Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. 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.

Project Name: Wheeler Arts Community  
Location: Indianapolis, IN

Owner: Wheeler Arts Community, L.P. (Subsidiary of Southeast Neighborhood Dev)

Project Use(s): live/work lofts for low income artists; theatre; studios and offices

Project Size: 60,000 square feet  
Total Development Cost: $4.6 Million

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate): $144,000

Date Initiated: December, 1998  
Percent Completed, December 1, 2001: 100%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate): September, 2000

Application submitted by:

Name: Bill Taft  
Title: President

Organization: Southeast Neighborhood Development

Address: 1831 Prospect  
City/State/Zip: Indianapolis, IN 46203

Telephone: (317) 634-5079  
Fax: (317) 637-3137

E-mail: billtaft@ind.cioe.com

Weekend Contact Number (for notification): (317) 926-8673

Key Participants (Attach an additional sheet if needed): SEE ATTACHED

Organization:___

Key Participant:___

Telephone/e-mail:___

Public Agencies

Architect/Designer

Developer

Professional Consultant

Community Group

Other

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

☒ Direct Mailing  ☐ Magazine Advertisement  ☐ Previous RBA entrant  ☐ Other (please specify)

☐ Professional Newsletter  ☐ Previous Selection Committee member

☐ Organization Magazine Calendar

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Signature: [Signature]

[Signature]
## Key Participants

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<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Key Participant</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Public Agencies:</strong></td>
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<td>(317) 327-5701</td>
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<td><strong>Architect/Designer:</strong></td>
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<td>Fountain Action</td>
<td>Tonya Hunley</td>
<td>(317) 236-8310</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Indianapolis</td>
<td>Jerry Israel</td>
<td>(317) 788-3211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandt Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td>(317) 638-3300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Initiatives Support Corporation</td>
<td>Sherry Seiwert</td>
<td>(317) 630-3113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership</td>
<td>Allan Wright</td>
<td>(317) 925-1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliant Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td>(317) 638-3300</td>
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Project Name: Wheeler Arts Community
Location: 1035 Sanders Street, Indianapolis, IN 46203

1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major project goals.

The Wheeler Arts Community, the result of massive redevelopment of a 60,000 square foot factory listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has brought renewed life to an urban neighborhood on the southeast side of Indianapolis. This 86-year old building was once home to the nation's first mass producer of carburetors and was largely abandoned and in disrepair for the past decade. This distinct grassroots-generated project is the result of partnerships between a nonprofit community development corporation and the public sector, lending community, neighborhood associations, and other critical institutions – particularly the University of Indianapolis. Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND) took on the project, steering the entire development process from conception to completion, by primarily leveraging funds through historic and low income tax credits with additional private investments. The accomplished project is now a combined center for the arts: containing classrooms, a children's theatre, gallery space, as well as housing 34 aspiring artists in affordable studio/loft apartments.

The Wheeler project is many stories in one. Of course it is about how multiple entities can benefit from a mutual focus. It is also a story about how old buildings can take on new lives; for a community, and how design and architecture can bring multiple functions together in a harmonious and attractive way under one roof – one very old roof. It is a project with no losers: The community is enlivened, given a new center for commerce; the residents are given new educational and cultural opportunities; and artists are provided a place to live and concentrate on their work in a supportive environment. It is a successful representation of the transformation of a blighted and outmoded industrial building into an attractive and innovative multi-use complex.

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.)

- The Wheeler Arts Community is a unique collaboration between public agencies; neighborhood-based organizations; and higher education, expanding a community-based initiative to use the arts as an economic tool for redevelopment. Already, it has generated tremendous activity in the community in cultural and economic ventures beyond the Wheeler project. In addition, it provides affordable housing for emerging artists.

- It is the result of an unusual and creative community/university partnership. The interaction of resident artists with university students, professors, and community residents continues the social livelihood of the neighborhood and brings new educational and cultural opportunities to the area.

- Another major success has been the overall appeal of the design given its distinct historic renovations and utilization of space. As an adaptive reuse project, the model respects the existing structure, manufacturing components, and materials. Such aspects of the present configuration express and highlight the original character of the building. Use of new materials and existing materials reinforced the building’s strong historical and industrial presence.

- All of this was accomplished with long-term financial stability. The innovative financing of the entire project will allow for long-term sustainability of this critical community asset.
2001
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROJECT DESCRIPTION
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. 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.

1. What local issues did this project address? How has it affected the local community?

The community had identified the neglected Wheeler Building as a “problem building” for quite some time, as the dilapidation added to other neighborhood difficulties such as low resident incomes and education levels, and an aging housing stock. The previous Mayor of Indianapolis had tried to demolish the building repeatedly. The neighborhood still saw value in the building and in partnership with SEND were able to halt the demolition plans and convince the City that the building had unexploited potential. As a result, the massive Wheeler Arts renovation converted the 60,000 square-foot, historic factory into a combined center for the arts, community outreach, educational instruction, as well as working studio/apartments for low income artists.

All elements of urban life are converging in critical mass through the Wheeler project – people, cultural organizations, institutions, and public and private funding. Since completed, the project has located a new center of arts-motivated commerce by the activities of the tenants. It invites people to this area of Indianapolis. Three restaurants recently opened and other local business owners are investing in façade improvements. Indianapolis needed the benefits provided by a strong and healthy arts community, and the Fountain Square neighborhood is now seen in a new light.

The Wheeler Arts Community is also a unique community/university partnership. SEND and U. of I. have worked together to provide a variety of cultural and educational programs to the neighborhood, which is experiencing significantly lower levels of educational attainment than other Indianapolis communities. Through various departments at U. of I., interdisciplinary courses and community oriented non-credit classes will be offered to southeast residents. In addition, service learning – outreach-based educational projects – will be a major emphasis of the classes held in the building. To date, the university has taught classes to area high schools, repaired senior homes, instructed school children in music and theatre, given health counseling, marched against drugs, and raised funds to build local parks.

2. Describe the underlying values of the project. What, if any, significant tradeoffs were required to implement the project?

- This project makes a solid argument against the frequently held assumption that cities need to sacrifice their urban identities in place of suburban-style development. Instead urban revitalization and redevelopment can emphasize what’s distinct and what’s good about a neighborhood or a building, springboarding from the fact that this is a real place, with a real history.

- The Wheeler Arts Community was built on the recognition that the arts serve as a powerful economic engine for revitalization of neighborhood and commercial districts and that arts bring new energy to a neighborhood.

- This project created opportunities for individuals who struggle to find affordable living space. Wheeler Arts is now a live/work environment for artists, offering subsidized housing for individuals earning 60% or less of the area median income.

The main tradeoff that occurred during the development process ultimately enhanced the project far beyond the original intent. Originally, there were plans for well over 36 living units and a common area and gallery that would be leased to local artists and related organizations. SEND then began conversations with the University of Indianapolis (U of I) and a partnership was formed. As a result, significant redesign work had to be made to accommodate this endeavor, however, this leveraged many more community benefits than originally anticipated.
3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

For the past ten years the abandoned building was an ugly reminder of years when Fountain Square functioned as a manufacturing center. By the 1990s, the complex was too outdated to house modern manufacturing, but was still in structurally sound condition. In response to neighborhood outcries over its appearance, in 1998, SEND began studying the building to determine what new use would generate funding to restore the building. Based on various models in other cities, SEND learned that artists were looking for buildings where they can both live and create their art. This was an excellent use of this vacant and spacious factory, particularly since a nearby building that accommodated artists in studios closed around that time. In early 1999, SEND began raising funds for the conversion of the building into live/work lofts. Local neighborhood associations, arts community leaders and the City of Indianapolis endorsed the project. The project was very much in agreement with the 1998 Mayor’s Housing Task Force plan, which stated that arts, education and culture could be the backbone of successful urban recovery in Indianapolis. Later, the partnership with the University of Indianapolis was formed, adding more cultural and educational elements to the original idea. The focus of the architecture was to preserve the buildings “raw” appearance and historic elements. Axis Architecture + Interiors creatively utilized industrial materials and retention of open space in the design work of the building. Certain aspects of the project’s design were altered to meet historic requirements, particularly with the flooring and windows, which had to be custom manufactured. As many features of the original structure were preserved as possible during renovation.

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

Through federal, state and local funding sources, both public and private, SEND brought together over $4.6 million in renovation funds: $2.7 million from the sale of low income tax credits; $783,000 in historic rehabilitation tax credits; $250,000 in HOME dollars through the City of Indianapolis; $204,000 in Affordable Housing Project funds from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Indianapolis. In addition, the City of Indianapolis waived the rezoning fees and improved the curbs and sidewalks surrounding the building. Alliant Capital, a private investor, funded more than 80 percent of the cost. Through Alliant, the Vorizon Corporation invested in the partnership in order to utilize federal historic and low income housing tax credits. These dollars were then maximized through a $2 million bridge loan provided by the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership and an acquisition loan of $250,000 from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. The City of Indianapolis and First Indiana Bank provided “soft” loans to the project. The University of Indianapolis has committed $75,000 annually to provide a children’s theatre for southeast youngsters, classes for non-traditional area residents, and extension offices, studios and classrooms for the fine and performing arts instruction. The total cost of the project was $77 per square foot. This modest cost was achieved in spite of compliance with historic rehab standards and an emphasis on design excellence and durable materials.

5. Is the project unique? If so, how is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

Yes. This is the only known project to combine its arts, education and housing. The Wheeler Arts Community is a solid example that adaptive-reuse development can produce a better product than comparable new construction, particularly in capturing and utilizing the neglected assets of a historic urban area as a base for reinvestment. The building was ideally suited for use as artist’s lofts with its high ceilings, large clear-span spaces, skylights and wall-sized window openings.

By developing this formerly blighted structure into a community asset, the Wheeler Arts Building saved the City from spending substantial dollars to demolish the building and also attracted other reinvestment into the neighborhood. Also, the finance structuring provides net cash flow to help support other housing projects. This has not been typical with other local tax credit projects, which often become financial drains to their owners.

It is also a model for others in search of tools to attract economic development. This project has recharged and beautified the entire area by rehabilitating one vacant warehouse structure. Now, it brings in outside visitors and instills pride in neighborhood residents and merchants. With the overall arts emphasis of the project, it is actively contributing to this historic neighborhood whose background was a thriving theater district in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century.
WHEELER ARTS COMMUNITY

Exterior - After
2001

RUDY BRUNER AWARD

ARCHITECT

OR DESIGNER

PERSPECTIVE
ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

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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 Drew White
Title Partner
Organization Axis Architecture + Interiors
Telephone (317) 264-8162
Address 618 East Market Street
City/State/ZIP Indianapolis, IN 46202
Fax (317) 264-8165
E-mail dwhite@axisarch.com

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Signature Drew White

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

The initial concept was to create vistas as one circulates through the building's public spaces and to create a design that respects the existing structure, manufacturing components, and materials. Emphasis on movement, energy, and dynamics were used to create a gallery, which is then wrapped by incidental spaces created by the live/work studios as well as support spaces. The new structural entry canopy, at the north and more exposed end of the building, expresses and continues the industrial character of the building.

The large windows on the facades of the warehouse, long and continuous skylights, existing interior artifacts, and the large central skylight were retained. This also attributed to the creation of vistas and energy both interior and exterior.

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

- The creation of vistas as one circulates throughout the building creates movement and dynamics to the social experience in the galleries as well as within each studio.

- The interaction of resident artists with university students, professors, and community residents establishes and continues a social livelihood of the building and brings life to Wheeler Arts Community creating a community within a community.
3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design tradeoffs or compromises required to complete the project.

The biggest challenge was staying within the given budget and bringing back the energy of the once prominent 60,000 s.f. carburetor factory.

4. Describe the way in which the project relates to its urban context.

- Revitalizes and beautifies the area by rehabilitating a vacant warehouse structure, bringing in outside visitors and instilling pride within neighborhood residents and merchants.
- Provides a cultural experience to the neighborhood.
- Naturally causes interaction between artists and non-artists. The two groups learn from each other and teach each other.
- Involves community residents in university programs and classes.

5. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project's design and architecture.

Strengths:
- A successful transformation of a former warehouse into live/work studios, galleries, and classrooms.
- Contribution to the revitalization of an urban neighborhood whose background was a thriving theater district in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century.
- Use of new materials and existing materials to reinforce and carry on the building's strong historical and industrial presence.
2001
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
OTHER PERSPECTIVE

RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE
1. What role did you play in the development of this project?

The University of Indianapolis is a partner in the Wheeler Arts Community project. SEND approached the Community Programs Director of the university concerning the Wheeler building while it was still an abandoned factory. The Strategic Plan of the university had identified several departments that needed additional space, some of which had specifically identified a desire to locate space in the Fountain Square neighborhood (where Wheeler is located). As SEND firm up its proposal for a live/work space for artists, the university agreed to lease all the space in the building not suitable for residential use (i.e. interior areas without windows). SEND felt that they needed an institutional anchor for the project to be successful and that is largely the role the university has and is playing in the Wheeler project. In addition to anchoring the project, the university was able to attract other arts groups (i.e. The Writers' Center of Indiana and the Fine Arts Society of Indianapolis) to locate offices and or programs in the building as well.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the neighborhood and the city. Include any data or supplementary materials that support your conclusions.

Already, there is evidence that it is having an impact on the neighborhood and the city. Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson praised the project during his speech at the Binford Forum, an event held at Wheeler Arts Community as part of the opening festivities. He used this project and its partnerships as models of how to create positive change in inner City neighborhoods. A panel of eight neighborhood and community leaders at The Binford Forum echoed the mayor's comments that the Wheeler project represents an innovative approach to addressing problems facing deteriorated, poverty stricken neighborhoods. Partnership building, as represented by this project, was universally seen as the most effective way for cities, communities and universities to find solutions to urban problems. The Wheeler project has generated tremendous enthusiasm at the U. of I., resulting in substantially greater involvement of faculty/staff/students in the Fountain Square neighborhood. It is being used as a model of interdisciplinarity, community based education on the U. of I. campus (specifically among the health and human service fields). Indiana Campus Compact has also used the U. of I. and the Wheeler project as a model of campus-community partnerships for other universities to follow. The U. of I. Community Programs Director, Dr. Tim Maher, has been asked by other local universities for help in establishing such partnerships. Professionals working on campus-community partnerships in St. Louis and the Philadelphia metro area have also requested similar assistance as a result of this project.
3. What tradeoffs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them?

The major compromises required during the Wheeler project centered on space issues. Not wanting to limit the residential uses of the building, the university had to find creative ways of achieving the kind of spaces needed for instructional and performance uses. Since our oil painting studios were in the interior of the building with no natural ventilation, a $4,000 venting system had to be installed. Additional power supply was needed to run the lights required for the U. of I. Community Theatre at Wheeler. Attracting other arts groups, which the university saw as an asset to the project, also required limiting the amount of space for university programs. The university was involved in all of these compromises.

4. What are the most and least successful aspects of the project?

The most successful aspects of this project are:

a) It is a visible symbol of the university's involvement in the community
b) It is a visible symbol of the renewal of the community
c) It has generated tremendous enthusiasm on campus and in the community for collaborative ventures beyond the Wheeler project
d) It provides space for interdisciplinary, community based education
e) It provides space for community oriented non-credit classes
f) It provides an important art venue on the south side of Indianapolis (almost all artistic and cultural facilities are on the north side)

The least successful aspect of the project has been the somewhat limited publicity and press coverage of the project.
2001
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE
DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE

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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 Bill Taft
Title President
Organization Southeast Neighborhood Development
Telephone (317) 634-5079
Address 1831 Prospect
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E-mail billtaft@ind.cioe.com

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Signature [Signature]

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement.

The community had identified the neglected Wheeler Building as a “problem building” for quite some time. As a neighborhood-based organization, Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND) got involved to begin to solve this community problem. The previous Mayor of Indianapolis had tried to demolish the building repeatedly. The neighborhood was unwilling to allow that and in partnership with SEND, were able to halt the demolition plans and convince the City that the building had unexploited potential. SEND had previous experience in low-income housing tax credit projects, historic renovation and in general, neighborhood-based development. Due to the uniqueness of the project, there was no other alternative than for SEND to be the developer on the project. Essentially, SEND acted as the developer, owner and project manager of the entire venture.

2. What, if any, modifications were made to the original proposal as the project was developed? What tradeoffs or compromises were required during the development of the project?

The first major alteration came after drawing the initial plans and gathering the bids. The bids came back 20% higher than expected, so SEND had to raise more support. SEND was able to continue the project with an additional grant from a local nonprofit intermediary. The second major issue came after construction began. Originally, there were plans for a common area and gallery that would be leased to local artists and related organizations, however, SEND did not know with whom. SEND heard that the University of Indianapolis (U of I) was looking to increase its presence in the southeast community and a unique partnership was formed. SEND leased a larger portion of the building than originally planned and significant redesign work had to be made to accommodate this endeavor. For example, in place of the gallery space, a children’s theatre and classrooms were built.

Lastly, certain aspects of the project were altered to meet historic requirements, particularly with the windows and flooring. As many features of the original structure were preserved. From a design standpoint these adjustments ultimately improved the aesthetic quality of the project.

3. How was the project financed? What, if any, innovative means of financing were used?

Due to the project’s non-traditional nature, a conventional first mortgage was avoided. To accomplish this, SEND chose to defer the developer’s fee for the first two years. All the project funds were either equity generated through tax credits or soft loans. This allowed the project to maintain financial stability, offer low rents, and sustain itself through future net income to the organization.

The more innovative aspects of the project’s financing include the following: First, SEND obtained a bridge loan from the Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership. This deferred the need to draw equity from investors and allowed the project to be financed through highly-leveraged equity from syndication of the Low Income Housing and Historic Tax Credit programs. A Neighborhood Impact Grant filled the additional construction cost gaps. Along the way, SEND also obtained brownfield redevelopment funds to remove underground storage tanks discovered after construction began. In addition, the project took place during a major labor shortage in the construction field. This caused significant timing and deadline strain; however, the project was still completed and fully occupied within twenty-four months of its conception.
4. How did the financial benefits and economic impacts of this project compare with or differ from other projects you have been involved in?

By developing this formerly blighted structure into a community asset, the Wheeler Arts Building saved the City from spending substantial dollars to demolish the building and also attracted other economic reinvestment into the neighborhood. To name a few examples, three new restaurants are now opening in the near vicinity, and the grocery store adjacent to the Wheeler invested in exterior and interior improvements of their building. The unique partnership with the University of Indianapolis brought another type of much-needed investment into the area: enhanced educational and cultural opportunities. This partnership attracted other organizations, such as The Writers' Center of Indiana and the Fine Arts Society of Indianapolis, to locate their offices in the building. Also, the structuring of the financing provides net cash flow to help support other housing projects. This has not been typical with SEND’s and other local tax credit developments, which have often become financial drains to their owners.

5. What about this project would be instructive to other developers?

SEND has learned that the arts can be a powerful economic development tool and that Community Development Corporations (CDCs) can combine resources from multiple financing arenas to make non-traditional projects work. SEND also found that tapping into the resources of a larger institution such as a university is time consuming and difficult, but very beneficial in the long run. Lastly, the Wheeler Arts Building is another solid example that adaptive-reuse development can produce a better product than comparable new construction, particularly in capturing and utilizing the neglected assets of a historic urban area as a base for reinvestment.

6. What are the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspects the Wheeler Arts Community are that it enhanced university engagement in the community and raised the profile of Fountain Square as a center for the arts. Another major success has been the overall appeal of the design, given its unique historic renovations and utilization of space. All of this was accomplished with long-term financial stability.

The main challenge of the project was faced when leasing the units. The income and documentation requirements of the tax credit program are cumbersome and make it more difficult to select residents based on artistic skill and compatibility with the community’s goals.
2001 RUDY BRUNER AWARD
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE
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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 Terry Steadham
Title Resident Artist

Organization Wheeler Arts Community
Telephone ( ) (317) 955-4916

Fax ( ) (317) 940-3648

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Signature

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

Myself and another artist, both 55 years old, are the two oldest artists living in the Wheeler Arts Building. My connection to Fountain Square goes way back. I grew up in this area and spent many hours watching the classics at the Fountain Square Movie Theatre and shopping at the G.C. Murphy five and dime store, two buildings since has restored.

I left Indianapolis to live in New York City, spending significant time also in Dallas and Los Angeles. After many years, I returned to the Indianapolis Art Scene. Now I keep thinking, "Who would have thought, that this place I grew up in, would be the place where I can now live and work on my art?" I never imagined that I would end up back in Fountain Square. The Wheeler Arts Community has made this possible. This building was built for me. It is the perfect formula for serious artists.

2. From the community’s point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

From the neighborhood perspective, at first there is always an initial surliness to newcomers, but the neighborhood is becoming more comfortable. The Wheeler Arts Community will be a great benefit to the community in so many ways. This area of Indianapolis has always been depressed, but lively. It will offer so much to the young people and older residents of this area with the emphasis on the arts and variety of courses offered in the building.

3. What tradeoffs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

It seemed that the completion of the project took longer than the general public expected. Early on, the word got out and a long list of potential residents was accumulated. Time lapsed and it became a secret of some kind to discover. I did not give up and kept digging for more information. I hung in there until the end and it was worth it. I kept pushing for more information. I hung in there until the end and it was worth it. At first when I heard about the Wheeler project, I thought they were in over their heads. The warehouse was an old, marginal building. At the same time, it seemed ideal for an artist loft building. At some point I saw it coming together and as the work continued, I could see that it was good work. That's when I put my name on the list for space. Now I am helping to spread the word.
4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

There is truly a movement fostering arts in Fountain Square. Beginning with the Murphy Art Center around the corner, the spiritual seed was planted here on the southeast side. The Wheeler Arts Community is the piece of the puzzle in Fountain Square that will make it work. It was the next step to solidify this area as the arts center of Indianapolis.

The completion of the Wheeler was perfect timing for the community and particularly the arts scene. With the closure of the Faris Building on the other side of downtown, numerous artists were displaced. I was one of them. Someone was listening, saw something and went with it. It was SEND. Their vision is greatly appreciated.

Also, often times buildings are marketed as "lofts", but really do not work as lofts. The Wheeler Arts Community is the perfect build out for live/work space for artists. From a design standpoint, it is obvious that the architects were excited about this project and put a lot of love into it.

5. What would you change about this project, or the process you went through?

The Wheeler Arts Community sells itself now. People enter the building and are struck with what I call the "Wheeler Obsession." But if I had to say anything: more clarity – less vagueness. There has been a lot of hearsay along the way, with many people trying to figure out deadlines and when things are going to happen. But I am confident that these quirks will work themselves out along the way – actually, they already are. Truly, SEND deserves incredible recognition for bringing this together.
2001
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PUBLIC AGENCY
PERSPECTIVE
The City of Indianapolis made available to the Wheeler Arts Community $437,500 in HOME dollars, which eliminated the need for a traditional first mortgage, thus making the project more affordable. As a requirement for this grant 35 of the 36 units in the project are reserved for persons whose incomes meet the federal eligibility standards for low income renters. The City of Indianapolis worked with the developer to replace the curbs and sidewalks surrounding the building complex and the sidewalks leading from the nearest thoroughfare to the building. The City also agreed to widen one street to the east of the building, converting this same street to one-way traffic, and thus provide for an additional 30 parking spaces. In total, the sidewalk and curb replacement cost the City approximately $100,000. The project contributed approximately $30,000 towards the sidewalks and curbs by removing the existing structures during the early stages of construction.

The project was intended to meet the need for low income housing in the southeast section of Center Township, a neighborhood known as Fountain Square. The traditional ideas of space design for such low income housing units were traded off in an effort to provide not only living space, but also an atmosphere conducive to the arts. The City of Indianapolis helped facilitate the new design concepts by working with the developer to find and accept alternative materials that would meet current housing standards.
3. Describe the project’s impact on the neighborhood and the city. Please attach relevant data where available.

The Wheeler Arts Community has permanently established the Fountain Square area of the City as an arts center. The Community is providing much needed low cost housing to 34 artists, space for their work, and a facility from which theater arts can flourish in the neighborhood.

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?

The newest form of public/private partnership resulting from this project is one in which a major department of a university was brought into the plan as an integral part of the project. By adding “theatre arts” to the project, another group of artists was drawn to the area, classes for neighborhood residents were provided, and the university expanded it’s own facilities. Such collaboration with educational institutions is a model for other projects as it can provide a value added component to an otherwise one-dimensional project.

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

The most successful aspect of the project is that it created a community where one had not existed before. That community in turn has brought new businesses, commerce, diversity, a source of arts education and a revitalized culture, to an old and tired neighborhood. The least successful aspect of the project is the time it took to accomplish it.
2001 RUDY BRUNER AWARD COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. 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.

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 TONYA HUNLEY
Title TREASURER
Organization Fountain Area Community Team Telephone (317) 236-8310
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Signature ______________________________

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

As a member and the Treasurer of the Fountain Area Community Team (FACT), the neighborhood association of Fountain Square, I had heard the numerous complaints about the Wheeler Building over the years. The neighborhood truly wanted to improve the building and families spoke out publicly and tried to contact the owners of the building, who refused to deal with the problems it was causing. FACT was in support of SEND taking on the blighted building and voted on the various stages of the project. I am happy to be a spokesperson for the continued support of SEND and the Wheeler’s Arts Building because of the wonderful outcome it has had in the community.

2. From the community’s point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

The building had been abandoned, boarded up, and in much need of repair for sometime. It was so big and very run down. It was downgrading the appearance of the neighborhood and in turn was not giving surrounding neighbors a good feeling about their properties and community. SEND saw this building with new vision and challenge. Now it adds tremendously in what we, as a community, have to offer.

3. What tradeoffs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

The historic nature of the building had to be restored and kept in tact. For example, the windows had to be specially ordered and the colors of the paint had to reflect the era when it was originally built. Again, FACT was represented through votes on the various stages of the project.
4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

Definitely. It has brought new life into the community and created more for visitors and residents. The presence of the University of Indianapolis is such an advantage. This area of Indianapolis has a low high school graduation rate and we are excited about how this partnership is helping to address these issues. The completion of this project was a win-win all around.

5. What would you change about this project, or the process you went through?

Some corners had to be cut due to budget constraints. In looking back, maybe some of the floorboards could have been replaced instead of repaired.
Concentration: Stephen Gibson, an art student at IUPUI, focuses on his work in a studio at the Wheeler Arts Building.

Renovation and RENAISSANCE
Fountain Square's revival continues with the establishment of housing for low-income artists.

By S.L. Berry
STAFF WRITER

Tucked away in a small studio in an old building in Fountain Square, sculptor David Cox pours molten bronze into molds, welds the resulting pieces into busts and other works of art, then grinds and burnishes them to a rich patina.

Rumpled and tired, his voice low and rough from the cigarettes he chain-smokes, Cox hardly seems a pioneer. But he is.

Thirteen years ago he set up his first studio and foundry in Fountain Square. That was long before anyone thought of actively trying to attract artists and arts-related businesses to the area southeast of Downtown.

However, that's exactly what's happening these days. And today, the latest result of that effort is being unveiled with the grand opening of the Wheeler Arts Community, a renovated factory building that has been converted into rental housing for low-income artists.

It's the only development of its kind in Indiana, says Bill Taft. He's the executive director of Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND), the Fountain Square-based not-for-profit corporation that redeveloped the Wheeler building.

The $4.5 million project, which was funded with a combination of local and federal grants and loans, was the result of a need for affordable living and working space for artists in Indianapolis, says Taft. It was also an ideal way to turn a neighborhood eyesore into an asset.

Completely redone inside and out, the Wheeler building contains 36 efficiency apartments designed to serve as both living quarters and studios. Thirty-four of the units are renting for below-market rates: To qualify, tenants must have an annual income not exceeding 60 percent of the area's median income (approximately $22,000).

It houses a gallery in which residents can show their work, and classrooms in which the University of Indianapolis will offer some of its classes.

Tool for development

The Wheeler project is part of an ongoing effort on the part of SEND and neighborhood activists to use the arts as an economic development tool in Fountain Square. According to Taft, the goal is to make living and working in Fountain Square inviting, not only for those artists who qualify to live in the Wheeler building, but for other fine, performing and commercial artists as well.

By doing so, asserts Taft, Fountain Square will become not only the site of a lively arts scene, but also an attractive location for business owners and home buyers drawn by the visibility that such a scene generates. Once visitors discover Fountain Square's affordable real estate and sense of community, says Taft, some of them will want to stay.

See RENOVATION Page 2
It was the affordability of rental rates that attracted Cox to the area. He wanted an inexpensive place where he could work without attracting a lot of attention. "I liked the idea of being somewhat obscure down here," he says. "I needed time to build up a body of work, and this was a good place to do it."

Fountain Square first took shape in the 1860s and '70s when German immigrants began settling in the area and opening businesses. Irish and Italian immigrants followed, and the area prospered throughout the early decades of the 20th century.

But the post-World War II era of suburban development marked the beginning of a slow decline, which accelerated when I-65 and I-70 cut through the Fountain Square area in the 1960s, isolating it from Downtown Indianapolis. Businesses and residents began to leave.

But not all of them. Arthur's Music Store, for example, has been a Fountain Square fixture since 1952. Linda Osborne, the daughter of store founder Amos Arthur, now operates the place with her sister, Elizabeth Gibson.

Osborne has been active in efforts to improve Fountain Square for more than 20 years. "There are people living here whose families have been in the neighborhood for 60, 80, 100 years," says Osborne. "There's not a lot of money here, but there is a lot of willingness to work together to make things better."

Osborne sees the emergence of Fountain Square as an arts mecca as a positive effort. "I'm happy with what's happened to this point," she says. "But I think we have to be careful that we don't go too far in one direction — we don't want this to be just an area of art galleries. We need to have family attractions and businesses, too."

Taft agrees, saying that for a community to work, it needs to have a diversity of businesses and residents. It also needs to have people who commit to the community.

"I envision someone taking classes in the Wheeler Building; then, when they graduate, ending up living there," says Taft. "Then, when they decide they need more space, they buy a house in the neighborhood. That's an exciting prospect."

While a few artists such as Cox had settled in the area over the years, it was the Murphy Art Center, co-developed in 1999 by SEND and artists Phil Campbell and Ed Funk, that put Fountain Square on the art community's radar.

By turning the former G.C. Murphy building on Virginia Avenue into the home of galleries and artists studios, Campbell and Funk brought people to the area who might have never come otherwise, says Linton Calvert.

Owner of the Fountain Square Theatre Building, Calvert is active in community affairs. The need to give visitors more to do here than look at art, says Calvert, is fueling development of new restaurants and entertainment venues.

There are also other types of businesses moving into the area. Halstead Architects is one of them. Owner Mike Halstead says he moved his firm from Downtown to Fountain Square in part because of the burgeoning arts community.

"We felt that a neighborhood that's friendly to the arts was where we wanted to be," says Halstead. "I've always liked Fountain Square for its character, and it's fun to see it beginning to grow."

Cox agrees, saying he's glad his pioneering days are over. "It's nice to see some fellow spirits starting to show up on the scene," he says. "I hope it continues."

Contact S.L. Berry at (317) 444-6437 or via e-mail at s.l.berry@stamews.com.
Wheeler keeps factory feel
Renovated warehouse maintains historical industrial character

By Shelley Swift
Special to IBJ

It can be hard work making a refurbished building seem "plain."
But that was the mission of those who transformed an 86-year-old factory building into a unique living space for artists in Fountain Square.
The former Wheeler Carburetor factory at 1035 Sanders St., just west of Shelby Street, has been re-christened the Wheeler Arts Community.

Instead of adding artistic elements to give the building a new look, architects focused on preserving the building's "raw" appearance.

"We tried to retain the factory look," said Andrea Gilland, an architect with Axis Architecture + Interiors, which oversaw the building's redesign.

Said to be among the first of its kind in the nation, the recently opened center offers subsidized housing for artists who earn 60 percent or less than the state's median.

The "live/work" environment provides 36 separate studios in which artists make their combined homes and workplaces. Construction work began last November and an open house was conducted Oct. 13. Several artists have already moved in.

The renovation was spearheaded by Southeast Neighborhood Development Inc., or SEND, which gathered $5 million in funding from private, government and not-for-profit sources.

The University of Indianapolis also committed $75,000 a year to provide a children's theater, extension offices, art classes and classrooms for the university's performing and fine arts instruction.

The project was also supported by historic tax credits, which required contractors to maintain the building's original elements.

"It's a very industrial, raw, rough-looking interior, and we wanted to retain that look, which meant we maintained a lot of the existing artifacts in the building," Gilland said.

"Whether it was a curved steel beam hanging from the See WHEELER page 32A
Wheelers Continued from page 25A

High ceilings and bountiful sunlight create prime space for a lounge at Wheeler.

WHEELER

Continued from previous page

The recent renovation took place in two sections of the three-part building—a reinforced concrete structure built in 1911 and a brick structure added on in 1929. Both are two stories tall. A third structure, a one-story addition built in 1950s, was left untouched.

The refurbished section is now home to artists who can exhibit their work in their private studios or in public showing rooms.

While each studio space encompasses roughly 1,000 square feet—with private doors and 14-foot ceilings—architects incorporated curved and angled walls to make each space unique.

"Each space has its own dynamic and interest. We wanted to make it a versatile place for artists to exhibit their artwork and a unique living space as well," Gilland said.

Each studio comes equipped with a bathroom, kitchenette and sleeping space. One wall in each apartment is equipped with studio lighting and heavy-duty hooks for displaying artwork.

Gilland, who lives near the center, appreciates the beauty of the restored building and the potential it brings to her neighborhood.

She hopes the center can help further boost the rebounding sense of arts in Fountain Square and bring more people into the community.

She also hopes it will serve as a catalyst for further renovations in the neighborhood, which features many turn-of-the-century homes.

"I think a project like this naturally causes other people to say, "Hey, I think I'm going to clean my place up, too,"" she said.

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