

Abstract

Project Name Cleveland Historic Warehouse District

Location Downtown Cleveland, West of Public Square, above the Cuyahoga River Flats, and Lake Erie to the North

1. Describe briefly the project's design and implementation.

With the approval of the Historic Warehouse District as a local Landmark and a National Register District in 1982, the historic preservation community began the process of saving Cleveland's oldest commercial buildings. A decision was made through master planning to convert this blighted, vacant Victorian commercial district into a vibrant residentially based neighborhood in the heart of downtown.

In 1991, as a result of the use of historic tax credits, rental market studies and the city of Cleveland's creative use of UDAG funds and other HUD funding sources, adaptive reuse housing projects began in earnest. Over the last four years:

- * 1,000 apartments in 16 vacant warehouses and 9 new buildings have been added to create a neighborhood with a residential base of 1,500 people.
- * Active proposals in the financing stage will add an additional 322 housing units and another 500 residents.
- * The success of the Warehouse District residential development has spurred similar development in other parts of downtown Cleveland.
- * In addition to housing, retail shops, restaurants, jazz clubs, and commercial tenants continue to seek out the Warehouse District as a unique place to work and play (see color brochure).
- * 30 buildings with a total of \$125 million in private and public investment have transformed the 9 block area

2. What local urban issues did this project address? What were its goals? Were there issues that, in your judgement, might have been addressed but were not?

The major local urban issues addressed through the revitalization of the Warehouse District are:

- * Protecting Cleveland's heritage through adaptive reuse of its oldest commercial buildings
- * Creating a vibrant mixed use residential neighborhood in the heart of downtown with a critical mass of 1,500 residents
- * Cleaning up slum and blight in downtown caused by under utilized older buildings and waning businesses
- * Adding market rate housing in a city which has become predominately lower income
- * Attracting middle class people back to the city

The goals reached as a by-product of creating a successful neighborhood are:

- * Creating new jobs in retail service and commercial businesses to the city
- * Attracting jobs back to the city from the suburbs
- * Attracting suburbanites to downtown for club and restaurant entertainment in a safe, clean environment
- * Adding tax revenue to the city to help rebuild the financial base
- * Creating neighborhood diversity through for sale housing, market rate and affordable apartments
- * Providing neighborhood services like small markets, coffee houses, dry cleaning in downtown
- * Creating green space in and around the neighborhood for residents and workers to enjoy
- * Attracting new residents into Cleveland, moving from out of state and outside of the region, who are looking for an urban lifestyle.

Issues we are still working on include ensuring there is adequate parking for residents and neighborhood visitors

in a town which is car driven; providing security and street cleaning to create a uniform level of service through the district. A business improvement district is currently being formed as well, led by the apartment building owners to self assess for clean and safe activities.

3. Describe the financing of the Project. Do you think it could be replicated?

The City of Cleveland, Cleveland Tomorrow and the Historic Warehouse District Development Corp. have been instrumental in supporting the renaissance of the city's first neighborhood into Cleveland's newest residential neighborhood. Through financial incentives and design controls, these organizations enticed local developers to convert old warehouses to retail, commercial and residential uses. Incentive packages for rehabilitation included:

- * Syndicated historic tax credits on every building rehabbed to date
- * City tax abatement on the all projects which include housing
- * Low interest city loans for gap financing from UDAG redirect and loan repayments, HUD Section 8 loan guarantees, city and county bond authorities
- * City CDBG storefront grants
- * Cleveland Tomorrow low interest loans for gap financing
- * Streetscape and greenspace improvements
- * Street cleaning
- * Market studies showing the demand for and the absorption rate of downtown living opportunities
- * Advocacy on behalf of individual projects to local lenders for construction and take out financing
- * Marketing of vacant retail, commercial and apartment space

In addition, these organizations are currently taking the lead on building the first new construction town housing in downtown Cleveland in over 100 years on the parking lots and vacant parcels in the Warehouse District. Yes, the Warehouse District model can be and is being replicated in other parts of downtown Cleveland and other cities in the Midwest

4. Why does the project merit the Rudy Bruner Award for Excellence in the Urban Environment?

- * The creation of a residential neighborhood where one did not exist for over 150 years
- * The successful private/public partnerships which together created this unique neighborhood in Cleveland to live, work and play
- * The city's creative use of the old UDAG funds to leverage adaptive reuse projects in close proximity to each other and its continued commitment to stabilizing the neighborhood through HUD Section 8 and CDBG funds
- * Cleveland's oldest commercial and warehouse buildings, dating from 1850 were protected and enhanced
- * The faith Cleveland's business community had to have to undertake the initial projects and the faith it took to continue to develop old buildings. The reward is a low financial rate of return, but a strong sense of pride in saving a building and creating a neighborhood.

