

Uptown Artist Relocation Program

Definition: The Uptown Artist Relocation Program is an economic development tool for the revitalization of Uptown and the implementation of the *Uptown Improvement Plan*.

The program addresses such goals of the plan as:

- Create an attractive environment for entrepreneurial people who will consider Uptown as a location for their business or residence.
 - Create a market for infill and redevelopment.
 - Create a core of change that has enough impact to be noticed in the market.
- (*Uptown Improvement Plan*, p. 4.)

The program implements several recommendations of the plan, specifically:

- Concentrate revitalization efforts and create a noticeable change. “Perform a demonstration project, a joint public-private venture, to restore a building façade and signage.” (*Plan*, p.25 and p.53.)
- Increase owner occupancy. “Owner/occupant investment in this neighborhood is critical to its ability to stabilize and grow, which could include having your business at the street level and your residence upstairs...Live/work opportunities are also very appealing to entrepreneurial types, exactly the kind of match that would be ideal for Uptown...Projects such as Gorman’s artists lofts bring a wonderful new demographic into the area, who may want to rent gallery space or own a retail building in the Uptown area while living in the neighborhood.” (*Plan*, p.26.)
- Consider a new identity plan for the district. “There must be a dramatic effort made to re-invent this district into something that feels up to date and alive.” (*Plan*, p.27.)
- Develop a targeted, realistic strategy for business recruitment. “...many shopping districts have found success in shifting to more specialty shops that have a focused merchandize concept or niche...Examples of consumer based niches might include: Arts and Crafts...”. (*Plan*, p.28.)

The program has two parts: First, an extensive marketing campaign focused on artists to make them aware of the advantages of Racine in general and Uptown in particular as a place to live and work. Second, maintenance of an inventory of properties in Uptown that are well-suited to live/work use by artists. The inventory will consist of properties that are available for sale to artists as well as properties available for lease from owners who are cooperating with the program. In tandem with the inventory of properties is financial assistance for relocating artists for the purchase and improvement of property in Uptown.

Vision: The vision for the Artist Relocation Program is to create for Uptown a local, regional, and national reputation as an artists’ live/work district and for the market for commercial and residential space in the district to be self sustaining.

Goals: In 5 years, the Program will have successfully renovated and converted 4 buildings into condominium units that will be sold to artists for live/work space. The Program will also have attracted 5-6 artists that have purchased and renovated properties in Uptown in addition to the buildings renovated by the City/RCEDC/RDG partnership.

Implementation Steps: During the next 5 years, complete the following:

- Create and maintain a marketing campaign for the arts in Uptown and Racine in both the print media and on the internet.
- Complete the demonstration project at 1526 Washington Avenue by having the building renovated and sold to artists for live/work space.
- Create and maintain a real estate clearing house for artist space in Uptown.
- Create and maintain a financial assistance program for artists purchasing real-estate in Uptown.
- Foster the renovation of building facades in the Junction area.
- Sponsor further enhancements to the streetscape and public spaces in the Junction area.
- Implement a housing demonstration program on Owen Avenue.
- Increase the membership of the Uptown Improvement Organization.

Program success will be measured by:

- 9 to 11 artists relocated to Uptown;
- Increase in property values;
- Improved safety and security, both real and perceived;
- Increased “buzz” about the area and the program; and
- Increased membership in the Uptown Improvement Organization.

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By the City Plan Commission:

By the Common Council: