

---

# ACADEMY LOFTS ARTIST LIVING COMMUNITY

Albany, New York

---



applicant: **dave sadowsky, architect p.c**

---

# 2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DATA



# PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name **Academy Lofts Artist Living Community** Location \_\_\_\_\_ City **Albany** State **NY**

Owner **Albany Housing Authority**

Project Use(s) **22 subsidized artist rental living units; 14 artist rental work studios; performing arts stage; recording studio, exhibit and community space**

Project Size **38,000 Square feet (13,600 SF Commercial; 24,400 SF residential)** Total Development Cost **\$ 10,500,000**

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) **\$ 200,000**

Date Initiated **December 2011** Percent Completed by December 1, 2014 **100 %**

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) **3/31/14** Project Website (if appropriate) \_\_\_\_\_

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates **June 2003-Arbor Hill Nbhd Plan identified reuse of St Joseph's Academy as a priority  
July 2004 -Albany Housing Authority for seed money for a feasibility study  
Sept 2009- NYS Empire State Development announces award of \$ 4.5 million- (the first money in)  
Dec 2011 - Financial closing / start of construction**

## Application submitted by:

Name **Dave Sadowsky** Title **Architect**

Organization **Dave Sadowsky, Architect, P.C.**

Address **97 Maxon Road** City/State/Zip **Petersburgh, New York, 12138**

Telephone **(518) 658-2830** Fax ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail **dave@sadowskyarchitect.com** Website (if appropriate) **sadowskyarchitect.com**

## Perspective Sheets:

Organization	Name	E-mail
Public Agencies <b>Albany Housing Authority</b>	<b>Darren Scott</b>	<b>DScott@albanyhousing.org</b>
Architect/Designer <b>Dave Sadowsky, Architect, P.C.</b>	<b>Dave Sadowsky</b>	<b>dave@sadowskyarchitect.com</b>
Developer <b>Norstar Development, USA L.P.</b>	<b>Lori Harris</b>	<b>lharris@norstarus.com</b>
Professional Consultant <b>TAP, Inc</b>	<b>Joe Fama</b>	<b>famajoe@tapinc.org</b>
Community Group <b>Underground Railroad History Project of the Ca</b>	<b>Mary Elizabeth Stewart</b>	<b>info@UndergroundRailroadHistory.org</b>
Other <b>Professional Consultant: Art Space Projects, Inc.</b>	<b>Bill Mague</b>	<b>bill.mague@artspace.org</b>
<b>Community Representative : Albany County Historical Association</b>	<b>Jillian Altenburg</b>	<b>jillian@tenbroeckmansion.org</b>
<b>Other: Albany Barn, Inc:</b>	<b>Kristen Holler</b>	<b>kristen@albanybarn.org</b>
<b>Other: Albany Historic Foundation</b>	<b>Susan Herlands Holland</b>	<b>sholland@historic-albany.org</b>
<b>Professional Consultant: Renaissance Educational Consultants</b>	<b>Sandy Paben</b>	<b>sandypaben@gmail.com</b>

Please indicate how you learned of the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. (Check all that apply).

- |   |   |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Mailing           | <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Email         | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous Selection Committee member | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online Notice | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous RBA entrant | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Organization           | <u>outside reference</u>                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media             | <input type="checkbox"/> Bruner/Loeb Forum    |  |  |

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, and to post on the Bruner Foundation websites, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature  Date **12/09/14**

---

**2015**  
**RUDY BRUNER AWARD**  
**PROJECT**  
**AT-A-GLANCE**



# PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet, the Project Data sheet, and the representative photo will be sent to the Committee in advance as the *Project Overview*.

Project Name **Academy Lofts Artist Living Environment**

Address **56 2nd Street** City/State/ZIP **Albany, New York, 12210**

1. Give a brief overview of the project. Approximately 500 words.

Academy Lofts is an adaptive reuse of the former St Joseph's Academy located in an economically depressed neighborhood in Albany, New York. The conversion into affordable loft apartments and artist incubator space for working artisans was completed in March, 2014.

The historic brick school, built in 1906, has been vacant for over 15 years and was slated for demolition a decade ago. The firm of Dave Sadowsky, Architect P.C., with assistance from the firm of TAP, Inc., paired contemporary, sustainable design with the existing historic and traditional parochial school architectural details, giving new life to a forgotten urban icon. The result is an exciting place to live and create art, containing 22 spacious studio and 1 bedroom loft-style units, as well as separate but adjacent (under the same roof) work studios, performance spaces, exhibit areas, and community work space for the arts.

Each of the units have Section 8 project-based vouchers where the tenants pay no more than 30% of their income for rent; and, the highest income level served is 50% of area median income.

One indicator of the project's success is its enthusiastic community response. The units were fully rented, with a waiting list, months prior to completion and, as had been hoped, has already catalyzed rehabilitation around the surrounding Arbor Hill Neighborhood, commencing what is hoped to be a sustained ripple effect .

"True sustainable design not only preserves natural resources, but develops socially sustainable projects that enhance the quality of life of the community as a whole. The project achieves both by linking the resource savings of adaptive reuse construction with the community oriented artist programming" - Dave Sadowsky, Project Architect.

"The affordable housing community has a vital role to play in the preservation and revitalization of what are often both our most treasured and at-risk neighborhoods. The Albany Housing Authority is thankful to our entire team of funders, project participants and neighborhood stakeholders whose support and hard work allow the Authority to undertake transformative projects such as this."

- Darren Scott, Director of Planning and Development, Albany Housing Authority, (Building Owner).

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.) Approximately 500 words.

It is understood vacant buildings can be a blight on a neighborhood, presents safety hazards, is a drain on the tax base, increases public and private expenditures, lowers property values, poses safety risks, and can act as a catalyst for crime. All of the above contribute to the downward economic and social spiral of even the strongest communities. When a willing developer, the municipality and resources permit, the typical, and outwardly apparent solution is to replace the derelict properties with a new project satisfying a perceived current need. Unfortunately, too often these turn out to be "band-aid on cancer" approaches, evidenced by long term failures, unsustainable solutions; cheaply constructed absentee landlord housing with poor management, new unoccupied store fronts..., etc, etc. The missing element is comprehensive community involvement in the planning and implementation of a solution that addresses the broader based issues that plague the location.

The numerous organizations and individuals that initiated the neighborhood based planning process (eventually evolving into the design team implementing the Academy Lofts project), saw more than a piece of derelict property. All participants worked under the premise this property was an integral piece of a larger community puzzle. The team moved ahead with the understanding this project would either be a cancer perpetuating further physical and social decay, or a beating heart, breathing life and spurring growth into its surrounding environment.

The Albany Housing Authority proposed a truly unique program that would bring multiple advantages to the community consistent with the direction laid out by the previously completed Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan. An "artist incubator space" within this rejuvenated abandoned building was to create an affordable, nurturing environment for local artists to live and work. In conjunction, space would be designated for free/ affordable community programs for kids and adults to explore their own creative talents and enjoy the art, music and performances created by the residents and community members. This success of this concept would not only salvage an historic community icon, and fulfill a need in the community, but would serve as a solid anchor for the ongoing Arbor Hill neighborhood revitalization.

The symbiotic relationship with the community was further fostered during construction process. The contractors were required to meet Section 3 goals which call for a percentage of the workers to be in categories of local residence, and low-income. In addition, goals of Minority and Woman owned business participation were met. Many local residents from the surrounding blocks were gratified to participate and make fair wages on such a significant project to their neighborhood. There was no shortage of local participation.

Over the past decade the project team and the community has worked tirelessly to ignite the potential of this distressed historic school building, resulting in a unique, beautiful community center for the arts that has afforded neighborhood residents collectively and individually an arts and cultural avenue for the future.

---

**2015**  
**RUDY BRUNER AWARD**  
**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**



# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project? Approximately 500 words.

St. Joseph's Academy, a parochial school built in 1906 at the corner of North Swan and Second Streets in Albany, NY, was the centerpiece of a tightly knit working class community where childhood memories of its now elderly residents are of a vibrant neighborhood with shops carrying all the necessities one would need within walking distance, and word of your misdeeds would travel home to your mother faster than you. By 1984 the neighborhood had changed substantially, forcing the school's closure just as it was declared a contributing building to the recently expanded Arbor Hill/Ten Broeck Triangle Historic District. By 2000, the school had gained another distinction: The worst blighting influence in the most notorious and violent open-air drug market in the city. It was destined for demolition.

The Academy Lofts project is a story about returning to the underlying values that once made Arbor Hill a great place to live and work. By 2003, city leaders and community stakeholders had spent hundreds of hours meeting and plotting to take back their neighborhood. The result of their efforts was the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan, a comprehensive revitalization strategy that reaffirmed the community's core values: 1) quality affordable housing, 2) employment and economic development, 3) celebrate the arts, culture and heritage, and 4) quality of life. At the center of the Plan was St. Joseph's Academy, which despite its condition the community wanted saved. In 2004, the Albany Housing Authority was granted funds by NYS Homes & Community Renewal to study the feasibility of reusing the building. The study determined the estimated cost - \$10 million - and the highest and best use - artist housing and business incubator for creative enterprises - but it would take the next 10 years to build the political will, identify the partners, aggregate the funding, and to painstakingly rehabilitate and convert the severely deteriorated 45,000 square foot structure into what is now known as Academy Lofts.

The only significant trade off in seeing this project through is that it nearly came at the expense of everything else. There were other projects that the Albany Housing Authority and other stakeholders accomplished over the course of a decade, but none required the dogged effort that this did. If not for the intermittent signs of hope, it is unlikely that the Authority would or could have continued to work on a project that lay outside of its traditional mission. That, and the belief that this one project, once accomplished, would have a far greater transformative impact on the Arbor Hill neighborhood than any straight-forward housing development project could.

Today Academy Lofts stands as the embodiment of all of the community's values and the culmination of 10 years of effort and investment that led the American Planning Association to name Arbor Hill one of 10 Great Neighborhoods in America. However, while having written this chapter about surmounted incredible odds to save and reuse this building and setting the neighborhood on a path toward an alternate, more hopeful future, the story remains unfinished. The rest of the story is about how we capitalize on the momentum and attention that has been created by Academy Lofts to do the really heavy lifting: continue to build the relevance and value of Arbor Hill in the hearts and minds of the many who still do not know about or fully believe in its renaissance, so that they may buy into, become a part of, and take pride in the rebirth of a community.

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve?

How many people are served by the project? Approximately 500 words.

Arbor Hill is two neighborhoods in one: the haves and the have-nots. On the east side of North Swan Street is the Ten Broeck Triangle part of the neighborhood where there is greater socio-economic diversity and consequently where there are architecturally superior residential buildings, higher property values and a higher rate of homeownership. This is largely a result of the neighborhood having been built 150 years ago by lumber barons of the Erie Canal, and its adjacency to Albany's central business and entertainment district. On the west side where Academy Lofts sits, is the rest of Arbor Hill. The rest of Arbor Hill is comprised of simple row houses and a minority majority resident population. Until the 1960's there was less distinction between the two sides as North Swan Street being the neighborhood commercial district was its "downtown" and a natural meeting place for all types. With white flight and property values spiraling downward, businesses changed and then closed. North Swan Street became a dangerous place when the void was filled by people with no place else to go and the drug dealers and unscrupulous landlords and business people who prey on them. The police clamped down in 2000 after a series of murders. The street would be a no-man's land for the next seven years - nobody, not even residents of the two sides of the neighborhood, went there because there was no good reason to.

In 2005 and 2007 the Albany Housing Authority began building rehabilitated and new housing and commercial space on and around North Swan Street. In all, 80 units of rental and for-sale housing and 7 storefronts were built so as to fill the void with residents living with a responsible landlord, as well as reintroduce some semblance of a commercial presence. These investments helped to stabilize the several blocks on and around North Swan Street and paved the way for the more ambitious Academy Lofts project. One such example is the establishment of the Albany Barn, Inc., a fledgling arts non-profit, in one of the storefronts as a way to nurture them and create a sense of belonging in the community prior to moving into the commercial space at Academy Lofts.

Today Arbor Hill feels different. The people who live there feel a new energy and a sense that a corner has been turned. Many say that they were thinking about leaving, like their children did, and now they are reconsidering. News about the neighborhood's revitalization is reaching other parts of the city and to the tri-city area. So far, Academy Lofts has managed to rent apartments and workspace to people from within the Arbor Hill neighborhood and to those who come from outside it, in some cases from outside the city of Albany. North Swan Street is slowly returning to a place where people meet, rather than be repelled from, and Arbor Hill is making the nightly news for good reasons.

However, we cannot assume that it will continue on that trajectory. The celebration of successfully working together to accomplish the highly improbable cannot be one of looking back. It has to be used to look forward at other, as of yet unattended to, set of challenges that threaten to undermine all the hard work invested thus far. There needs to be a doubling down on the commitment to see through other parts of the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan, especially employment and economic development. And the success we have earned so far has to be effectively advertised to those who can help us and benefit from a sustained revival.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate. Approximately 400 words.

In 2003 the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan was adopted. This living document is the first place where the effort to save St. Joseph's Academy is stated.

In 2004 the Albany Housing Authority assembled a group of stakeholders representing each of the four areas of the Plan's focus and applied to the NYS Division of Homes and Community Renewal for seed money to explore the feasibility of adaptively reusing the St. Joseph's Academy building. The feasibility study identified three potential reuse scenarios: 1) senior housing, 2) market rate lofts, and 3) artist housing.

The reuse of the 15,000 square foot gymnasium proved to be too much a challenge to make the senior housing and market rate housing concepts viable, even if the neighborhood could support market rate rents.

The artist housing was intriguing, however. But the Authority knew nothing about working with artists, let alone being their landlord. In 2006 the Authority adopted a nascent arts non-profit called the Albany Barn, Inc. which was looking for permanent space for artists to live and work. Through the help of donated space and other financial support, including professional advice from Artspace Inc., the Albany Barn was nurtured into a fully functioning organization with a board of directors and an executive director. The organization was able to provide programming out of a storefront just down the street from St. Joseph's Academy for three years preceding construction completion.

In 2009 the City of Albany sponsored the Academy Lofts project in an application to RESTORE NY, a grant program operated by Empire State Development (ESD), New York State's economic development arm. The Lofts project hit all the ESD criteria: 1) eliminate blight, 2) economic development, and 3) housing. With the success of that application came \$4.5 million - the key money to the entire financial structure of the project because traditional sources of financing such as Low-Income Tax Credits and Historic Tax Credits could raise only half the equity that the project needed. The project was a "go". The Authority hired Norstar Development USA, a private developer able to attract a tax credit investor, and Norstar and AHA in turn hired the balance of the development team. The financing closed in December 2011 and construction began. The 22 residential apartments were occupied in December 2013 and the arts incubator and performance space opened four months later.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable. Approximately 400 words.

The project first received a \$45,000 grant from NYS Homes and Community Renewal to study the feasibility of adaptively reusing the St. Joseph's Academy building. The resulting Academy Lofts project consists of 22 loft-style live/work residential spaces and approximately 15,000 square feet of commercial space serving three purposes: 1) business incubator for creative arts enterprises, 2) performance space, 3) arts community center.

Permanent financing sources include:

\$4,500,000 Empire State Development Corp. RESTORE NY Program

\$2,688,574 Historic Tax Credit Equity

\$2,591,689 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Equity

\$440,000 Federal Home Loan Bank

\$301,402 Deferred Developer Fee

\$10,521,665 TOTAL DEVELOPMENT COST

Construction Cost of the roughly 45,000 square foot building was \$7,262,554 or \$161 per square foot. Total Development Cost is \$10,521,665 or \$234 per square foot.

The total annual Operating Budget is approximately \$200,000. Rents from the 22 residential apartments are set at \$607 for a studio and \$613 for a one-bedroom unit. All rents are subsidized by Section 8 Project Based Voucher subsidy whereby the tenant pays 30% of their household income toward the rent and the low-income housing subsidy pays the balance up to the full rent. Residents must be at or below 50% of the area median income to qualify. Utilities such as heat, gas and electric are paid by the resident. The commercial tenant, Albany Barn, Inc., pays approximately \$34,000 in rent (mostly comprised of utility expenses) annually through a Sublease Agreement with the Albany Housing Authority, which in turn has a Master Lease Agreement with the Limited Partnership (comprised of the Authority and the Special Limited Investor).

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings? Approximately 400 words.

The project is unique in the microview specifics of the building, site, financing, and support organizations. However, the macroview exposes the very common urban issue of "what to do about deteriorating buildings in economically depressed neighborhoods". Fortunately, this project demonstrates a solution with enough macroview common denominators for successful replication.

Common denominator 1: Recognizing the process takes time, and requires at a minimum a coalition of community, and municipal entities for success  
Common denominator 2: A neighborhood based comprehensive plan must be developed incorporating neighborhood and municipal involvement to insure overall long-term community needs and sustainability are addressed.

Common denominator 3: The project must be viewed as a part of the bigger picture, and developed consistent with the goals of the nhbd plan.

Although it is a simple formula, the execution is typically a long term venture, and therefore requires drive focus and commitment to fulfill a need, as a motivator more so than profit.

The unique specifics applied to the Academy Lofts project, within the framework of the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan, included focusing on art and culture coupled with affordable housing, as a vehicle to anchor neighborhood revitalization. It was anticipated the population involved in the practice and study of the fine arts would be undaunted by the real and perceived social and economic stratification issues facing the Arbor Hill neighborhood. This was ultimately borne out by the project's full occupancy and long waiting list, of both the residential and commercial rental spaces.

While affordable housing for artists has been done elsewhere (Artspace, AS220, etc.), it is the first time that a Public Housing Authority has been at the helm, and (ironically) it is the Albany Housing Authority's need and willingness to partner with other organizations, specializing in what they do, that helps insure successful projects.

Although it is early, it is safe to say Academy Lofts has already had a positive impact and will continue making economic and cultural investments to the surrounding community. This model should be considered a best practice option for transforming disenfranchised urban communities.

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by staff representative(s) of public agency(ies) who were directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name **Darren Scott** Title **Director of Planning and Development**

Organization **Albany Housing Authority** Telephone **(518) 641-7536**

Address **200 South Pearl St** City/State/ZIP **Albany, New York 12202**

Fax ( ) E-mail **dscott@albanyhousing.org**

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature  Date **12/09/14**

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements). Approximately 400 words.

The Albany Housing Authority is the Owner, Co-Developer and Managing Agent of the Academy Lofts project. The Authority participated in the creation of the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan, conceived the idea of the project, conducted the study that led to the decision to create artist live/work space and a determination of feasibility, found and nurtured the non-profit arts organization that would become its partner, and selected the development team and oversaw the financing, construction and rent up of the project. All of those activities were carried out with a lot of support and expertise of many people including community residents, development, legal and design professionals, elected officials and the local artist community.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

The Academy Lofts project was intended to be the cornerstone of a complete neighborhood revitalization effort. The future success of the neighborhood was largely viewed to be dependent upon the successful completion of the project. The primary reason being that the community had invested an enormous amount of its effort, creativity, hopes and dreams in the imperative that the project be completed and deliver on the promise that introducing a new dynamic into the neighborhood - that of the artists and that of an outward celebration of the arts - would be transformative. It was a huge risk for the Authority to get involved in something so far outside of its wheelhouse, a risk that it shared with every community leader, elected official and funding source who got on board one by one and pledged their support, adding sustenance the project's early backers. Failure would have been catastrophic - a collapse in confidence and investment potential that probably would have doomed the neighborhood to several more decades of struggle. We did not permit ourselves to think about it.

## PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

Arbor Hill is being viewed through a new lens, one through which new potentials are coming into focus. For example, the neighborhood's adjacency to the city's downtown entertainment and business district is giving rise to the possibility that Arbor Hill is a Arts District, comprised of Academy Lofts, the Ten Broeck Mansion with its newly restored King's Place gallery and office space (another Authority project on North Swan Street), and the soon to be completed Stephen and Harriett Myers Underground Railroad Museum. With these arts, culture and history attractions as its constellation, many of the historic row houses that make up the neighborhood could see new homeowner and rental investment. While socio-economic balance is desired for long term sustainability, the side effects of gentrification are not. Fortunately, Academy Lofts and other affordable housing that has been constructed since the Plan's inception, coupled with pre-existing affordable housing developments, will ensure that the balance, once achieved, will not be tipped in the other direction so as to displace the very people who stuck it out through the lean times and lent their time and energies to Arbor Hill's recovery.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities? Approximately 400 words.

The Academy Lofts project was made possible by communication, compromise and partnership. The early days of creating the neighborhood plan were fraught with mistrust and resentment due to decades of disenfranchisement and the more recent violence that the drug infestation brought to the neighborhood. Over a period of a year, old baggage was discarded and replaced with a growing sense of respect for the value that each person brought to the table. A tentative trust was established and common ground began to emerge that eventually bound the group together in one cause to revitalize Arbor Hill. After the adoption of the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan in June 2003, the group transformed itself into the Arbor Hill Implementation Team in an effort to accomplish the goals that had just been agreed upon. One neighborhood plan is a composite of a hundred smaller plans and projects that need to be fleshed out and implemented. Through its participation on the Implementation Team, the Albany Housing Authority made partnerships with several organizations that had aspirations but neither the expertise or resources to attain them. For example, one was with the neighborhood improvement corporation to develop houses for sale, another was with the District Attorney to establish an outreach center in a storefront, another was to rehabilitate a historic property for use by the Albany County Historical Association, so that the visitors they attract from around the nation would first come to North Swan Street - again introducing positive energy and a new dynamic to a neighborhood in need of change. The partnership with the Albany Barn developed in a similar way through a confluence of need: AHA was looking for an arts organization to be the creative enterprise partner and liaison to the arts community for what would become the Academy Lofts project. And the Albany Barn was looking for permanent live/work space for artists and did not have the wherewithal to accomplish that objective.

Everyone involved in the Academy Lofts project took a risk, stepped outside of their comfort zone, leaned on each other for help and guidance, and in the end were rewarded with what is undeniably better and more promising than what any one of us could have hoped to have accomplished on our own. Over the past 20 years, through these projects and others in similar communities of need in Albany, the Albany Housing Authority has itself been transformed from the largest most notorious landlord into the go-to partner for change.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

It is still early in the going to see if Academy Lofts lives up to the dreams so many people have had for it over the 10 years it took to accomplish. However, the process itself, as described in #4 above, is an unqualified success that taught everyone involved how to persevere and work together to achieve a common goal. The awards and media attention that come with that success are affirming what the project team already knew, but need to hear in order to begin the long, slow process of gathering momentum that sustainable, game changing initiatives seem to require. I believe that it means more for residents of Arbor Hill. After a half century of decline - most of its residents not even knowing any different - it is almost surreal that this beacon of hope now lights their neighborhood. It is encouraging longtime residents to stay while at the same time opening an invitation to others to consider Arbor Hill a viable neighborhood in which to invest their family's future.

The least successful aspect of this project is that it took so much time, effort and money that could have been shared across more initiatives, so that not one project is carrying the high expectations of revitalization the entire neighborhood. There were other projects and initiatives resulting from the neighborhood Plan, of course. But all the aforementioned resources are scarce and the demands upon them ever increasing. Personally, having worked at the Authority for 20 years, I am grateful to have been around long enough to gain the credibility to take the Authority on an adventure such as the Academy Lofts project, and relieved to finish what I started. There just isn't enough time to develop all the opportunities, so the challenge lays in pairing talent with ambition and empowering people and communities to be better than they are today.

# ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

Name	Dave Sadowsky	Title	Architect
Organization	Dave Sadowsky, Architect, P.C.	Telephone	(518) 658-2830
Address	97 Maxon Road	City/State/ZIP	Petersburgh, New York 12138
Fax ( )		E-mail	dave@sadowskyarchitect.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature		Date	12/09/14
-----------	---	------	----------

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc. Approximately 400 words.

The existing building, although deteriorated and populated by pigeons, was the origin of inspiration for the design of Academy Lofts. We vowed to preserve and highlight as many of the original details as possible, for instance, the intricate trim work around the stage and the magnificent historic skylights above the gym. The tile-lined corridors and the classrooms with large double hung wood windows and built-in blackboards all brought back memories of our own days in school, which we wanted to impart on the end users of the building, for memories of learning and growth. In other words, we didn't want to mask the original design and function of the building, but instead enhance and pay homage, enabling it to become, not just a learning center, but also a place of art, culture, community and affordable living.

When deciding on the new materials, we resolved not to try to replicate the building's details, but rather create a contrast that readily enabled occupants to discern the original from the new. The result is a distinct line drawn between history and future. To accomplish this we chose modern, industrial materials such as steel cables, clean gypsum wallboard, simple millwork, flush doors, and stainless steel metals. To meld the old and new, we designed the new details to be congruous in scale and proportion with the original details. These choices led to an economical, functional and simple design that both balanced the building and the client's budget.

We allowed ourselves to be freely creative with the forms that we were developing within the space, knowing the artists and performers that would soon be living and working there would appreciate, and perhaps be inspired by, the design latitudes we employed. At the same time, we tried to minimize embellishments and allow for a maximum amount of clean walls to create a "blank canvas" for the artists to display their work.

Lastly, it was important to create a welcoming atmosphere to inspire the surrounding community of Arbor Hill to participate in the many free and affordable programs that are planned to take place in the building. Toward that end, we rebuilt the original historic entrances, and further enhanced the interior with a progression of large, open spaces with two enormous existing columns painted bright red that can be seen from the outside when the doors are open. These features rekindle the building's identity while drawing in passers-by during the many performances, social gatherings and art shows. To accommodate the different types of classes that will be offered to the community, a number of the studios have moveable and removable walls separating them, allowing for spaces to be enlarged or reduced depending on the needs of the respective programs.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design. Approximately 400 words.

The goal was to create a facility to foster and uncover the talents of the many unknown local artists and performers that were unable to financially do so alone, while at the same time, creating a mechanism to coalesce and strengthen the community as a whole. Lacking was a suitable space to enable the creative process. Merely, providing the building would minimally accomplish this; however, our goal was to enhance the design with spaces and features that encourage interactions among the artists in hopes of creating a strong sense of community within the building, as well as bridging to the Arbor Hill community at large.

We also wanted the space to function as a catalyst for the community to explore the artists' and performers' work, while at the same time exploring their own individual potential in the arts. To accomplish this we designed for flexible, communal learning spaces mixed amongst the artist's rentable studios. Both the resident artists/ performers and community members have a building that they can work, explore and enjoy, side-by-side, breaking down the typical boundaries between those who are inside and those who are out.

## ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project. Approximately 400 words.

As with any project, there were design challenges with the Academy Lofts project, many of which were unique to this set of variables. Although adaptive re-use of an existing building is not uncommon, the combination of parameters required by Historic Tax Credit financing, the age of the building, the extremely deteriorated condition, the environmental / HAZMAT conditions, and the very specific needs of the end users, combined for numerous challenges.

The Tax credit financing required a series of reviews by the State Historic Preservation Office, National Parks Service, and the Albany Historic Review Commission, insuring their respective preservation criteria were being met. On more than one occasion, lengthy negotiated compromises were reached where historic preservation requirements conflicted with code issues (ie: replacing historically accurate thermal windows was agreed to, in place of the originally required reconstruction of the existing single pane wood windows).

The condition of the building, (due to +/- 15 years abandonment), resulted in numerous structural "surprises" both prior and during construction. One such example: After demolishing the ceiling over the gymnasium, it was discovered there had been a previous fire, and the rafter structure was compromised to the point it all had to be replaced. Our Engineer noted the entire roof was being held up by "willpower". Aside from the unexpected costs, significant scheduling and sequencing had to be adjusted.

The unique layout dictated we abandon a standard apartment design and customize each unit to fit into the existing differing classroom layouts. In order to gain room that the classrooms lacked, we created loft spaces for the tenants to use as extra storage or sleeping quarters. We designed the rentable artist and rehearsal studios to be flexible in size and "float" within the existing gymnasium keeping the original historic ceiling molding, stage proscenium and series of historic skylights intact.

In addition to the typical construction issues, we experienced a series of lengthy delays due to multiple discoveries of hidden asbestos-containing materials. In addition to the delays, numerous subcontractor scheduling challenges, as well as significant cost increases, resulted. When we were confident we were through all the HAZMAT remediation processes, contaminated soil was discovered leaching under one corner of the building which resulted in even more delays, costs, and scheduling adjustments further pushing back completion and occupancy dates.

The restrictive budgets and numerous reviewing entities (at times with incompatible/ conflicting agendas) not only creates a challenge for the architect to stay within budget, but also requires added time to massage design concepts and construction concerns to gain approval from all parties.

In the end, we take pride in the end result which we feel incorporates the best compromises that balanced the programmatic flexibility, profitability and aesthetic designs

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context. Approximately 400 words.

We felt little need to change the exterior of the building other than to repair and restore it to its original splendor. The St Joseph's Academy School had long been an integral fixture in this urban neighborhood, which we endeavored to respect and pay tribute to. Community members related stories of cherished memories including attending childhood classes and basketball games, getting lectured by the nuns, learning to box, joining the boy scouts, learning discipline, etc.

Our goal was to provide a rejuvenated space which would polish and build on those positive memories. The unique design coupled with the resultant increased activity around the building has encouraged those who remembered the building, as well as the next generations, to join in and build on those memories; experiencing the building, and integrating its activities with the community in a whole new way

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by the person who took primary responsibility for project financing or is a representative of the group which did.

Name	Lori Harris	Title	Senior Project Manager
Organization	Norstar Development USA, L.P.	Telephone (	518 - 431-1051
Address	733 Broadway	City/State/ZIP	Albany, New York 12207
Fax (	518-431-1053	E-mail	lharris@norstarus.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature		Date	11-7-14
-----------	---	------	---------

1. What role did you or your company play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement. Approximately 400 words.

Norstar Development USA, L.P. (Norstar) acted as the developer for the Academy Lofts project. As the Developer, Norstar was responsible for all aspects of the development including but not limited to: assembling all the members of the design team, securing all approvals and funding for the project, construction oversight, and project close out

2. What trade-offs or compromises were required during the development of the project? Approximately 400 words.

Due to significant costs of rehabilitation including environmental abatement, the owner was not able to include all amenities which they had hoped including geothermal and solar.

# PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

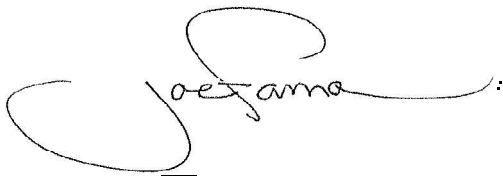
Name **Joe Fama** Title **Executive Director**

Organization **TAP, Inc.** Telephone (518) **274-3050 ext 11**

Address **210 River Street** City/State/ZIP **Troy, NY 12180**

Fax **(518) 274-3165** E-mail **famajoe@tapinc.org**

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.



Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date 12/2/14

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

**TAP was not involved in the first stages of the project. As I understand the history, seeds of the idea for this project were sown in the context of the City of Albany's determination turn around the City's most dangerous, deteriorated and depressed neighborhood, the North Swan Street Corridor. The effort was several years old and just beginning to make a difference when this project was conceived.**

**The project was generated collaboratively between the City of Albany's Public Housing Authority and a local Arts organization known as the Albany Barn. Its objective was to provide a combination of artist loft housing, rental studio space and a performance venue. The building chosen was a severely deteriorated former school, St. Joseph's Academy. The new facility was to be known as "Academy Lofts."**

**The first financing package fell apart on two fronts. It failed to obtain governmental sources of funding and it failed to qualify for Historic Tax Credits. These twin failures were nearly the death of the idea, but the Housing Authority was tenacious and a developer, Norstar Developers, was brought in to breath new life into the project. They looked for a different approach, and being familiar with TAP's work, first invited us to first try again to work through a compromise on the Historic Tax Credits and later to submit a proposal for architectural services.**

**TAP has been involved in community design work since 1969, but never as project architect on a job of this size and complexity. We turned to a long-time collaborator, Dave Sadowsky Architects and suggested that his firm take the role of lead architect and allow TAP to function as consultant, providing field work, consulting design and construction document production teams. We have worked this way with Dave many times, and once again, on this project, it worked successfully.**

**TAP did the Historic Tax Credit work via a direct contract with Norstar, and the collaborative work with Dave was done as a consultant to his firm, Dave Sadowsky Architects.**

# PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

The project overcame a discouraging beginning, a severely deteriorated building, substantial financial challenges in a difficult funding environment, difficult negotiation over the Historic Tax Credits, and substantial difficulty with environmental issues.

The result is a testament to three essential strengths: a strong initial concept, a collaborative spirit among a substantial number of agencies, builders and consultants, and a remarkable determination by all to outlast the adversities. The building, now complete, is universally applauded and is considered an unmitigated success both within the building by the tenants and outside the building by the neighborhood.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

There are many communities that have been positively impacted by this project. The most important, of course, is the neighborhood in which it is located. It is important to note that the basic objective of the entire effort was to turn around a dysfunctional neighborhood. The steps that preceded Academy Lofts must be acknowledged as an important foundation without which this project would have been unthinkable. It is not an exaggeration, however, to assert that Academy Lofts changed the neighborhood from one that might be changing for the better into one that is well on its way to a brighter future.

The second community is the Arts community, in particular the artists that now reside and/or rent space in the building. They have become part of an increasingly diverse and stable neighborhood. The residents are not isolated. They have become active participants in the neighborhood. This is a project that has only added to the neighborhood. There were no residents displaced to create the project, and, thus far, there is no evidence of gentrification overheating to change the average income in the neighborhood.

There are other benefits to the residents of the building. They all speak in glowing terms of the artistic synergies within the building and they building is becoming an art venue that is producing significant work within a growing art community in Albany. All residents are income qualified and they can focus more on their art because all are paying a reasonable percentage of their income in housing costs. This allows more time for their art, and adds to their peace of mind.

Finally, the project has had an effect on Albany's Preservation and Architectural communities. That will be described in the next answer.

---

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession? Approximately 400 words.

The project has had an effect on the region's Planning, Preservation and Architectural communities. This project is an unprecedented combination of exceptionally ambitious social goals, combined with a hard won substantial construction budget and high standards for all aspects of the project. There are many positive messages that the three professions can take from the project. Among the lessons that TAP is fondest of are the following:

- Something good can happen in even the worst neighborhood, and, if you string together several good things, positive change begins to happen.
- Combining the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and the Historic Tax Credit can result in a very substantial construction budget.
- A municipal Housing Authority can accomplish more by involving itself in the future of the neighborhood than by building inward looking hard edged projects.
- Cooperating municipalities, neighborhoods and non-profits, working together, have the potential to achieve amazing results. Sadly, that potential is largely untapped.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Most successful: **The overwhelmingly positive effect the project has had on all fronts. All of the previous answers are just the highlights of a project that thus far has had only positive outcomes, positive reviews and lots of smiling faces. The most successful aspect of the project is the lack of a substantive downside.**

Least successful: **the magnitude of the task and the cost of the project make it difficult to replicate unless the a lead agency had the resources and persistence of the AHA and the tenant had the ambition and drive of the Albany Barn.**

# COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Mary Elizabeth Stewart	Title	Executive Director
Organization	Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Inc.	Telephone	(518) 432-4432
Address	P.O. Box 10851	City/State/ZIP	Albany New York 12201
Fax (518)	432-4432	E-mail	info@UndergroundRailroadHistory.org

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature	<i>Mary Elizabeth Stewart</i>	Date	11.04.14
-----------	-------------------------------	------	----------

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? (Approximately 400 words.)

Underground Railroad History Project (URHPCR) became involved with the Academy Lofts project back in 2003 when an Arbor Hill resident invited URHPCR to participate in the Arbor Hill Plan conversations that were being held at that time. URHPCR was in its early stages of development at this point, having taken its Underground Railroad research to the public through walking tours, speaking engagements, and a conference. The Underground Railroad research yielded evidence of many local Albany residents being involved in this pre civil War civil rights movement, many of them living in Arbor Hill. By 2004 URHPCR identified a building that had documentation supporting its use in the Underground Railroad movement. URHPCR purchased this building, now known as The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, with the intention of restoring the entire building to its period of historic significance, creating it as a space where this significant history, and its relationship with today, can be experienced.

The Arbor Hill Planning Team welcomed URHPCR into planning conversations, recognizing the value of the preservation of this important Arbor Hill history and its relationship with us today, and recognizing the contributions that could be made to community economic development through the restoration of The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence. To this end both Underground Railroad History Project and The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence were included in the Arbor Hill Planning document that was produced by the Arbor Hill Planning Team. Participation continued with the Arts and Culture Committee that was one component of the Arbor Hill Implementation Team, which succeeded the Arbor Hill Planning Team.

URHPCR, responsible for The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, and The Barn, responsible for Academy Lofts, became important components of the Arbor Hill Plan. Both organizations realized the value in working collaboratively together to contribute to the reclamation of the vibrancy and economic stability that once characterized Arbor Hill.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? (Approximately 400 words.)

Major issues concerning this project included (1) successful implementation, (2) sustainability, (3) abandoned buildings and properties, (4) absentee landlords, (5) high poverty rate, and (6) funding. A considerable amount of time, energy, and funding was expended with the planning conversations leading up to the drafting of the Arbor Hill Plan. In fact, the Arbor Hill Plan that included Academy Lofts and The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence was the third Arbor Plan. Clearly, there was skepticism that this third plan would actually lead to implementation. Sustaining the plan to bring it through implementation and beyond requires the support of numerous agencies, organizations, and community members. This requires the dedication of necessary staff time which is always threatened by inadequate funding, lengthy time frames, and political changes. The preponderance of abandoned buildings and properties in Arbor Hill, accentuated by absentee landlords, needed attention as part of the whole picture of redevelopment and revitalization. The successful impact of Academy Lofts needed to be part of a plan that impacted all of Arbor Hill, not just a segment of it. The high poverty rate of Arbor Hill residents offered challenges as residents weighed in on revitalization strategies, criticizing revitalization plans that did not always match with their more immediate concerns. And, of course, funding is always a concern. Funding needs face severe competition as the funding needs routinely outstrip available funds.

## COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

The Academy Lofts project has, without a doubt, made the community a better place to live and work. Its presence and purpose have directed attention to what is possible. Through its success it has reminded residents that they and their community are worth the time and energy required to reclaim the vibrant life that once was part of the life of this community. The transformation of a dilapidated, vacant building into a building with a purpose gives hope to a community that has suffered disinvestment over too many years. It communicates to the world outside Arbor Hill that publicly acceptable activities that enrich the quality of life in the community and in the city of Albany are part of the life of Arbor Hill, contrasting with the public perception of Arbor Hill as a crime-ridden, gun toting, drug infested community. The purpose, as a residential building, is one that is about long term commitment, both personal and financial. As an art space open for us by building residents and others, it is about celebrating and supporting the value and importance of the arts as contributors to the quality of life in the community and the city.

The presence and purpose of Academy Lofts, the activities that occur within it, the movement of residents and visitors in and out of the building, have contributed to the reduction of illegal activities that, prior to Academy Lofts, were a regular occurrence. Community residents who had not engaged in illegal activities are now supported in their desire to live in a community in which they can attend to their needs with the assurance that they can do so safely. The attention to building and grounds maintenance at Academy Lofts motivates neighbors to maintain their properties, contributing to an overall improvement of property conditions in the community. Residents have reason to be proud of their community. As they reclaim pride in their community, those outside the community are affected and are coming to recognize the rich history, heritage, and value inherent in Arbor Hill. The presence of Academy Lofts has contributed, as well, to the willingness of URHPCR to make a long term commitment to the restoration of The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence and the reclamation of associated historic properties for the benefit of the community.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

The only thing about the process that could have been improved was giving equal weight in the decision making process to all the stakeholders involved in the planning process. While there was an inclusive character to planning conversations, the role of stakeholders was advisory. However, accomplishing this goal would have required a far larger commitment of time for all parties concerned, as well as a possible delay of implementation, in light of the fact that the decision makers had a large body of knowledge related to policies, regulations and funding that were essential to informing final decisions and which would have needed to be relayed to the full collection of stakeholders if the stakeholders were to share equitably in the decision making process.

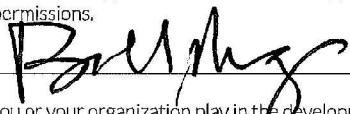
# PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name	Bill Mague	Title	Vice President
Organization	Artspace Projects, Inc.	Telephone	(612) 465-0214
Address	250 Third Ave. N., Suite 400	City/State/ZIP	Minneapolis, MN 55401
Fax	(612) 333-9089	E-mail	bill.mague@artspace.org

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature		Date	11/5/14
-----------	---	------	---------

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Artspace acted as the arts development consultant to the Albany Housing Authority and their program partner the Albany Barn. Artspace has developed and owns 38 operating affordable artist live/work projects around the country, and increasingly assists other local participants in conceiving and planning implementation of similar projects. Specifically, our model depends on substantial community participation, with the understanding that the co-location of artists and creative activities is a leveraged community development strategy. Artspace worked with the Albany Barn and AHA on all aspects of the proposed project, including design considerations, tax credit dynamics/rules as they relate to an artist program, involvement and role of Albany Barn as a key tenant, space & program planning assistance with Albany Barn, and strategies for implementing an artist preference as part of the resident selection criteria.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

The Academy Lofts project is emblematic of the power of the creative economy. The neighborhood is one that is transitional. The Academy Lofts building was a large, vacant eyesore in the neighborhood, exhibiting blight, security issues and a nuisance. At the same time, rents/prices in nearby neighborhoods that were gentrifying positioned the Academy Lofts neighborhood as an affordable, nearby alternative which artists and arts organizations had already begun to populate. The AHA had already invested in stabilizing certain area homes, and finding a catalytic reuse of the Academy site was a critical next step. We believe multiple benefits have been achieved through this project: adaptive re-use of critical existing infrastructure, maintaining the historic character of the area, anchoring affordable housing in an area sure to experience gentrification, providing a well-capitalized home for arts programming with an established community partner, and setting an example of mixed-use, affordable, arts-centered community development in upstate NY.

## PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

---

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession? Approximately 400 words.

Artspace is extremely proud to have worked with the AHA on this visionary project. We often find ourselves having to advocate with local political, development and business interests in order to have affordable artists live/work projects enter the community/economic development conversation. That the Albany Housing Authority and Albany Barn already recognized and committed themselves to this sort of development opportunity is notable. AHA has the expertise and knowledge of tax credits and housing issues that are fraught with complications, and the vision to understand how a non-traditional mixed-use creative economy project would leverage their core mission. Similarly, AHA showed flexibility and adaptability in embracing the artist preference, design standards and related topics that are not traditionally accommodated in public housing programs. Finally, finding and cultivating relationships with existing arts and cultural organizations is critical, and also typically out of the box thinking for a housing authority. Success in these projects is a function of finding organizations with exemplary practices and a collaborative intent/vision, each organization keeping to its core competencies, and recognizing that the true benefit is realized in the community, not by any single entity or financial interest. Understanding these goals from the beginning is crucial to reconciling often divergent or conflicting motives.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Most successful is the provision of critical affordable arts infrastructure. Equally significant is the partnership between AHA and Albany Barn. As to least successful aspects, as with all projects of this nature, time is money. The challenge in developing partnerships, working through logistics and conflicting interests, aligning and remaining within the rigorous requirements of the funding sources is time consuming. It places a significant administrative and financial burden on the participants and the deal structure. While not unique to this transaction, it is a structural challenge in any project of this magnitude.

Send to Contact

## COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Jillian Altenburg	Title	Executive Director
Organization	Albany County Historical Association	Telephone	(518) 436-9826
Address	9 Ten Broeck Place	City/State/ZIP	Albany, New York 12210
Fax	(518) 436-1489	E-mail	jillian@tenbroeckmansion.org

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature		Date	11/10/2014
-----------	---	------	------------

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

The Albany County Historical Association has long been a stakeholder in the Arbor Hill community. Since its formation in 1942, the ACHA has been focused on its mission to preserve, present and promote Albany's rich history and culture. Our physical location in the Ten Broeck Mansion affords us the opportunity to do this in one of the most evolving and unique neighborhoods in the City, so engaging and promoting Arbor Hill is one of our top goals. In recent years, momentum has gained and new projects and organizations have joined in the revitalization with a common goal among us all: revive while maintaining local color and facilitating growth and improvement for the entire community. The Academy Lofts has been a tremendous partner in achieving that goal. ACHA's involvement in the project has evolved with its progress. Formally, we maintain an advisory position and work in conjunction with the Lofts (among others) on a long-term Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan.

The Academy Lofts are located on North Swan Street, a street that encapsulates the Arbor Hill image of blight and poverty mixed with earnest community effort, historic structures and tremendous potential. Our organization recently opened a gallery space and satellite office, the Kings Place Building, on the same street, just a few dozen yards from the Lofts. We opened this space knowing that with the Lofts nearby, we could easily collaborate. The Academy has been instrumental in the successful operation of this new location. We work together to bring unique events to the neighborhood and share gallery space with Loft residents in our King's Place Building, allowing a space for them to display their work. We work together via collaborative participation in events and promoting each other, to spread the word about the exciting things coming out of our neighborhood today. It was no surprise to any of us that Arbor Hill was just named one of the American Planning Association's top US neighborhoods.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

The Lofts were phase 2 of the long-term, multi-phase Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan, an extensive proposal composed by various stakeholders and the City of Albany. Included initially were controversial demolition plans that were rejected by the community. While The Lofts were never intended to be built out of demolition, their current home in a restored, original school house shows their commitment to preservation and respect for community and transparency. Throughout the project, stakeholders and community representatives were present and any concerns were quelled. Major issues pertaining to the building and usage of The Academy Lofts were avoided, and Arbor Hill welcomed with open arms a project that provides low-income housing in a City struggling for affordable living options, shows faith in the neighborhood and progress on North Swan Street.

## COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

---

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

The Academy Lofts serve as a major arts incubator for the community and beyond. Facilitating arts programs and bringing art to the neighborhood makes it a more vibrant and diverse place to live, work and visit. Additionally, the building that houses the Lofts is representative of the architectural fabric of Arbor Hill. It showcases preservation efforts while bringing attention to a historically significant part of our City.

Atypical of many urban revitalization efforts, The Academy Lofts provide low-income housing to artists with limited income. This type of revitalization efforts limits exclusion and enhances diversity as opposed to shifting the makeup of an area while improving it.

Just two years ago, North Swan was known for its open air drug markets, proximity to the City's largest public housing project and abandoned brownstones. Today, a Friday night looks completely different. Whether we're playing for the public a documentary on the fight for Civil Rights in Albany or using our gallery space to present an exciting new artist, the area has something to offer everyone.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

The most valuable lesson ACHA and other community organizations learned from building of The Academy Lofts is the importance of transparency. While this was something achieved by the project, it was a good lesson for all to learn who to involve in the planning and at what stage. Similar to New York City's ULURP (Uniform Land Use Review Process), from this project we identified a process by which to approve use of public land with the largest emphasis being on the desires and opinions of the community. While their voices were absolutely heard, we would like to see public hearings and comment periods earlier on and more frequently for future projects. It was and will continue to be of the utmost importance that residents can maintain pride and stock in their neighborhood through any revitalization work.

Send to Contact

## OTHER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Name Kristen Holler Title Executive Director  
Organization Albany Barn, Inc. Telephone (518) 935-4858  
Address 56 Second Street City/State/ZIP Albany, NY 12210  
Fax ( ) E-mail kristen@albanybarn.org

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature Kristen Holler Date 10/17/14

1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Albany Barn acted as the creative partner in the development of The Barn/Academy Lofts project. The role of Albany Barn was to act as a liaison to both the artist community, and the neighborhood in which the project is located. Albany Barn undertook a major grassroots effort to spread the mission of the project and garner support for a creative placemaking project that would simultaneously serve the creative sector and the community through increased exposure and development for creative professionals, artists, and artisans and carefully designed and facilitated opportunities for artists and the public to meet and collaborate for the purpose of reinvigorating the community.

Through outreach efforts based in the Arbor Hill neighborhood, efforts were made to increase local and regional awareness of revitalization and stabilization efforts in the Arbor Hill neighborhood by offering multidisciplinary arts programming that was accessible to all and producing quality exhibitions and events that integrated the creative arts into the larger picture of redevelopment and revitalization. Where most see daunting problems of urban decay and neglect, artists see opportunity to create and beautify. One of the most important roles Albany Barn has played in the implementation of the project has been the selection of artists in residence. Artists were carefully screened for their dedication to their craft as well as their interest and ability to mobilize their creative talents for the purpose of community engagement.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

The Barn/Academy Lofts and the associated programming that takes place in conjunction with the project has generated more than 2,000 visits to the Arbor Hill neighborhood. It is beginning to influence a change in public perception of the neighborhood from that of a 'typical' low-income neighborhood marked by neglect and crime to a true up-and-coming community of opportunity and choice.

The project not only impacts the more than 45 artists who live and work within the walls of the building by providing them measurable financial and professional stability, but also impacts the larger community. Since opening its doors in April, 2014 The Barn has hosted two full scale theatrical productions, twelve visual art exhibitions, four concerts, workshops and classes in painting, spoken word, acting, yoga, and African dance, and a host of business functions, community meetings, and special events with the majority of events being free or low-cost and open to the general public.

By connecting the under served community of Arbor Hill with city and regional events and trends The Barn/Academy Lofts can begin to encourage self-advocacy in the areas of program and service planning and public safety. As the borders of Arbor Hill become more fluid and the community is brought back into the fold of city and regional planning and revitalization, residents and visitors can begin to shed light on long overlooked problems such as blighted buildings, vacant commercial properties, and limited access to public transit and nutritious food options and advocate for resources to address these issues that hold the neighborhood back from achieving true and lasting revitalization.

## OTHER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

In redeveloping an historic building to become a multipurpose arts center as well as a residential space there are many difficult decisions that must be made to balance historic preservation with the current and future needs of residential and commercial users and the larger community of neighbors, program participants, and event goers. Also in redevelopment of older structures, contingency budgets can become quickly eaten away by unforeseen abatement and construction costs. Albany Barn participated in weekly construction meetings to keep abreast of progress and offer input when issues of the functionality of planned facilities arose. In some instances, amenities that would make for ideal living and working spaces for artists such as sound dampening construction materials and high capacity ventilation systems had to be value engineered out or did not meet historic preservation guidelines. When these instances occurred, there was a team effort to make reasonable adjustments in order to achieve the best results possible for all. In addition, the number and size of apartments and work spaces had to make sense from an operational perspective where there was enough salable square footage to offset the cost of operations, while not cannibalizing space for public/common space for programming and public meetings. These decisions were made with diligence and by the full team of project partners, including Albany Barn, to achieve the best possible results. Finally, some compromises with other development projects had to be made in connection with the development of The Barn/Academy Lofts. Parking in Arbor Hill, as in any downtown neighborhood, is a challenge. When considering the large number of projected visits to Arbor Hill that would be generated by The Barn/Academy Lofts, project partners advocated heavily for designated parking in nearby vacant lots as well as improved streetscaping and traffic calming while others were advocating for additional green space and recreational facilities. In the end, vacant double lots opposite The Barn/Academy Lofts were designated for redevelopment as a public park with no designated parking. The park will be a true value add for the community, and as usage increases we will continue to work with the City to identify opportunities for parking and traffic calming to ensure the safety and security of residents and visitors alike.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The Barn/Academy Lofts has been extremely successful in attracting visitors to Arbor Hill for everything from community forums to theatrical productions, which is a major success when focused on changing perceptions of place. In addition, the project has more demand from potential residential and commercial tenants than can be accommodated, which reinforces the need for quality, affordable living space and maker space within the creative sector, and particularly those who identify as low-income. The Barn/Academy Lofts has also seen success in engaging the neighborhood in arts programming and beginning to ease concerns of displacement from long-standing residents of Arbor Hill. The sense of community that is being built around the facilities and programs of The Barn/Academy Lofts is a true nod to the effectiveness of community driven urban planning and creative placemaking.

One of the aspects of the project that narrows the scope of individuals that can be served by the project are the strict income limits associated with the housing units. Because 100% of tenants must have income that does not exceed 50% of the area median income, there is a large portion of the creative sector that is unable to be served in the residential program, despite their being otherwise very appropriate for inclusion in a creative placemaking project. The ability to introduce individuals who have achieved a moderate level of financial stability and professional success to a community-focused project like The Barn/Academy Lofts, those individuals could bring additional resources, skill sets, and income diversity to the predominantly low-income Arbor Hill neighborhood. The project is able, however, to serve these individuals with commercial space, and Albany Barn works to actively engage artists from within and outside of The Barn/Academy Lofts in exhibitions and opportunities to teach or volunteer within our programs.

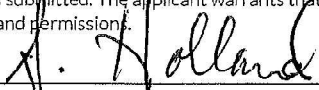
Send to Contact

## OTHER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Name	Susan Herlands Holland	Title	Executive Director
Organization	Albany Historic Foundation	Telephone	(518 ) 465-0876
Address	89 Lexington Avenue	City/State/ZIP	Albany, New York 12210
Fax	(518 ) 463-2704	E-mail	sholland@historic-albany.org

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permission.

Signature  Date 11/7/2014

1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

As background, Historic Albany Foundation (HAF) is the City of Albany's only historic preservation nonprofit organization, and now in its 40th anniversary year. In 2001, HAF with the State University at Albany Regional Planning Graduate Program, embarked on a groundbreaking study about vacant buildings. The buildings appeared to be primarily in historic neighborhoods, overlaid with the most economically distressed areas of the City. The vacant buildings, as a result of "white flight" to the suburbs, lack of good code enforcement and a local, large scale urban renewal project in the 1960's and 1970's, were fast becoming the symbol of urban blight. By counting and quantifying the buildings, HAF and the Albany Housing Authority, along with the other partners such as the City of Albany, local community development organizations and neighborhood groups and other interested stakeholders, were able to move quickly to the next step--formulating a neighborhood-based plan which ultimately became the Arbor Hill Redevelopment Plan. The Plan is a comprehensive look at the entire neighborhood while making specific recommendations such as the reuse of the St. Joseph's Academy building. The Plan is still utilized today, by its creators and new members now known as Arbor Hill Implementation Team (AHIT). HAF continues to play a role at AHIT. Today, the Plan is realized with over \$50 million in private and public investment. From HAF's perspective, the historic building stock is significantly restored and the Academy Lofts is the crowning jewel in that redevelopment. Because the Lofts and the surrounding development were so successful, more investment is now being made there. The Plan also became the model for all other neighborhood-based plans such as Capital South and the Albany Housing Authority was instrumental in developing and completing that plan. The City of Albany finally completed a comprehensive plan, Albany 2030, combining these early and successful neighborhood plans.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

HAF works in all areas of Albany and has been involved on an advisory and supportive role of the North Swan Street redevelopment, as part of AHIT. The impact on this particular neighborhood, the North Swan Street corridor, has been trailblazing and inventive. By harnessing significant private and public investments in one of the most drug-ridden, economically distressed and downright frightening areas of the City, the Albany Housing Authority was able to turn an entire neighborhood around in 10 years. Investments have been made by others-private and public-and now is touted as a now successful area of the City. A new City-owned park is under construction; the Underground Railroad History Project, an important cultural resource of national importance; and the Albany County Historical Association's new home at the restored historic King Building, are all helping to build the brand of an arts space/neighborhood, and a safe and desirable place to live. One of the direct and measureable results is the now much higher cost of real estate in the immediate area.

## OTHER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

Trade-offs and compromises were made—mostly because of time. Once the vacant building situation was known and in particular, in that neighborhood; restoration plans for the buildings, a feasibility study of the former St. Joseph's Academy (Academy Lofts), and developing budgets for each element of the development plan were completed. Most all the partners were seasoned nonprofit and community development organization, private developers or municipal agencies, yet there was an urgency to start the redevelopment and complete it, because of the direness of the neighborhood. Many could see the endgame. Perseverance and tenacity, especially on the part of Albany Housing Authority, kept the Academy Lofts project going while working with others to look to other possibilities in the immediate neighborhood. Other partners were brought along and ran other projects—such as Arbor Hill Development Corporation and the City of Albany's Department of Development and Planning. HAF had to compromise on a few historic buildings and not fight demolitions, because the vacant buildings were studied and examined; thereby, making the condition known to the public and the officials. A good compromise and outcome of the demolitions was that the city officials, the other owners in the area and the Albany Housing Authority recognized the immediate need to invest and prioritize the stabilization of those historic buildings still standing and took steps immediately. A fine blend of new and restored architecture is now the hallmark of the North Swan Street project.

4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The most successful part of this project, beside a significant, early 20th century school building being restored to its highest and best use, is the inclusiveness of the project for the entire community at large. While artists live there, they also contribute significantly to the community in so many ways—doing their art, teaching others, sharing their work, opening their building for events and as a great catalyst for growth and opportunity. The spin-off businesses, occupying historic, Main Street-type buildings on North Swan Street, have contributed to the culture and vibe of the neighborhood. With more development planned and more restorations predicted in the immediate area, the synergy continues.

There are two least successful aspects of the project—one, that funding cannot come fast to fast enough to continue the momentum and secondly, there are also three, very distressed properties at the north side of North Swan Street. But the Albany Housing Authority, the City of Albany and the other stakeholders are working now to ensure the transformation of those properties. As in Academy Lofts and the North Swan Street project, HAF has no doubt it will be a success in a short time and there will be a fully restored set of buildings in the near future.

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name	Sandy Paben	Title	CEO
Organization	Renaissance Educational Consultants	Telephone	(518) 441-5605
Address	34 North Allen Street	City/State/ZIP	12203
Fax	(518) 445-0634	E-mail	sandypaben@gmail.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature  Date 10/21/14

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Our organization had a two fold role in this project. First, during construction we provide compliance services. We oversaw the minority and woman participation and the Section 3 utilization portion of the project. This involved being on-site weekly for every construction meeting. This allowed us to be involved in understanding the space utilization concepts as well as the intent of the project.

Once the project was completed we took over all self-sufficiency case management. Our role is to meet with residents quarterly to set goals and provide supportive services that will allow them to become self-sufficient. With an artist community this has involved running workshops on topic germane to their field such as copyrighting, intellectual property, how to hang a show, how to create a web presence. In addition, if a resident needs immediate services such as food or counseling we provide access to those services as well. Each resident is assigned a case manager that they have immediate access to.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

In a community that has struggled, the ability to create a vibrant artist presence has lifted up the entire community. Not only did it take a blighted building that had been an eye sore for over twenty years and resurrect it, it created a hub for the community.

The space provides space to live, work and create. In addition, it allows the community to have access to the building for events and gatherings. The residents provide the energy needed to sustain the project. In addition, the work space is available for others in the community to use as well. It provides those in all aspects of the arts a place to produce.

There are also community activities that include the children in the neighborhood such as African American dance classes. The intent is to provide positive alternatives for the entire community.

The combination of these three aspects; live,work create, community work space and community involvement create a scenario that is reinvigorating the neighborhood.

## PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

---

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession? Approximately 400 words.

The ability to think outside the box with space utilization is crucial. There are other community venues such as Apache Cafe in Atlanta, GA but few have been able to marry the live, work, create concept.

The ability to create a unique project is only limited by the creativity of those involved. When faced with space that seems unworkable often it just takes a different view point to create a truly amazing project.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The most successful part has been the revitalization of the neighborhood and the community involvement in that process. The connection to the residents and their arts has been crucial.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect is working to get the artists to embrace a self-sufficiency mind set. They have never truly thought about actually making their arts a true business. However, over the past year we have seen a number of residents begin to make that shift. However, there are still those who are working on making the shift to making a true living through their creative endeavors.

Academy Lofts Artist Living Community



photo by Randall Perry

Refurbished historic entrance canopy over Artist Work Space entry at North Elevation. Note historically accurate replacement doors and windows.

Academy Lofts Artist Living Community



photo by Susan Lomonaco

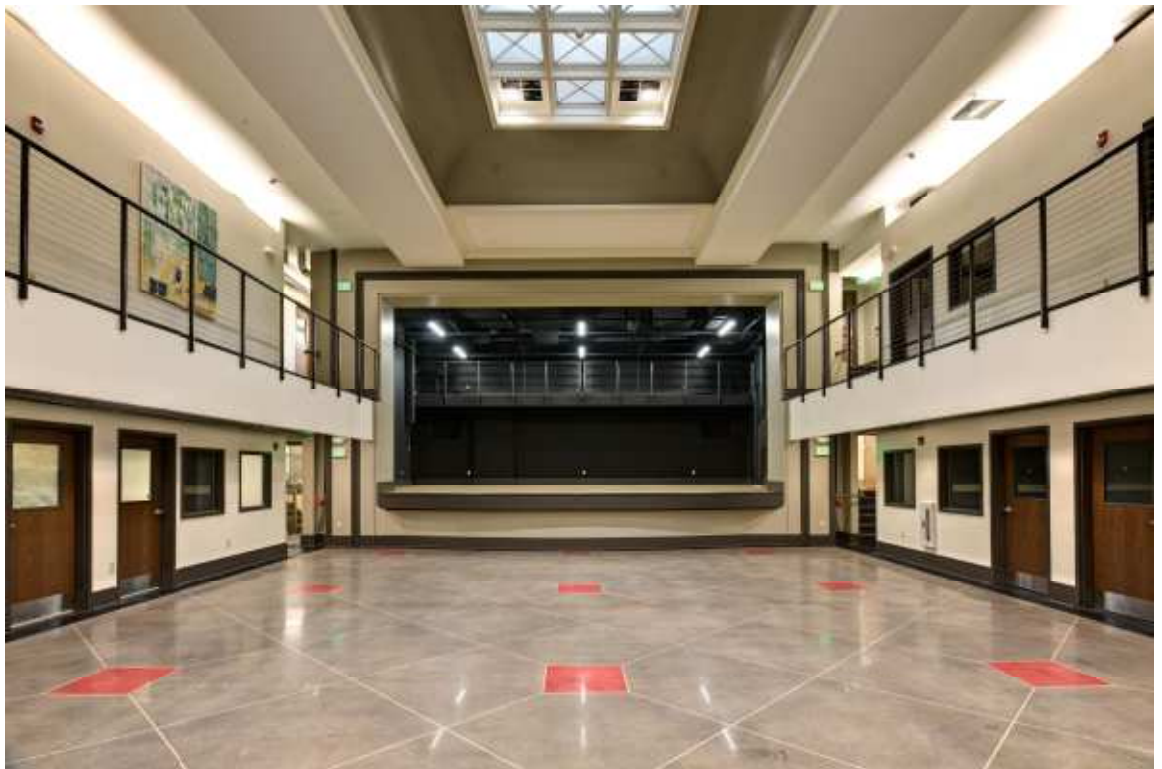
The building had been vacant for approximately 20 years, presenting a variety of restoration challenges.....

Academy Lofts Artist Living Community



Before: View of gymnasium and stage...

photo by Dave Sadowsky



After: View of Artist exhibit space, and refurbished performing arts stage. Note renovated historic skylights, main and mezzanine level perimeter artist workspace studios.

photo by Randall Perry



photo by Randall Perry

View from performance stage of exhibit space, and artist studios. Note stained concrete floor, original skylight coffer, and central floating sculptural staircase.



photo by Randall Perry

Academy Lofts Artist Living Community



photo by Randall Perry

View of artists' lounge at mezzanine level. Note interplay of original historic coffers, and columns; with exposed ductwork, multi-level space, and vibrant colors.

Academy Lofts Artist Living Community



photo by Dave Sadowsky

Before: Typical Classroom. Note snow buildup in chalkboard tray. Floor residuals comprised of lead and asbestos laden plaster mixed with pigeon "guano".



photo by Randall Perry

After: Classroom to apartment conversion. Note original chalkboard, ladder to sleeping loft, historically accurate replacement wood thermal windows, and environmentally sustainable linoleum tile floors.



photo by Randall Perry

Classroom apartment conversion. Note sleeping /storage loft, original chalkboard, and open kitchen layout.

Academy Lofts Artist Living Community



photo by Randall Perry

Former classroom corridor, now serving residential apartments. Note original historic wall tile, and original glass block borrowed lite panels. Original classroom doorways and transoms were maintained. Also note use of historic classroom style, low energy light fixtures.



photo by Mel eMedia

Artists and community members hold a 50's era dance with resident performers providing the entertainment.



photo by Kristen Holler

Local musicians gather on the stage to practice their drumming.



Resident artist shows off his displayed work.

photo by Mel eMedia



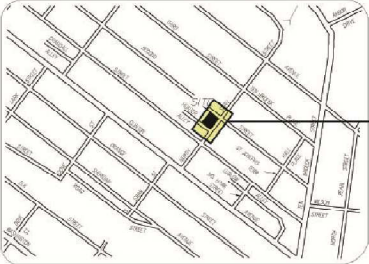
Performer practices in a rehearsal studio.

photo by Mel eMedia



SITE CONTEXT

KEY:  
URBAN NIEGHBORHOOD HOUSING [purple box]  
PROJECT BUILDING [yellow box] 

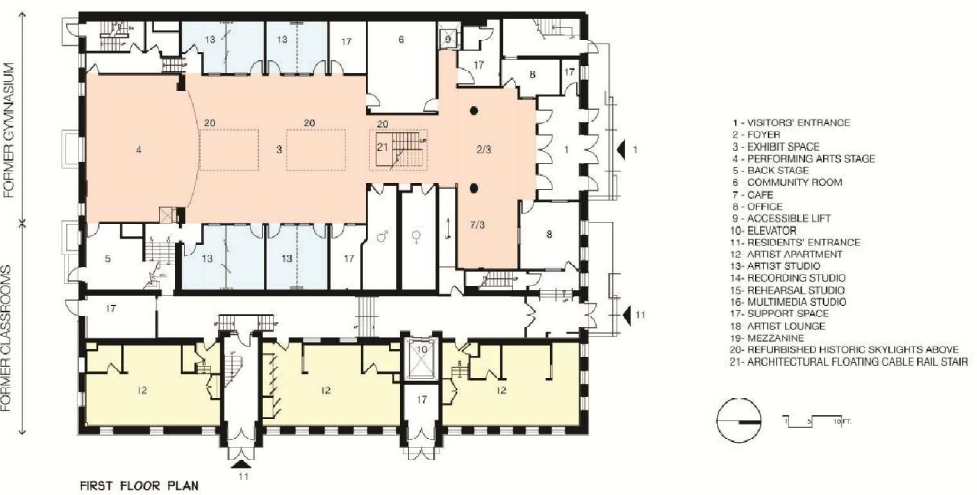
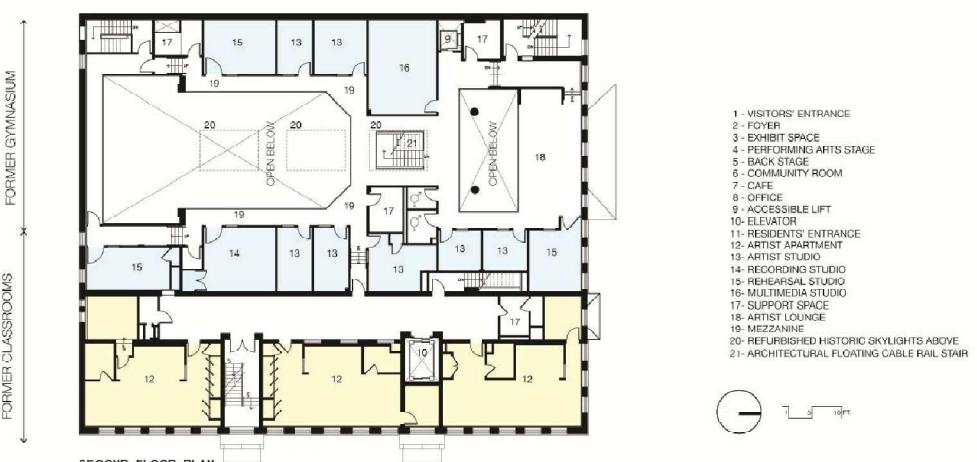
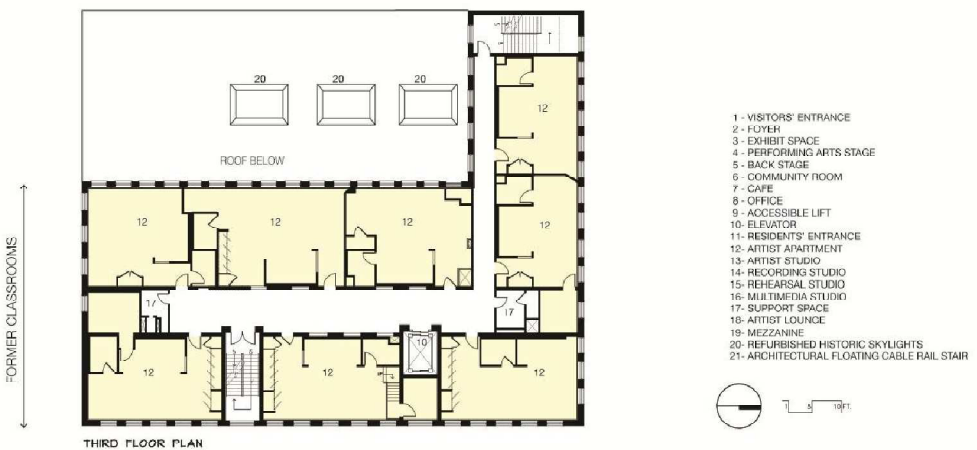
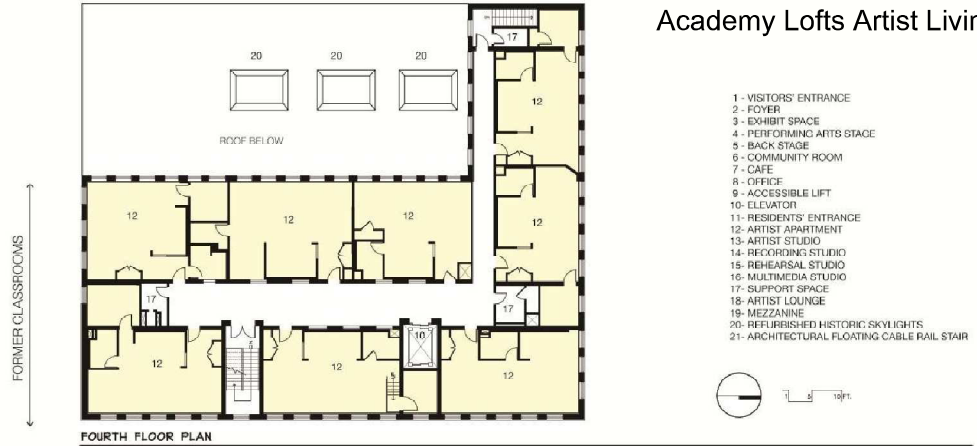


project location

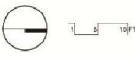
Arbor Hill Neighborhood, Albany, New York

ADAPTIVE REUSE - HISTORIC SCHOOL CONVERSION TO ARTISTS' LIVING/WORK COMMUNITY

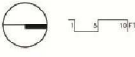
Academy Lofts Artist Living Community



- 1 - VISITORS' ENTRANCE
- 2 - FOYER
- 3 - EXHIBIT SPACE
- 4 - PERFORMING ARTS STAGE
- 5 - BACK STAGE
- 6 - COMMUNITY ROOM
- 7 - CAFE
- 8 - OFFICE
- 9 - ACCESSIBLE LIFT
- 10 - ELEVATOR
- 11 - RESIDENTS' ENTRANCE
- 12 - ARTIST APARTMENT
- 13 - ARTIST STUDIO
- 14 - RECORDING STUDIO
- 15 - REHEARSAL STUDIO
- 16 - MULTIMEDIA STUDIO
- 17 - SUPPORT SPACE
- 18 - ARTIST LOUNGE
- 19 - MEZZANINE
- 20 - REFURBISHED HISTORIC SKYLIGHTS
- 21 - ARCHITECTURAL FLOATING CABLE RAIL STAIR



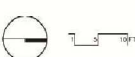
- 1 - VISITORS' ENTRANCE
- 2 - FOYER
- 3 - EXHIBIT SPACE
- 4 - PERFORMING ARTS STAGE
- 5 - BACK STAGE
- 6 - COMMUNITY ROOM
- 7 - CAFE
- 8 - OFFICE
- 9 - ACCESSIBLE LIFT
- 10 - ELEVATOR
- 11 - RESIDENTS' ENTRANCE
- 12 - ARTIST APARTMENT
- 13 - ARTIST STUDIO
- 14 - RECORDING STUDIO
- 15 - REHEARSAL STUDIO
- 16 - MULTIMEDIA STUDIO
- 17 - SUPPORT SPACE
- 18 - ARTIST LOUNGE
- 19 - MEZZANINE
- 20 - REFURBISHED HISTORIC SKYLIGHTS
- 21 - ARCHITECTURAL FLOATING CABLE RAIL STAIR



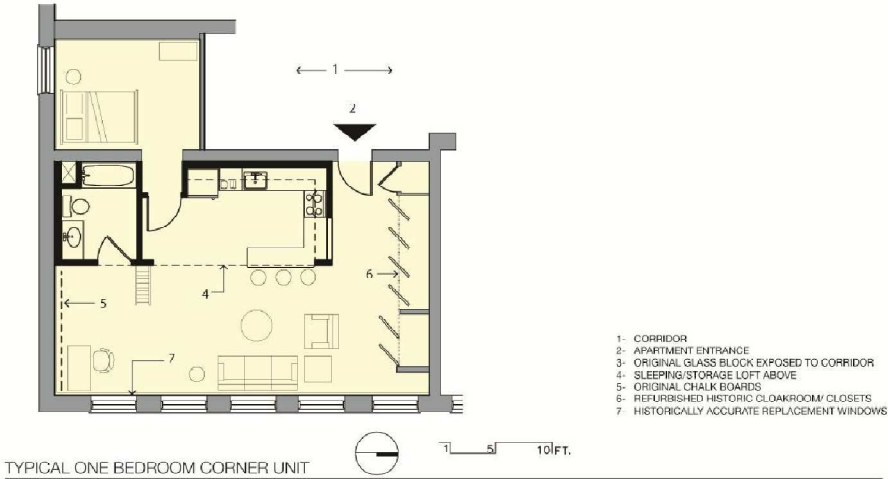
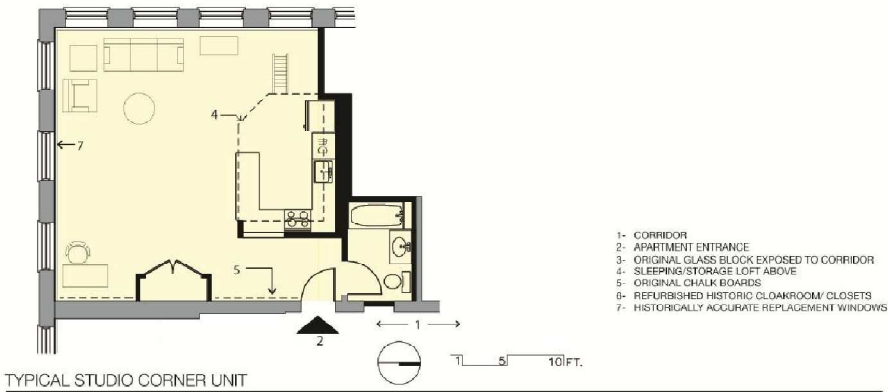
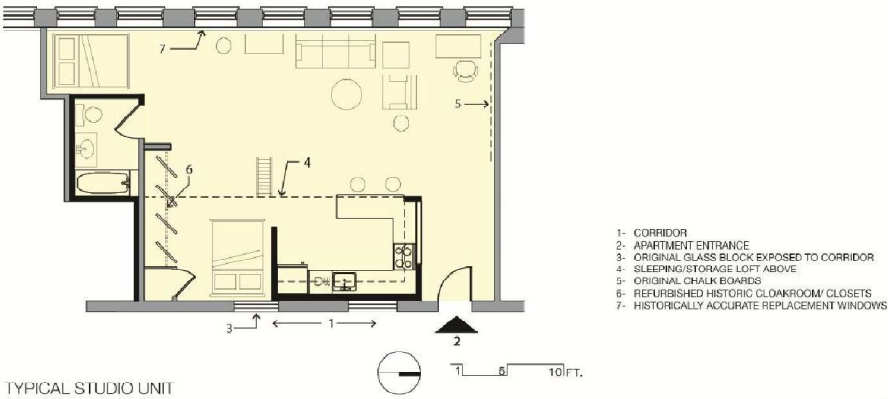
- 1 - VISITORS' ENTRANCE
- 2 - FOYER
- 3 - EXHIBIT SPACE
- 4 - PERFORMING ARTS STAGE
- 5 - BACK STAGE
- 6 - COMMUNITY ROOM
- 7 - CAFE
- 8 - OFFICE
- 9 - ACCESSIBLE LIFT
- 10 - ELEVATOR
- 11 - RESIDENTS' ENTRANCE
- 12 - ARTIST APARTMENT
- 13 - ARTIST STUDIO
- 14 - RECORDING STUDIO
- 15 - REHEARSAL STUDIO
- 16 - MULTIMEDIA STUDIO
- 17 - SUPPORT SPACE
- 18 - ARTIST LOUNGE
- 19 - MEZZANINE
- 20 - REFURBISHED HISTORIC SKYLIGHTS ABOVE
- 21 - ARCHITECTURAL FLOATING CABLE RAIL STAIR



- 1 - VISITORS' ENTRANCE
- 2 - FOYER
- 3 - EXHIBIT SPACE
- 4 - PERFORMING ARTS STAGE
- 5 - BACK STAGE
- 6 - COMMUNITY ROOM
- 7 - CAFE
- 8 - OFFICE
- 9 - ACCESSIBLE LIFT
- 10 - ELEVATOR
- 11 - RESIDENTS' ENTRANCE
- 12 - ARTIST APARTMENT
- 13 - ARTIST STUDIO
- 14 - RECORDING STUDIO
- 15 - REHEARSAL STUDIO
- 16 - MULTIMEDIA STUDIO
- 17 - SUPPORT SPACE
- 18 - ARTIST LOUNGE
- 19 - MEZZANINE
- 20 - REFURBISHED HISTORIC SKYLIGHTS ABOVE
- 21 - ARCHITECTURAL FLOATING CABLE RAIL STAIR



ADAPTIVE REUSE - HISTORIC SCHOOL CONVERSION TO ARTISTS' LIVING/WORK COMMUNITY  
 CLASSROOM CONVERSION TO ARTIST LOFTS



[Subscribe to Times Union](#)  
[Subscriber Services](#)  
[Advertise With Us](#)  
[Get TV Weekly Magazine](#)

**timesunion.com**

Search [timesunion.com](#) [Businesses](#)

[Weather](#) [Closings](#) [Traffic](#) [Help](#)

Wednesday, October 01, 2014

**63**°F Albany, NY  
Light Rain

[Home](#) [News](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Opinion](#) [Entertainment](#) [Living](#) [Blogs](#) [Jobs](#) [Real Estate](#) [Cars](#) [Classifieds](#) [Index](#) [SAVE](#)

[Local](#) [Your Town](#) [Capitol Confidential](#) [Newsletters](#) [State](#) [Nation](#) [World](#) [Technology](#) [Special Reports](#) [School Closings](#) [All Stories](#)

## Arbor Hill named one of America's 10 great neighborhoods

Organization names Albany community a great neighborhood

By Paul Grondahl

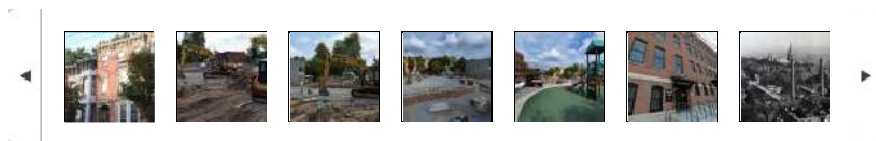
Updated 6:34 am, Wednesday, October 1, 2014

1 of 11

[PREV](#) [NEXT](#)



Homes along Clinton Avenue on Tuesday Sept. 30, 2014 in Albany, N.Y. (Michael P. Farrell/Times Union) [Buy this photo](#)



4 [Tweet](#) 288 [Share](#) 0 [g+](#) 0

[Larger](#) | [Smaller](#) [Email This](#)

[Printable Version](#) [Font](#)

### Latest News

[AP: Assemblyman William Scarborough to face charges in Albany](#)

[Suspect in custody after manhunt that closed Skidmore College](#)

### Albany

One can forgive the residents of Arbor Hill for walking with slightly swelled heads and a bit of a swagger on Wednesday, after the [American Planning Association](#) announced that the neighborhood was chosen as one of the 10 great neighborhoods in America for 2014.

"There was nothing but blight, crime, shootings and murder along the Lexington Avenue corridor a few years ago and we've turned it around," said [Mark Robinson](#), 51, a Common Council member who represents Arbor Hill. He has lived in the neighborhood for more than 40

## Rain sprinkles on region

### Arbor Hill named one of America's 10 great neighborhoods

years and has renovated his own home and helped family members renovate others. He has his own personal story of redemption.

"We're taking this neighborhood back one block at a time and there's a good spirit in the air here," he said. "It's a labor of love for those of us who've lived here a long time."

"This is quite an honor and it's finally giving Arbor Hill its due," said [Mary Liz Stewart](#), co-founder with her husband, Paul, of the Underground Railroad History Project. Their group is restoring the 19th-century brick home of noted abolitionists Stephen and [Harriet Myers](#) on Livingston Avenue, a stop along the Underground Railroad.

"This recognition is a thank-you to those people who continued to live in Arbor Hill and hung in there in the tough years and represent the foundation of the community," she said.

They won't gloat, but Arbor Hill residents have every right to adopt an I-told-you-so attitude after enduring decades of naysayers and negativity that focused on ongoing problems with poverty and crime rather than a perspective that accentuated the positives of community spirit, new development and a celebration of great potential.

**That's what the APA did with its selection of Arbor Hill, which joins a list of 230 neighborhoods, streets and public spaces chosen since 2007 in its "Great Places in America" designation that highlights "a true sense of place, cultural and historical interest, community involvement and a vision for tomorrow."**

"The strong effort at rehabilitating housing units and the historical connection were factors in the selection of Arbor Hill," said [Roberta Rewers](#), a spokeswoman for the APA. "We were impressed by the collaborative efforts to keep the community moving forward."

The only other previous recipient in the Capital Region was the historic Broadway corridor in Saratoga Springs in 2012.

Arbor Hill is in some impressive company this year, chosen along with neighborhoods that include Adams Morgan in Washington, D.C.; Fields Corner in Dorchester, Mass.; Fremont in Seattle; the Fan District in Richmond, Va.; and the Victorian District in Savannah, Ga.

"We have a lot of positive energy going on here. It's one of the hidden jewels of our city," said [Arlene Way](#), director of the [Arbor Hill Development Corp.](#), a not-for-profit neighborhood preservation organization. She's lived there since 2006 and is a former president of the [Arbor Hill Neighborhood Association](#).

"I love the neighborhood. It embraces everybody," Way said.

"I don't want to say it's about time, but that's how I feel," said [Kristen Holler](#), executive director of [Albany Barn](#). The not-for-profit group renovated the long-vacant, blighted former St. Joseph's Academy building at the corner of North Swan and Second streets and turned it into [Academy Lofts](#), with 22 apartments for artist-tenants and work studios for 24 more artists.

**The APA cited the Academy Lofts as one of the highlights of the Arbor Hill recognition and a focal point of \$77.5 million in public and private revitalization efforts since the Arbor Hill Neighborhood Plan was put into place in 2003.**

"I'm really excited that people are finally noticing and recognizing the jewel that Arbor Hill actually is," said [Jillian Altenburg](#), executive director of the Ten Broeck Mansion. "There was a lot of stigma that had to be put behind us."



NEW YORK STATE  
OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

October 29, 2014

Mr. Jeffrey Mirel  
President, Board of Directors  
Albany Barn, Inc.  
PO Box 10261  
Albany, NY 12201

Dear Mr. Mirel:

Each year the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation recognizes excellence in the preservation and revitalization of New York's historic and cultural treasures. This year it is our honor to present a **2014 New York State Historic Preservation Award** to the Academy Lofts project in Albany— an outstanding rehabilitation of a former school into affordable artists' housing and work space. The award recognizes the Albany Housing Authority in partnership with the Albany Barn, Inc.

This year's awards ceremony will be held on Thursday, December 4, at 1:30 pm at Academy Lofts. The ceremony will follow the quarterly meeting of the New York State Board for Historic Preservation and provides the perfect opportunity to celebrate outstanding preservation achievements across the state. We hope that you and your project partners will be there to receive the recognition that is your due. Please RSVP to [Austin.OBrien@parks.ny.gov](mailto:Austin.OBrien@parks.ny.gov) or call 518 237-8643 (ext. 3279). Your project team and guests are welcome to attend!

We admire and appreciate all that you and your colleagues have done to preserve and revive New York's rich heritage. Best wishes and congratulations on this much-deserved award.

Sincerely,

Rose Harvey  
Commissioner

cc: Kristen Holler, Director of Volunteer Coordination – Albany Barn, Inc.  
Dave Sadowsky, Architect  
Michael Lopez, TAP  
John W. Bishop, Jr. and Peter Beaudry, Bishop Beaudry Construction

Albany, New York 12238  
518-474-0443 • Fax: 518-474-1365

printed on recycled paper