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Contact: Fred Bidwell
(216) 938-5429
fred.bidwell@transformerstation.org

Nonprofit Gordon Square Arts District Declares Mission Accomplished and Suspends Operations

CLEVELAND, OH—The board of the nonprofit Gordon Square Arts District voted on October 23 to conclude the daily operations of its work revitalizing the west side neighborhood using an arts and culture strategy. The nonprofit will suspend operations on December 31, 2019, though some of its work will be continued by other neighborhood-based nonprofit organizations.

Gordon Square Arts District was originally formed in 2007 as a collaboration between Cleveland Public Theatre, Near West Theatre and Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization for a joint capital campaign. Co-chaired by Albert Ratner, Tom Sullivan, Dick Pogue and David Doll, the campaign successfully raised \$30 million to expand and renovate Cleveland Public Theatre, build Near West Theatre, and rescue the old Capitol Theatre and convert it to a movie theatre. The campaign also funded the streetscape and built parking lots with additional leadership by Cleveland Councilman Matt Zone.

While the organization was originally scheduled to dissolve after the completion of the capital campaign in 2014, the board of Gordon Square Arts District voted then to extend its work in the neighborhood to build on its arts identity through placemaking, the installation of public art, arts programming and workforce programs for artists.

“The Gordon Square Arts District has been a successful collaboration for 12 years and we’re proud of what we’ve accomplished. There are many able organizations in the neighborhood today that will continue our mission to offer a thriving arts center and free, inclusive arts programming,” said Fred Bidwell, Gordon Square Arts District board of directors.

Gordon Square Arts District is now home to 5 performing arts theatres, a movie theatre, a music club, and more than 60 artists studios and galleries. Anchors include Cleveland Public Theatre, Near West Theatre, the Capitol movie theatre owned by nonprofit Detroit Shoreway Community

Development Organization, Talespinner Children's Theatre, Maelstrom Collaborative Arts, Blank Canvas Theatre, Happy Dog music venue, and 78th Street Studios.

Key Accomplishments in the Gordon Square Arts District:

- Renovated Cleveland Public Theatre and expanded its campus
- Built Near West Theatre
- Rescued the historic Capitol Theatre, owned by nonprofit Detroit Shoreway Community Development Corporation
- Installed parking lots
- Beautified the streetscape
- Installed 43 signs to help with wayfinding
- Installed 11 murals and 2 sculptures
- Offered the Creative Workforce Series to enhance the business skills of artists
- Launched www.clevelandartistregistry.org to market Cleveland artists
- Held 26 art exhibits highlighting more than 418 local and emerging artists at its nonprofit Square Art Space and 78th Street Studios galleries
- Commissioned more than 100 local artists for exhibits and projects
- Offered 46 free performances featuring local musicians and actors throughout the neighborhood
- Supported 10 quarterly Gordon Square Artists-in-Residence
- Secured an additional \$750,000 in the 2018 state capital budget for enhancements to Cleveland Public Theatre, Near West Theatre and Capitol Theatre

"Twelve years ago, there was just one theatre in the Gordon Square Arts District. Today, six theatres attract people from all over Cleveland, and more new residents move here every day. I know that our arts partners will continue to make this area vibrant," said board chair Teri Agosta.

A board task force is working to conclude the operations of the organization and determine any programs to be transferred to other arts organizations.

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