

since Michael R. White, who was elected mayor in 1989, the same year a young Frank Jackson was elected to the city council for the first time. Matt Jackson (no relation to the mayor) of the Center for Local Economic Strategies in London, England, who visited Cleveland as part of a tour evaluating economic development in select US cities, refers to the city's approach as "the Cleveland Model," pointing to the rich collaboration between the Cleveland Foundation, the Ohio Employee Ownership Center, and the Evergreen Cooperatives.

The city's Department of Economic Development also offers programs for locally owned restaurants in Uptown District, including low-interest loans up to \$40,000 for their tenant fit-outs and a local community benefit agreement that requires hiring of minority and female subcontractors in the construction process, with 20% of the construction hours going to local workers and 4% of the 20% to low-income local workers.

The city government is also credited by the institutions with whom it collaborated for solving problems without a lot of political maneuvering. For example, the city relaxed parking requirements to leverage the transit-oriented development represented in the project. Perhaps more to the point, challenges encountered during design and construction, like fire and right-of-way restrictions in the axis from CIA to MOCA, were considered problems to be solved by the city, not immovable obstacles in the evolution of the project.

All parties involved described the project as replicable when the conditions are defined in the frame of shared investment risk and problem solving. The close collaboration between the Cleveland Foundation, CWRU, the City of Cleveland, UCI, and other organizations and institutions within University Circle is made manifest by quarterly meetings of chief executive officers and other top leaders of these organizations, who together keep their fingers on the pulse of their shared interests.



*The Full Consortium*

Much has already been said about the key leadership in developing Uptown District. In addition, UCI, the RTA, MOCA, and CIA were also able to support critical elements and leverage the work on Uptown to advance their institutional goals. The recognition of the interdependence of the partners makes everyone invested in each other’s success. The narrative of the development of the district is all about how important each piece is to the realization of the larger goals for the work—all of the educational, cultural, and health care institutions as well as city and nonprofit organizations. Public transit, for example, eases the need for driving and parking, offers easy access to Greater University Circle neighborhoods and downtown, improves the ability to market small retail, and attracts student populations to CWRU and CIA. CIA both feeds and is fed by MOCA in their art collaborations, and both CWRU and CIA students add to the retail demand and rental income in both Phase 1 and 2 of the Wall. Recognizing all this and more requires a democratic practice orchestrated by all the players. This is collaborative leadership.

**DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT**

Four key partners—Case Western Reserve University, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Cleveland Institute of Art, and University Circle Inc.—are described by Uptown District as central to the creation of Phase 1 and 2 buildings on either side of Euclid Avenue. They are indeed a key part of what has been achieved in the district. However, the run-up to and during the development of these buildings brings into focus many other projects and plans necessary for the emerging economic success and quality of life improvements in Uptown District and surrounding neighborhoods. The whole program offered by Uptown Phases 1 and 2 required complementary projects including two RTA stations, the Commodore Hotel renovation, the renovation of the CWRU Triangle Apartments, and creation of Toby’s Plaza to name just a few. Cultivation of all these moving parts required

**TABLE 1: UPTOWN DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

<i>Project</i>	<i>Program</i>
Phase 1	112,000 square feet total; 114 market-rate apartments
Phase 2	20,000 square feet of retail, 44 market-rate apartments, and 130 beds for CIA freshmen
Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA)	80,000-square-foot Gund building
Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland (MOCA)	34,000-square-foot art space
RTA Rapid Transit	Replacement of existing Cedar-University station with a bus-rail hub serving as the gateway to University Circle and new Little Italy and Buckeye-Woodhill rapid rail stations
Commodore Hotel Renovation	Renovation of a 1924 12-story hotel to accommodate 198 apartments above retail, including federally subsidized efficiencies and one- and two-bedroom units
CWRU Triangle Apartments Renovation	Renovation and ground-floor retail conversion
Toby’s Plaza and Uptown Alley	Public park and gathering space adjacent to MOCA

the patient and deft administration of strategic resources by the Cleveland Foundation, the continued support of the City of Cleveland, and the decades of work by UCI.

A look, for example, at the scope of the engagement by the Cleveland Foundation reveals both financial investments and relationships among anchor institutions and other partners. The story of a project's development is generally said to begin with a request for proposals, but the real story begins with the context within which the potential is created for such a request. Strategic explorations and incentives provided by the Cleveland Foundation over a 10-year period literally created the canvas on which Uptown District became a reality. While each of the collaborators in Uptown District could develop similar charts outlining their investments and developments in the area, none address the full range and diversity of the Cleveland Foundation's involvement.

All of the groundwork over a decade and the strategic thinking about the relationships among each of the elements helped to create the broad framework that then enabled the projects presented as the Uptown District.

The RFQ/RFPs issued by CWRU in 2005 called for a mixed-use and mixed-income approach that emphasized both physical and psychological walkability and accessibility as well as providing a framework for further development. Uptown District was envisioned as a hub for local college students in addition to a thriving mixed-income community that attracts local professionals. Connections to nearby neighborhoods and to downtown Cleveland were to be reinforced through improved transportation networks and the promotion of walkable and bike-friendly design. A development that catered to visitors and residents alike would help ensure long-term financial and cultural investment and subsequent ripple effects into the surrounding neighborhoods. Economic investment in Uptown was also seen as a way to serve local adjacent neighborhoods. The same vitality that is good for

the city would also make both CWRU and CIA more attractive to potential students and more competitive with their peers.

For Uptown District to succeed, it was essential to create a destination in the core of University Circle related to the CWRU and CIA campuses. There are numerous attractions in University Circle. Uptown provided a unique urban retail and entertainment destination to complement the cultural campus surrounding Wade Oval, a nearby public park. Time and again visitors, residents, students, and employees visited one retail, cultural, or service institution and then just went home. Uptown District is now home to multiple-attraction options where people can do many things on foot in one trip, transforming what were once parking lots and largely empty buildings into a continuous urban façade that structurally organizes the street, linking together places for shopping, dining, living, and working.

A second prerequisite to success, stressed especially by the Cleveland Foundation, UCI, and the City of Cleveland, was to address larger community needs and potential barriers to quality of life for all who reside in Greater University Circle. Uptown District and immediately adjacent areas provide market-rate and low-income housing opportunities, including the renovation of the Commodore Hotel into subsidized apartments, student housing, and private rental options with 20% of the units affordable to households earning up to 80% of median income. The collaborating institutions also funded early planning to integrate and prioritize intermodal bus and rapid transit stations near Uptown.

The Cleveland Foundation board of directors used a "slum and blight" test—an assessment of the physical condition and demography—in the adjoining neighborhoods as part of the argument to support its program-related investments in the Uptown District initiative, and this review of demographics, including new residents, increases in household income, and access to neighborhood services, still serves to measure their success.



*"The Wall" includes passageways that connect to pedestrian plazas and parking.*

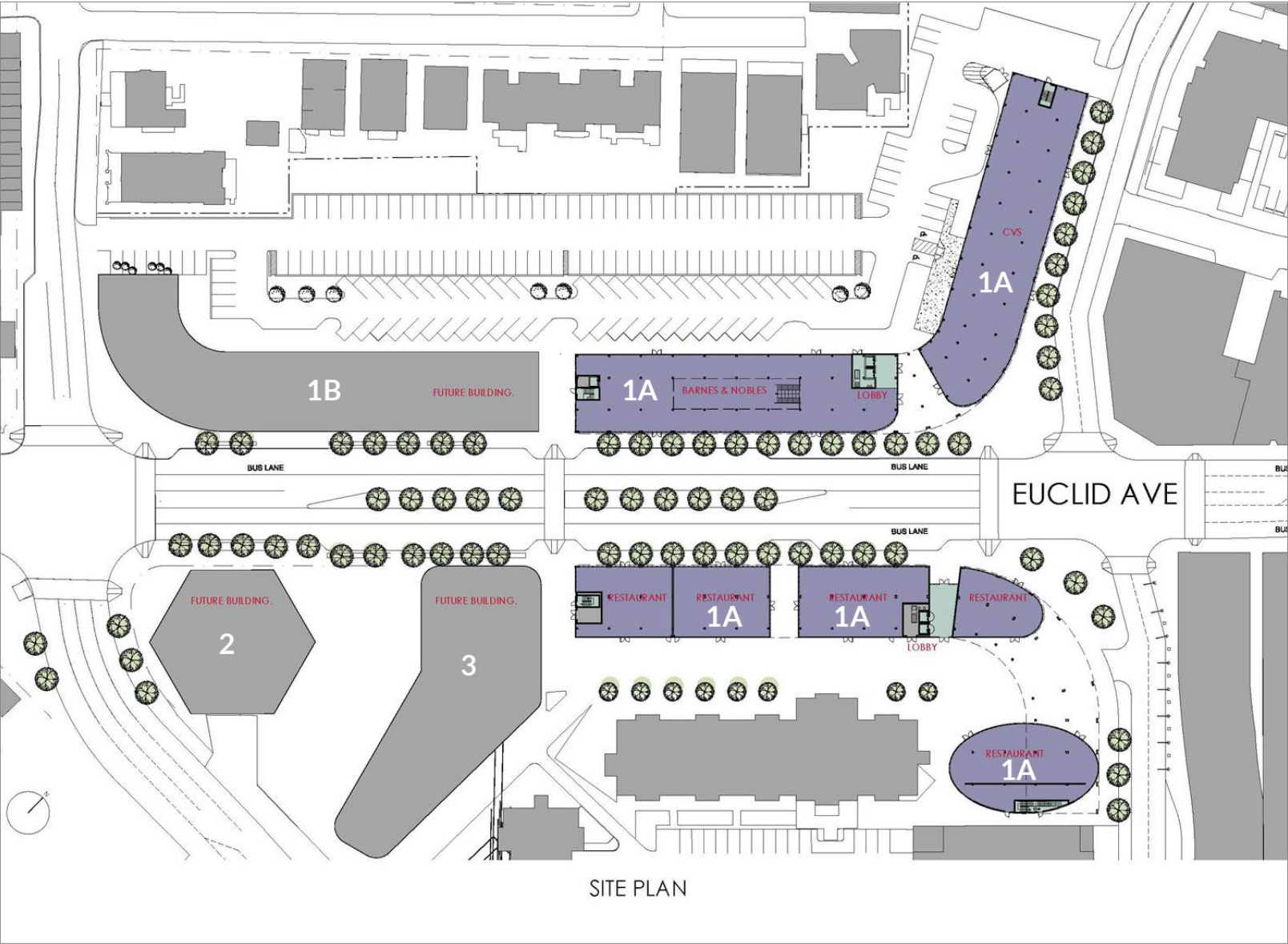
### *"The Wall" – Phases 1 and 2*

MRN recruited Stanley Saitowitz of San Francisco-based Natoma Architects, Inc. to design what became Phases 1 and 2 of the project on both sides of Euclid Avenue. Saitowitz's original concept included five-story buildings with a variety of different condo options. Then the housing market for condos collapsed, resulting in a variety of modifications to program, scale, and phasing. Phase 1 ultimately resulted in 112,000 square feet total, including 114 market-rate apartments. Phase 2 added 20,000 square feet of retail, 130 beds for CIA students, and 44 market-rate apartments.

The intent of the urban design and architecture of Phases 1 and 2 of Uptown District was not to be heroic, but rather to establish a context, or frame, for what became two signature building structures—MOCA to the south and CIA to the north across East 115th Street—as well as other developments and renovations of existing structures to follow. The urban design organizes the multiple structures in Uptown into a cohesive hub. The two main mixed-use buildings northeast and southwest of Euclid Avenue that Saitowitz calls the "Wall" are anchored by the MOCA building by Farshid Moussavi and the Cleveland Institute of Art consolidation by Anton Germishuizen of Stantec, which are connected by Toby's Plaza, designed by James Corner of Field Operations. The projects were planned and constructed within the same four-year period according to a common set of urban guidelines and a shared vision, but with different architects who were likely never in the same room during the design process.

Saitowitz reports what he likes best about this project as a whole is that it is "city making." The CIA entrance on axis with MOCA through the public realm designed by James Corner creates a mix of formal and informal public spaces. The work supplements an already prestigious architectural history in a larger urban fabric that includes buildings designed by Marcel Breuer, Rafael Viñoly, Norman Foster, and Frank Gehry.





An early conceptual site plan including "The Wall" phases 1 (1A) and 2 (1B), the future site of MOCA (2), and a proposed additional building (3).

The design changes in the Wall during the project resulted in scale reductions that downsized a consistent five-story structure into a mix of five and three stories. While the reductions were forced by economic considerations after 2008, the smaller-scale fabric reduces the massiveness of the Wall and improves its relationship to the two-and-one-half-story residential fabric of the surrounding neighborhoods. The Wall itself is formed by two sweeping curves with a pattern of tall vertical and long horizontal fenestration. Two-story portal openings at the ground level connect sidewalks on the street to pedestrian access to the neighborhood sides of the buildings and to sweeping pedestrian plazas.

The buildings are clad in extruded aluminum with ridges alternatively oriented vertically and horizontally, producing differentiated shade effects. Saitowitz believes that the clean and simple lines of the buildings give a nod to the industrial heritage of Cleveland, and the urban street wall and mixed-use program combine to “bring downtown to uptown.” The glass bases of the buildings express their retail function, with the aluminum and rectangular windows signifying the residential life above the storefront. Saitowitz likens the Wall lining Euclid Avenue to George Haussmann’s renovation of Paris. However, rather than being monolithic façades like the 1927 completion of Paris’s Boulevard Haussmann, the building materials here separate the uses vertically, recalling other more modernist developments where the bases are a transparent wall of glass set back slightly from the upper floors. This gives the appearance that the buildings are floating above the pedestrian plaza.

Construction costs were an important factor to CWRU and the project pro forma. The one-bedroom apartments within the Wall are a modest 550 square feet. As a result of the economic crisis, the buildings and units were scaled down and built for approximately \$150 per square foot. At the completion of the first phase, there was already a waiting list, and residents were eager to get into the building. The rental prices were targeted at \$2



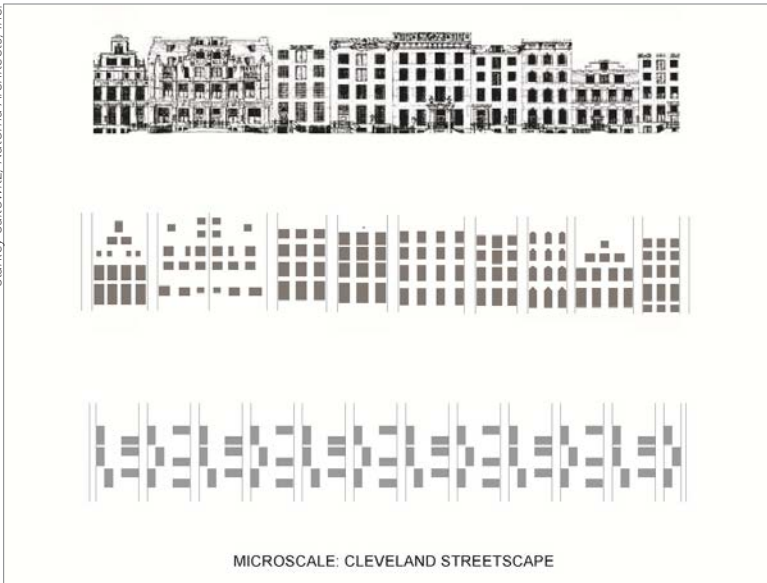
*The design approach to “The Wall” (top) was inspired by traditional street facades in Cleveland and Europe.*

Stanley Saitowitz

Rien Van Rijnthoven



Stanley Saitowitz, Natoma Architects, Inc.



The design of the buildings (top) gives a nod to Cleveland's industrial heritage and traditional urban architecture.

per square foot (\$1,100 per month). MRN and the city saw this project as a breakthrough for market-rate housing because the price point was sufficient to secure financing without the need for subsidy. The fact that the units responded to new market interest in relatively small apartments helped avoid subsidized financing. The modules were also conducive to the creation of student housing, providing 130 beds for first-year CIA students.

The CIA student housing is part of the Phase 2 building which also includes apartments as small as 550 square feet and as large as about 2,400 square feet (two large apartments combined by the tenant). Twenty percent of the apartments are affordable housing for those with household incomes up to 80% of the median income. Many of the market-rate apartments are occupied by doctors, staff, and students working at or in educational programs at University Circle hospitals and universities.

While not in Phase 1 or 2 of Uptown, two significant renovations elsewhere in the district were completed as Phase 2 was underway: the 198 apartments and ground-floor retail in the former 1924 Commodore Hotel underwent a \$9 million renovation, and the CWRU "Triangle Apartments"—largely occupied by graduate students—were renovated and augmented with ground-floor retail.



Commodore Place Apartments (left) and Triangle Apartments.





Market-rate apartments (top) and student housing feature contemporary interiors.

The interiors of the Wall buildings are flush with natural light and fitted with clean, contemporary interior design. The double-loaded corridor housing plumbing, heating, and air conditioning services makes flexibility in the interior spaces possible as walls perpendicular to the corridor can be added or removed, enabling a variety of apartment configurations. Portions of the corridor are open to the façade and strategically placed as common living areas that also bring natural light into the corridor. The fluidity of the design is enhanced by the use of sliding doors that, when opened, do not occupy doorway space. The residents of both the dorms and apartments spoke very positively about the quality of their places.

#### *Museum of Contemporary Art: “The Gem”*

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) has had three homes in its almost 50-year history, all in University Circle: a former Euclid Avenue dry cleaner, an old fraternity house at CWRU, and an old Sears department store in the shadow of the Cleveland Clinic. While MOCA leadership had pursued relocation opportunities in University Circle for several years, the genesis of its current home started to emerge in 2005 when the stakeholders in Uptown began to imagine that it would become an arts, education, and retail entertainment district that was, in the words of the *Uptown Ideas Catalog*, “part college town, part urban neighborhood, and a cultural and arts campus.” MOCA leaders were highly engaged throughout the process that resulted in Uptown District.

Cleveland’s \$27.2 million, 34,000-square-foot MOCA is the first United States work for London architect Farshid Moussavi. While the project was described in the CWRU RFQ/RFP, the design was commissioned by MOCA and coordinated with Phases 1 and 2 of the Wall as well as the CIA consolidation project. The MOCA building sits at the corner of Mayfield Road and Euclid Avenue. Jill Snyder, MOCA Cleveland executive director, said Moussavi first proposed that the MOCA building about the corner, allowing for an adjacent plaza to provide ample public space within the



*The Museum of Contemporary Art (top) and the Cleveland Institute of Art.*

district. This was a transformative move in shaping the district flow, and MOCA is what Steve Litt of Cleveland's *The Plain Dealer* referred to as an "architectural gem" in James Corner's landscape. The metaphor is apt as the multifaceted geometric building resembles a gem. The hexagonal base of the building is extruded and transforms as it rises to form a square roof finishing at a high point of 67.5 feet. According to Moussavi, however, the building is also contextual in that the black polished Rimex stainless steel façade offers a mirror that reflects its surroundings.

The interior spaces provide views of the Wall, Toby's Plaza, and the axis to the Cleveland Institute of Art through the "Uptown Alley" opening at East 116th Street. The ground floor is free to the public and serves as an "urban living room" for more than 100 public programs each year. MOCA draws more than 40,000 visits annually, generating economic impact in the district through parking, dining, and retail transactions. The main entrance opens to the plaza, not to the corner or street as might be expected in more conventional urban structures. Some argue that MOCA turns its back to the fabric of Uptown District while others enjoy the intimacy of the main plaza entrance and its connection to outdoor programming and the Uptown Alley.

#### *Cleveland Institute of Art*

Located on axis to MOCA, the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA) is an independent college of art and design located within the Uptown District. Although not part of the Case Western RFQ/RFP, it is fully integrated within the overall urban design of the area. With the encouragement of its tenth president Grafton Nunes, CIA used the opportunity created by Uptown development to complete a \$75 million expansion of its campus that helps anchor Uptown District. CIA retained Stantec in Philadelphia to design an 80,000-square-foot addition to its Joseph McCullough Center for the Visual Arts and remodel the original building that was the site of the historic Cleveland Ford plant. The addition, named for philanthropist

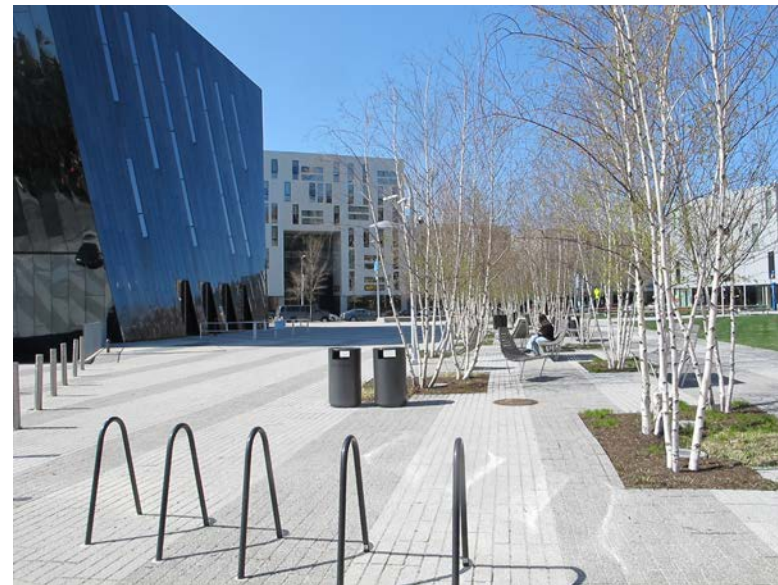
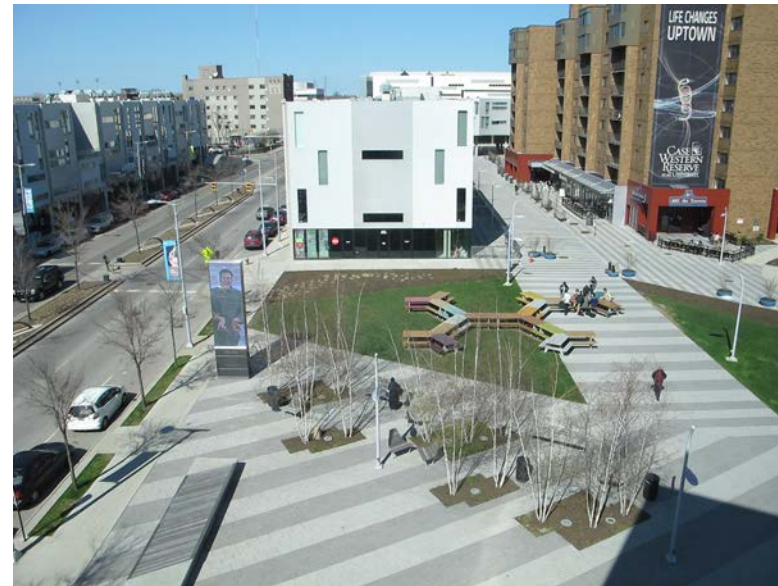
George Gund, contains lecture halls and the Peter B. Lewis Theatre—home to the Cleveland Cinematique, an alternative film theater showing art, independent, and foreign films. A large glass atrium provides a light and airy counterpoint to the former factory. The addition allowed CIA to consolidate its campus and vacate its East Boulevard building, which was jointly purchased by CWRU and the Cleveland Museum of Art.

CIA also collaborated with MRN to develop a rental agreement that provides student housing within the Wall, further assimilating the campus in the Uptown development and helping to attract and retain students.

### *Landscape as Connection*

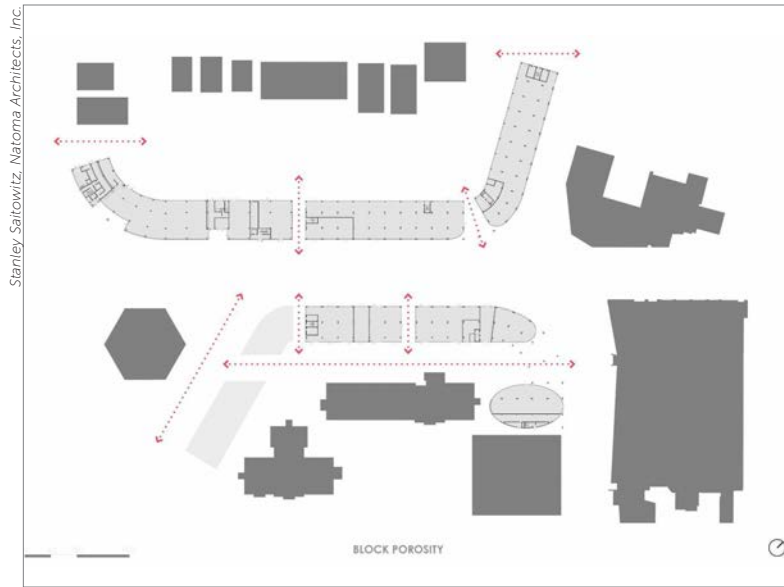
James Corner of Field Operations was chosen to design the public plaza in the triangle that houses MOCA. The design was based on the two cultural institutions, MOCA and CIA, serving as anchors and incorporating the two sweeping Saitowitz-designed buildings as gateways that expose the East 115th Street intersection as a destination. Included in the design for each anchor institution are public areas that connect the whole intersection as a pedestrian area.

The texture of the pathways and pedestrian plazas evokes the same relationships as Saitowitz's design for the Wall buildings; the striation and verticality of the Wall is projected into the streetscape design. The landscape is also used to draw attention to certain major focal points in the Uptown District development. For example, the main entrance to the Phase 2 building at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Ford Drive, across from Toby's Plaza and MOCA, features striations that seem to emanate out from the glass and aluminum façade. This also highlights the 22,000-square-foot Corner Alley, a bowling alley that serves as one of the major anchor points of the project on the corner of Ford Drive and Mayfield Road. In short, Field Operations used the architecture as a foil when designing the pedestrian plazas.



*Toby's Plaza connects MOCA with adjoining buildings.*





Mid-block connections and pedestrian passageways, like Uptown Alley (bottom), link new development to the community.

### Transit

In keeping with the thread of connection that pervades the design of Uptown, another partner in the development of Uptown District was the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA). The RTA's HealthLine bus rapid transit system was developed concurrent to the Uptown project and was brought online in 2008, just in time for the economic collapse. It was a bold initiative, connecting downtown Cleveland through University Circle to East Cleveland. The HealthLine was controversial partly because of the cost and partly because of the segregated nature of Cleveland. Despite the financial troubles, the city and RTA recognized that the area could become a crucial link to downtown. It has since been recognized as one of the best examples of bus rapid transit in the world and has spurred over \$6 billion of investment along the corridor. The new stations connect Uptown District down Euclid Avenue to Public Square, another area slated to be redeveloped by Uptown's landscape architect, James Corner.

In addition, the RTA renovated the old Cedar-University Rapid Station and opened the new Little Italy-University Circle Rapid Station to create new gateways to University Circle and surrounding neighborhoods. The Cedar-University station was designed by Mehrdad Yazdani of Cannon Design's Los Angeles office, working with the URS Corporation (now AECOM). The Little Italy-University Circle station was designed by City Architecture of Cleveland. Part of these updates were encouraged through support from



HealthLine Bus Rapid Transit shelter (left), Little Italy-University Circle station.

the Cleveland Foundation, CWRU, University Hospitals, and the Cleveland Clinic, which each contributed \$250,000. The vast majority of station construction was funded through grants from the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency as well as Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) II and III grants from the US Department of Transportation and other federal earmarks from the federal legislative delegation in Ohio. TIGER grant programs are an explicit recognition that transportation systems are an integral part of economic recovery. The rest of the required funding was contributed by the RTA itself.

Again we see a remarkable range of participants, each with a real stake in the project, working together to assure a state-of-the-art transit hub as part of this transit-oriented neighborhood development. Stakeholder parking demands were reduced by public transit options, RTA's transit ridership went up, and distinctive transit connections for University Circle were established in the process. Stanley Saitowitz describes Yazdani's design for the RTA Hub as a gateway to University Circle, Cleveland Heights, and Cleveland itself, much like the philosophy that shaped the design of Uptown District.

### *Uptown Cleveland as a Whole*

The overall design of Uptown District mimics the organizational framework that brought the project to life in the first place. The built environment is representative of the teamwork and connection among organizations needed to get the project off the ground and the contemporaneous development of the major anchor institutions of the area. The project manifests connectivity and teamwork in the built environment through the clarity of client intent read and interpreted by individually contracted designers. This connectivity also refers to the array of public discussions and boardroom debates that made up so much of the whole effort to create Uptown. The open public process in the ideas publication produced by CWRU was grass roots (send us your ideas and best place examples),



*The Corner Alley (top) anchors the intersection of Euclid Avenue (bottom), Ford Drive, and Mayfield Road.*



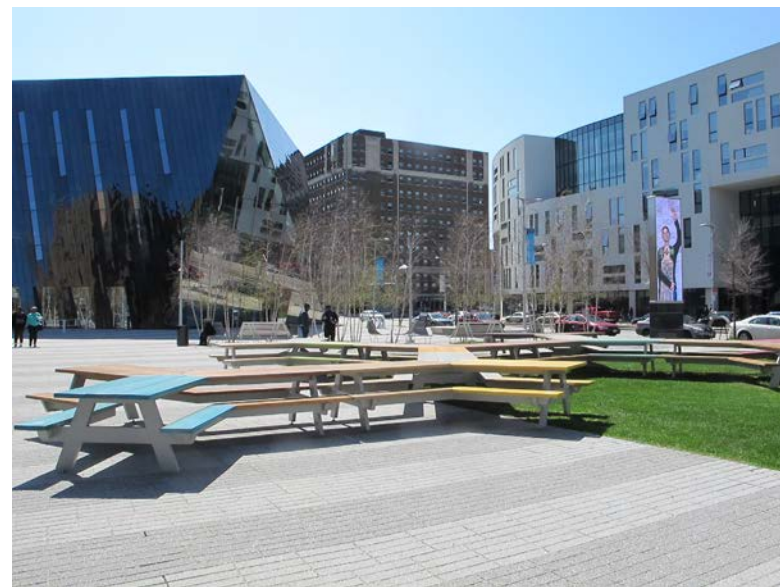
and this, combined with the representative democracy that surrounded all the participants in the Greater University Circle Initiative and the top-down discussions at the board level, informed the entire decision-making process in Uptown's development. No one institution appeared to metaphorically win at the expense of another, and there were enough players involved that checks and balances were in place.

### ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

In order to engage people in Uptown District and the greater University Circle area, the stakeholders recognized the need for on-site community programming. A prime example is UCI's "Wade Oval Wednesdays," which take advantage of the warm summer months by hosting weekly outdoor concerts in the largest open green space in University Circle between the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, and Cleveland Botanical Garden—a five-minute walk from Uptown. Uptown District also uses Toby's Plaza, with its sculptural picnic benches developed in an art competition as well as the "Faces of Uptown" image projections, to host concerts and programs sponsored by CWRU, UCI, and MOCA. Other events have been held on the relatively new public plaza including bicycle demonstrations, retail promotions, and MOCA programs, including free entry to the museum on the first Saturday of each month.

The relationship between CIA and MOCA is programmatic and spatial. MOCA is clearly an asset to CIA students as a site for the presentation of contemporary art. Students learn from MOCA programs and MOCA is physically identified with excellence in art education. The axis between the institutions is a site of mingling among patrons of the museum and students at CIA.

Community members and nonprofit and philanthropic organizations also realized that Uptown District lacked attractive, affordable housing as well



Public art includes "Faces of Uptown" (top) and picnic benches in Toby's Plaza.



as neighborhood services, retail, viable social services, and entertainment. They worked collaboratively to recruit and support diverse residents and commercial tenants to Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods through entities like UCI; Neighborhood Progress, Inc., a local community development funding intermediary; and Neighborhood Connections, a nonprofit that works to strengthen and empower neighborhoods through direct engagement with residents.

While much has already been said of the Cleveland Foundation, it is useful to note that it spun off Neighborhood Connections as a separate nonprofit organization that remains largely supported by the foundation. Neighborhood Connections' mission is to enable neighborhood restoration at the scale of individual homes and community facilities and activities. The primary focus areas are the neighborhoods surrounding Uptown District, although in time they anticipate being able to expand into other areas.

In the network of large institutions that make up Uptown District, the main emphasis is still regional connectivity and the encouragement of local businesses. However, there is a significant presence of chain stores like Panera, Barnes & Noble, Jimmy Johns, and others. These institutional chains are described as providing stability while the project and Cleveland itself gain traction. In addition to these chain stores, there are still the local touches that make Uptown District unique to Cleveland, including local bars and restaurants, boutiques, a locally operated grocery store, and the Corner Alley bowling alley at Euclid Avenue and Ford Road.

Another mainstay of the district is the Happy Dog at the Euclid Tavern at East 116th Street and Euclid Avenue. The Euclid Tavern was established in 1908 and became an eccentric but venerable rock club that over time came to represent the vitality and diversity of a district as varied as the acts that played there. The tavern closed in 2013 when the struggling business was bought out by University Circle Inc. to preserve and update the site.



Locally owned businesses include the Corner Alley (top) and Mitchell's Ice Cream (right).

The reopening of the Euclid Tavern as the Happy Dog is symbolic of the concern for history, local interest, and rebirth of the area. The owners of Happy Dog redeveloped the Euclid Tavern with very little alteration to the overall atmosphere of the original space. The faithful reproduction of the

Euclid Tavern is in sharp contrast to the modern architecture of the Wall and MOCA's "gem," but it is consistent with the renovation of the former Ford plant to accommodate CIA's expansion and the renovation of the Commodore Hotel into modest apartments.

## FINANCING

There was much groundwork that needed to be laid to actually create Uptown. The Cleveland Foundation is a common thread in the history of the collaboration among the institutions involved in financing the project. The sources and uses of all seven projects are beyond the scope of this report, but the full expenditures on these projects totaled more than \$200 million as of 2015.

**TABLE 2: CLEVELAND FOUNDATION GRANTS AND INVESTMENTS RELATED TO UPTOWN DEVELOPMENT**

Grant to MOCA for relocation to Uptown	\$1,600,000
Grant to CIA for consolidation in Uptown	\$1,000,000
Planning grant to Maximum Accessible Housing Ohio	\$150,000
Grant to UCI for joint parking feasibility study	\$50,000
Grant to UCI to promote Living in the Circle forgivable loan program for home buyers, strategic investments, a visitor's center, and a safety study	\$150,000
Grant to RTA for planning Mayfield Road Station	\$120,000
Grant to CWRU for predevelopment, streetscape, and public amenities for Uptown	\$1,000,000
Program Related Investment Phase 1 (the Wall)	\$4,000,000
CWRU planning grant for Phase 2 (the Wall)	\$160,000
Program Related Investment Phase 2 (the Wall)	\$2,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,230,000</b>

The details on groundwork by the Cleveland Foundation as well as the actual sources and uses of Uptown Phase 1 are provided in Tables 2 and 3 to show the level of engagement by the Cleveland Foundation and the relative complexity of the financing for the initial phase of the project. Phase 1 northeast of Euclid Avenue involved 112,000 square feet total and included 114 market-rate apartments and 60,000 square feet of retail.

After the economic downturn that began in 2006 and the subsequent cautiousness of banks regarding direct bank funding, the developers of Uptown District had to find creative solutions to finance the project. The partnership between UCI, the Cleveland Foundation, local government, and MRN was what made this project possible. These four major organizations worked together to develop a complex network of low-interest loans that would be used to qualify the project for New Market Tax Credits (NMTC), an innovative federal financing program established in 2000 as a vehicle to bring private capital investment to low-income communities. Other funding resulted from direct grants to the project in combination with low-interest, program-related investments. One of the keys to successful completion of Uptown was constructing it in two phases, the first to show the viability of the project and the second to complete it.

CWRU's commitment to hold the master leases for the university bookstore and grocery store helped convince banks such as First Merit and Key Bank that the project was viable in a fragile financial climate. It is the kind of patient financial investment that anchor institutions can make in anticipation of long-term returns. Many Quality Low-Income Community Investment loans (QLICI) were provided to enhance eligibility for tax credits. The project has to carry the debt for seven years to sustain its eligibility, after which the debt from places like the Cleveland Foundation can be forgiven, essentially making the loan a grant to the project. QLICI Loan A is unique, as it includes \$4 million from the Cleveland Foundation, \$2 million from the Gund Foundation, and \$750,000 from the Village Capital Corporation that

will not need to be paid back. Overall there are loans totaling approximately \$10.9 million that revert to grants after seven years, nearly a fourth of the total funding sources. The Cleveland Development Partnership II Loan came from the Community Reinvestment Act pool.

The City of Cleveland Department of Economic Development (CDED) also played a significant role in the funding of the Uptown project. The CDED directly contributed \$5 million from its Vacant Property Initiative, a forgivable loan program that encourages businesses to buy out and revitalize vacant areas in Cleveland. This loan provided a catalyst for further investment by banks, as the CDED was able to shoulder more risk during a financially sensitive time. This gave Uptown enough capital to establish better borrowing terms with local banks.

It is important to note that the City of Cleveland attached caveats to its money that required construction contractors to hire 20% of their labor



*Constantino's Market serves Uptown as the district's only grocery store.*

force from Cleveland residents, 4% of whom had to qualify as low-income earners. One of the primary goals of the Jackson administration is to ensure that local development projects create direct benefits for Cleveland residents. To achieve this goal, the city has been resolute in strengthening the interface between the Mayor's Office of Equal Opportunity, development departments, and the contracting community. The focus has been on living wage, resident employment, diversity, and inclusion. The City of Cleveland's enactment of the Cleveland Resident Employment Law in 2004 provides a strong base for this work. Cleveland had been encouraging a walkable, pedestrian-friendly development, and its financial commitment to this project in a time that was financially unstable was an investment that aimed to close the gap in local development during the economic downturn. This governmental investment was also an important symbol of the commitment to what the city believes is the future of Cleveland.

Phase 2 is the triangular site across from Phase 1 on Euclid Avenue. The \$26 million Phase 2 project provides 20,000 square feet of retail, 44 apartments, and room to accommodate 130 CIA students. It was also funded with a variety of low-interest loans, including many QLICI loans tied to the New Market Tax Credits. It was a significantly simpler deal to assemble given the demonstrated viability of Phase 1 and the less ambitious program of construction.

New Market Tax Credits A, B, and C came from Huntington Bank, the Cleveland Foundation, and developer equity. One of the most interesting funding mechanisms for Phase 2 was the \$5 million from the Cleveland International Fund, which is a collection of donations by international philanthropists for the purposes of investing in the United States in return for the ability to work in the country. This is representative of the unique collaborative and connective approach of the developers and nonprofits working on Uptown, only here projected into a financial domain.



TABLE 3: PHASE 1 DEVELOPMENT

<i>Sources</i>		<i>Soft Costs</i>	
First Merit Bank	\$8,400,000	Architectural/Engineering	\$1,110,027
Key Bank	\$9,000,000	Landscape/Streetscape Architect/Engineer	\$105,000
Qualified Low-Income Community Investment QLICI Loan A	\$6,750,000	Building Permits and Fees	\$166,296
QLICI Loan B	\$2,715,000	General Conditions	\$732,995
QLICI Loan C	\$160,000	Insurance	\$83,633
QLICI Loan D	\$2,250,000	Legal Fees	\$915,443
QLICI Loan E	\$3,601,450	Marketing	\$126,000
Cleveland Development Partnership II Loan	\$1,500,000	Soft Cost Contingency	\$832,996
City of Cleveland Vacant Property Initiative Loan	\$2,750,000	Survey	\$80,350
Deferred Earn Out to CWRU	\$4,250,000	Tax Credit Application Fees	\$41,650
Qualified Active Low-Income Community Business (QALICB) Members Equity Contribution	\$2,355,639	Brokerage Fees	\$980,325
Release of Funded Community Development Entity (CDE) Fees and Expenses Reserves	\$224,776	Pre-Construction Services	\$891,450
Release of Funding of Preferred Return Reserve to Leasing Company AJAPPJR V LLC	\$53,975	Other Loan Fees	\$530,986
Interest of Construction Escrow	\$6,457	Economic Impact Study	\$15,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$44,017,297</b>	Investor Closing Fee	\$15,000
<i>Uses</i>		Construction Period Interest	\$910,501
Land		Funding Preferred Return to AJAPPJR V LLC Reserve	\$76,200
Cash at Closing	\$1,825,000	CDE and Administration Fees Paid Quarterly	\$174,776
Deferred Earnings	\$4,250,000	Audit and Tax Paid Annually in December	\$50,000
Hard Costs	\$27,766,522	Payment of Preferred Return to AJAPPJR V LLC	\$53,975
		Funding of CDE Fees and Audit and Tax costs	\$1,058,550
		Less: Amount Funded from Operations	(\$300,600)
		Developer Fee	\$2,000,000
		Less: Deferred Portion	(\$1,147,702)
		Project Contingency	\$672,924
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$44,017,297</b>

The total scope of Uptown District development clearly exceeds MRN's \$70 million projected cost, totaling over \$200 million when including the \$75 million CIA expansion, the \$26 million MOCA building, and the \$32 million for site acquisition. Additional funds were expended on parking and RTA HealthLine and Cedar-University Rapid Transit infrastructure, fit-out for several tenants, the CWRU Triangle Apartments renovations, and the Commodore Place conversion of a hotel into 198 mixed-income housing units. As intended, the whole of Uptown District is continuing to see new investment and development.

## IMPACT

Key ideas and themes drawn from Cleveland's Uptown District development will evolve for decades to come. However, first and last among them is the process of inter-institutional collaboration that invites shared risk and shared return, which has already produced a far greater return for all involved than had the institutions acted alone. Success is a catalyst for future development, and credit for success widely shared energizes all participants.

In any city, transit is too big a political and economic entity to be pushed by only one constituency. In the collaborative construction of Uptown District, it was pushed by an army of constituents. And, once tested for strength, relationships among the constituents got stronger, trust increased, and more got done. So while it may be counterintuitive, more and diverse partners have proven in Uptown to be better able to act than any one on its own.

Planners and designers often see diverse partners and multiple stakeholders as the enemy of clear vision, but in Uptown, many strong professionals played with a loosely but strategically developed playbook to deliver a new, distinctively modern yet non-heroic urban fabric and architecture. The net

result is a strong urban design with solid new landmarks, a well-defined yet permeable district, significant transportation nodes, and a walkable mixed-use neighborhood.

## *Success Is a Catalyst*

Uptown District has helped to create and, indeed, foster demand for a mixed-use rental market where for the past half century none existed. The residential units in Phase 1 were 70% leased within a month of their opening, and the Phase 2 units were 100% leased when that building opened. Other developers are planning another mixed-use apartment, retail, and office building named Intesa which will be built on nearby land owned by UCI. The project will add more than 250 additional apartments in University Circle. Still other developers plan to begin construction this year on One University Circle, a new 20-story apartment building where the Children's Museum of Cleveland once stood, on land also owned by UCI.



*Uptown District has created and fostered demand for a mixed-used rental market.*

### *Transit Is a Catalyst*

Uptown has been transformed into a more diverse, walkable, and transit-oriented urban setting. The new RTA HealthLine and RTA stations allow travel between Uptown District and downtown, and the success of this line has already contributed to further transit-oriented development.

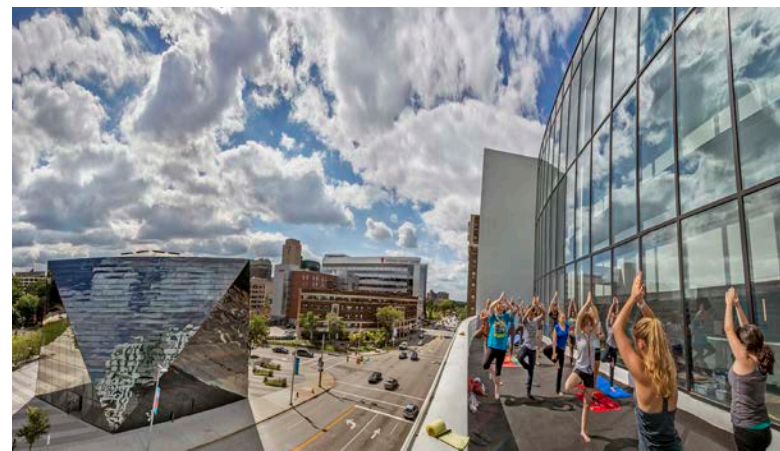
The RTA reports that since its start, the new rapid transit stations have increased ridership at a steady rate year after year. The Red Line RTA service has 19 miles of rail servicing downtown through University Circle and beyond and services 6.2 million riders per year.

### *Strong Relationships Get Stronger with Practice*

Not only are there examples of impact on the built environment in the development of Uptown District, but there is also ample evidence of improved public-private partnerships and institutional collaboration in University Circle. The strength of the relationships between the main stakeholders CWRU, CIA, MOCA, the City of Cleveland, UCI, and MRN with the Cleveland Foundation and other philanthropies helped the group weather the development challenges along the way. The economic and housing crisis forced the stakeholders to “press the reset button” on their financing plans and eventually revise most of the final building design. The diversity of the stakeholders and the creativity and flexibility they showed in financing, building, and marketing Uptown is a testament to the future success of University Circle and a great example for communities across the country. This project shows that with the right partners and creative thinkers, positive change is replicable in places where it might not have been decades ago. As part of the Cleveland Foundation’s ongoing Greater University Circle Initiative, the president of the Cleveland Foundation, the president of CWRU, city leaders including the mayor, and other University Circle partners meet quarterly on issues of shared interest.



Robert Muller



Scott Pease

Programming includes outdoor concerts and yoga.



### *It's Not a College Town; It's a Place for Clevelanders that Includes the College Community*

While the university presence is unmistakable, all of the institutions invested in the project utilize the space for activities and programming. What sets this college town apart, however, is that it is not a college town—it is a place for all Clevelanders to congregate.

Programming in and just outside of the projects in Uptown District include concerts, street festivals, university celebrations, art exhibitions, walking tours, a program of free first Saturdays in MOCA, special discount nights for medical staff from University Hospitals, picnics, CIA public art installations, and more. The diversity of institutions that deliver programs and the diverse range of new residents assure a multi-generational experience. These programs are curated by staff at CWRU, CIA, MOCA, UCI, and many other University Circle partners. By all accounts the district has gone from “no traffic” to “no place to park” through the rich mix of uses in Uptown and the wide array of programming.

### *Gentrification Is an Issue*

Part of the promise of Uptown District is that as economic inclusion programs on workforce development and employment, safety and security, small grant home repairs, K-12 education, and human services for adjacent neighborhoods mature, the diversity of the area will be further enriched and sustainable. More work on the policy side of gentrification will be required to realize this promise.

It is too soon to tell if the demographics surrounding Uptown are changing. Some are optimistic about a shift to a better mix of affluence with existing residents, and others are afraid that gentrification is exactly what will happen. Much of the work of Neighborhood Connections seeks to seed neighborhood development and improvements in the largely African American communities that are part of the neighborhoods abut-

ting Uptown District and University Circle, and to the extent that affordable housing within Uptown is seen as helping, that may also address concerns about possible gentrification. Phases 1 and 2 have 20% affordable units, the Commodore Hotel was restored into subsidized affordable housing, and greater access to transportation is a significant help for overall area affordability.

Neighborhood Connections is also host to an innovative “Neighbor Up” network to improve community health, build neighborhood wealth, and create meaningful places. For example, teams of residents and healthcare professionals work on reducing infant mortality and lead poisoning rates in the Greater University Circle. They also encourage local spending as a vehicle for wealth creation. Participating neighbors in greater Buckeye and Glenville work on construction projects, and all six neighborhoods in the Greater University Circle area participate in a “City Repair Night,” where best practices on community and public spaces are shared and collectively enabled. So far nearly 1,500 neighborhood residents have participated in the Neighbor Up network since its inception in 2012. Their regular meetings in Uptown are networking at its best.

The relatively small size of the development to date makes it difficult to assess if the project is attracting people from other parts of the city to live, work, or even shop there. However a number of market-rate apartments and below-market-rate apartments are occupied by people who did not previously live uptown. Projections of additional development are planned and some are under design. Still others are under construction or have already cut the ribbon. MOCA reports its highest visitation rates ever since opening and claims success in an ambitious capital campaign. CWRU reports it is receiving three times the number of applicants since 2007, and officials believe the interest is partly related to the quality of the context Uptown District creates for the university.

The City of Cleveland approaches concerns about gentrification and displacement with multiple programs related to affordable housing, transit, and work force development, including a Community Benefit Agreement that ties development incentives to employment. The latter was unveiled in 2013 after two years of hard work and collaboration between the city and business, civic, labor, and trade organizations including the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, and several agencies representing minority contractors and union workers. Each pledged to set goals for hiring local and minority skilled workers for future construction projects throughout the region and to support training programs that feed the pipeline to the industry's workforce.

Uptown District partners also work to keep a diverse population through programs like the Evergreen Cooperatives, worker-owned cooperatives that employ previously unemployed or underemployed residents from economically challenged neighborhoods nearby. Neighborhood Connections is an example of a nonprofit organization that works to combat gentrification with small grants at the individual homeowner or neighborhood scale.

There are no policies tied to rising property values that assure displacement will not occur. However, while the market seeks incentives to develop, the city is working to ensure a percentage of affordable units will be provided.

### *Good Design Matters*

The philosophical thread that connects the physical structures in Uptown is evidence that good design matters. Each building has its unique conceptual characteristics that define its place in Uptown. The retail base of the buildings on both sides of Euclid Avenue encourage both pedestrian and residential use; MOCA is the focal point; and CIA, CWRU, and University Hospitals are situated on four distinct corners of the project, providing anchor points for the area both physically and socially connected to the core.

### *Sustainability Matters*

Now that Uptown District is more complete, the only step left is seeing how it holds up in the future. As of early 2015, Uptown could be regarded as a success, as it has aided all of the institutions that were directly or tangentially involved. Uptown has helped make CWRU more attractive to applicants, whose numbers have tripled since 2007. MOCA moved to a new location and has significantly increased attendance. CIA consolidated its campus and was able to house all freshman students across the street in new dorms, enriching the mix of tenants on Euclid Avenue. The next step is to draw and retain additional retailers and maintain the status of the area as a "place." Not incidentally, the projects all meet LEED certifications.

### *Diversity Matters*

Uptown District bypasses the historical bifurcation of Cleveland down Euclid Avenue that split the area into two economically, environmentally, and



*Landscape and building design promotes connectivity.*

socially distinct areas. Instead, the project utilizes RTA connections to integrate Uptown District rather than segregate it, and Euclid Avenue now brings Clevelanders together rather than divides them. The richness of event programming and its open and largely free nature invites a mixed age, race, and class engagement. The array of institutions also caters to a multi-generational population and varied income capacity.

### *Connections are Critical*

One thing that remains to be seen is whether Uptown District can broaden CWRU's and CIA's connections to Cleveland. In the age of digital connectivity and openness, connectivity in the urban form is just as necessary as it ever was, and good integration of education, arts, culture, and economic development is crucial for the development of a good 21st century city. Uptown represents this connectivity with the fabric of the project and its links to the city of Cleveland. The RTA rapid transit and

related rail connections also significantly improved access to the jobs, culture, art, and education available not just in Uptown, but in all of Greater University Circle.

Uptown District is still evolving, but judging by the institutional patience during the turbulent inception of the project and its successes to date, Uptown as a whole demonstrates great promise. Additional phases of work and success in efforts to revitalize adjacent neighborhoods will increase the variety and vitality of an already transformed urban district.

### **ASSESSING IMPACT IN RESPECT TO PROJECT GOALS**

*GOAL: Create mixed-income housing to attract a diversity of residents and students to the area.*

Uptown includes a mix of affordable, market-rate, and student housing. Phases 1 and 2 allow for 20% affordable housing for those who earn up to 80% of median income. The 15-story Commodore Hotel renovation is all low-income efficiencies and one- and two-bedroom units. Still more mixed-income units are being developed in the community. Uptown has frankly exceeded its mixed-income housing diversity goals with over 293 housing transactions in the surrounding neighborhoods and 450 new residents as of 2015, and the trending of this new resident activity is moving the needle on measures of poverty and racial mix.

*GOAL: Create retail space that attracts both locally owned and national retail establishments.*

The retail mix in early 2015 included 24 food, drink, retail shopping, and amenity establishments like the University Circle Visitors Center. Sixteen of the 24 are locally owned businesses. Of the food and drink establishments, eight of 13 are local. Of the shopping and amenity establishments, seven of the 10 are local.



Case Western Reserve University's annual Blue Block Party on Toby's Plaza.



Robert Muller



Rien Van Rijthoven



The new development offers signature architecture and a place for the community to come together.

*GOAL: Emphasize signature architecture and placemaking with world-class design.*

Certainly the array of well-known designers is impressive. The architecture of Phases 1 and 2 has been praised in local, national, and international media as well as in professional press. The diagram of the site reveals an approach that provides for “short blocks,” and Uptown Alley affords ample outdoor café and plaza seating along the pedestrian route that connects MOCA and CIA. The entire Uptown District is very walkable and the wayfinding is clear based on the simplicity of the building and site designs and lines of sight to various attractions.

*GOAL: Promote connectivity through the design of public spaces and transit.*

Transit capacities connect downtown with Uptown District and all of University Circle. The short blocks link the new development to neighboring communities, and the relationships among MOCA, CIA, CWRU, and University Hospitals are clearly visible standing in Toby Plaza.

*GOAL: Take full advantage of the convergence of art, education, and health care institutions as a source of creative district revitalization.*

Uptown District created a place to mix the populations from CWRU, University Hospitals, and CIA with MOCA patrons as well as customers of restaurants, bars, and entertainment venues, building on its strengths as a multi-institution and multi-purpose destination. The density of the population working in these Uptown institutions and the easy links available through new transit options also represent significant leverage of existing strengths. Finally, the history of the site includes memories of a place of character that offered bowling and music, memories that are also leveraged in the new district.

*GOAL: Create a sustainable, state-of-the-art development with partnerships and programs that ensure vitality and longevity.*

LEED silver environmental standards were the aspiration for CIA, MOCA, and both of the Phase 1 and 2 buildings. While all the certifications are not concluded, no one is anticipating any difficulty meeting these state-of-the-art standards. The sustainability of the development itself seems assured based on the strengths of the partner institutions and the long-term financial commitments they have made, including lease arrangements and the underwriting of both the Barnes & Noble university book store and the grocery store. The concurrent developments of RTA rail hubs also help assure commuter traffic, and movement to and from downtown along the Red Line RTA and Euclid Avenue bus line will continue to the site. The long-term programming for Toby's Plaza is currently subject to oversight by CWRU and may be vulnerable to budget ups and downs, but given the strength of the partners, that would likely just be another problem to solve, and they seem to be good at team problem solving.

### *Future Plans*

The ongoing work of the Greater University Circle Initiative is designed to address the quality of life in all seven neighborhoods that abut Uptown District. CWRU also already has added or has plans to add new facilities totaling more than one million square feet of academic, residential, and public space to its campus, including the newly opened University Center. Private retailers have begun to notice the increased investment as well, and retail space in the surrounding area that has been vacant for some time has now come alive with new tenants, adding new restaurants and entertainment venues to the area. Uptown District is hosting a variety of community events and programs, including concerts and bicycle riding promotions that celebrate its role as a community hub and draw additional people to the district.



*Uptown District links art, education, and health care including University Hospitals (top) and MOCA.*



### SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

In selecting Uptown District as a Silver Medalist, the Selection Committee recognized the importance of a collaborative, anchor institution-led project that focused on making the community a better place and a commitment to quality design. They praised CWRU's decision to invest in the neighborhood rather than turning its back and walling itself off, noting that it resulted in increased enrollment. The committee observed that this kind of approach is rare, with exceptions like the University of Pennsylvania's investment in West Philadelphia and Trinity College in Hartford. The committee was excited about the potential for the project to inspire similar initiatives and to be a model for other universities and communities.

The committee praised the development approach that integrated student and market-rate housing, a museum, retail, and public transit, including two

new rail stations. They acknowledged the significant collaboration among the institutions and public and private partners who remained committed throughout years of planning and development and persevered through significant financial challenges. The committee observed that Uptown District reflects this spirit of collaboration in the creation of a new community hub and the physical presence of the institutions, locally owned businesses, residents, and students.

The committee praised the vision and ambition that set the stage and expectations for design quality and resulted in the involvement of well-known designers. They admired the courage it took to make a deliberate shift away from the more conservative and traditional architecture predominant in the city towards more contemporary design, noting that it "puts Cleveland on the map." The committee observed that although the design is overtly mod-



*Uptown District at dusk.*

Scott Pease



## “THE COMMITTEE ADMIRERD THE COURAGE IT TOOK TO DELIBERATELY SHIFT TOWARDS MORE CONTEMPORARY DESIGN THAT PUTS CLEVELAND ON THE MAP.”

ern, it is not “heroic.” Instead, it seeks to create a new urban context through the use of “background” buildings that connect the district with adjoining development and create a sense of enclosure. They noted that the overall plan and massing make the right urban design moves in respect to scale, turning the corners, and incorporation of first-floor retail and mid-block portals that encourage pedestrian flow between Euclid Avenue and the adjoining pedestrian mall and parking area. The committee observed that the boundaries of the project are “fuzzy,” suggesting that this permeability lends itself to physical and social integration with adjoining neighborhoods.

Although the committee commended the project for the strong design agenda that served as an “act of engagement” and shifted attitudes towards design in the community, some members questioned the choice of aesthetics and construction materials. They observed that the new building materials do not blend in color, scale, and texture with ones found in the existing neighborhood. The committee commented that the glossy black geometric MOCA building turns its back on the main intersection of Euclid Avenue and Mayfield Road and appears out of place, and that the public plazas would benefit from “softening” with additional plantings and greenspace. The committee also questioned the degree to which the project has benefited adjoining low-income neighborhoods and residents. While they acknowledged that institutional commitment and investment in the community through the Evergreen Initiative, Hire/Buy Local program, and Neighborhood Connections illustrates commitment to community, they felt that the actual impact was unclear and expressed concern about potential gentrification that would push out existing residents.

### RELATED RBA WINNERS

Uptown District highlights the role of anchor institutions in catalyzing and leading community change. Several previous RBA winners involved complex collaborations between diverse anchor institutions and local municipalities that generated new investment in mixed-use development, public spaces, and programming that benefitted and revitalized their communities.



**CIVIC SPACE PARK** (2011 Silver Medalist) resulted from a close collaboration between Arizona State University (ASU) and the city of Phoenix, bringing new ASU facilities downtown and generating rapid transit and commercial mixed-use development as well as the creation of a park with a large art installation, all of which add density and programming to downtown.



**DOWNTOWN SILVER SPRING AND DISCOVERY WORLD HEADQUARTERS** (2005 Silver Medalist) in Maryland is the product of a public-private partnership that leverages transit with large cultural institutions. In this case, the American Film Institute and Discovery World Headquarters worked together to revitalize one of the earliest Washington, DC, suburbs.



**CAMPUS CIRCLE** (1995 Silver Medalist) was a collaborative initiative led by Marquette University that transformed a 90-square-block area next to the school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The project involved community-based organizations, businesses, and residents in improving housing, developing commercial property, and promoting safety and community involvement.

Pike Place Market (1987 Gold Medalist), Yerba Buena Gardens (1999 Gold Medalist), and Santa Fe Railyard (2011 Silver Medalist) offer additional examples of public-private partnerships that developed and implemented complex projects with ambitious community goals.

More information about these and other RBA winners can be found at [www.rudybruneraward.org](http://www.rudybruneraward.org).

## Resources

This case study was compiled from information gathered from the project application, an extensive site visit in April 2015, discussions with the RBA Selection Committee, and research and interviews conducted during those processes and throughout the writing and editing of this book. Titles and positions of interviewees and URLs listed below were effective as of the site visit unless otherwise noted.

### INTERVIEWS

**Case Western Reserve University:**

**Barbara R. Snyder**, President

**John Wheeler**, Senior Vice President for Administration

**Marilyn Mobley**, Vice President, Inclusion, Diversity and Equal Opportunity

**Steve Campbell**, Vice President, Campus Planning and Facilities Management

**Julie Rehm**, Vice President, Government and Foundation Relations

**Jennifer Cimperman**, Special Projects Director,

Government and Foundation Relations

**Latisha James**, Senior Director, Local Government and Community Relations

**Irwin Lowenstein**, Campus Architect

**Kevin Slesh**, Director of Real Estate

**City of Cleveland:**

**Frank G. Jackson**, Mayor

**Tracey Nichols**, Director of Economic Development

**Mamie Mitchell**, Councilwoman, Ward 6

**Cleveland Foundation:**

**Ronald B. Richard**, President and CEO

**Lilian Kuri**, Program Director for Arts and Urban Design

**India Pierce Lee**, Program Director for Neighborhoods, Housing, and Community Development (interviewed after the winners were selected as she recused herself during the selection process)

**Cleveland Institute of Art:**

**Grafton Nunes**, President

**CIA Uptown Apartments/Student Residences:**

**Jiaxin Cai**, Resident

**Sydney Givens**, Resident

**Grace Gongaware**, Resident Advisor

**Marissa Krekeler**, Resident

**Hanna Rubin**, Resident

**Gabrielle Watson**, Resident Advisor

**MRN Ltd.:**

**Ari Maron**, Partner

**Rick Maron**, General Contractor

**Community Partners:**

**Maribeth Feke**, Director, Planning and Programming,

Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority

**Pete Mitchell**, Co-founder/Co-owner, Mitchell's Ice Cream

**Danielle Price**, Program Coordinator, Community Engagement,

Neighborhood Connections

**Ronald B. Richard**, President and CEO, Cleveland Foundation

**Chris Ronayne**, President, University Circle, Inc.

**Jill Snyder**, Executive Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland

**Steve Standley**, Chief Administrative Officer, University Hospitals

**Consultants:**

**Kathie Barrie**, Principal, Barrie Projects

**Alex Krieger**, NBBJ (formerly Chan Krieger Associates)

**Stanley Saitowitz**, Partner, Stanley Saitowitz|Natoma Architects, Inc.

*\*Interviews conducted by phone*

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