



Harrison Center

for the arts!

**CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
& CREATIVE SOLUTIONS**

1505 N. Delaware Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202
317.396.3886
www.harrisoncenter.org

The Harrison Center for the Arts (HCA) is a community-based arts organization on the near north side of downtown Indianapolis. Four galleries of edgy-yet-whimsical exhibits make the arts accessible to those who might normally feel uncomfortable in a gallery, who are unaccustomed to showing their work, or who want to know (but are afraid to ask) about the arts.

“First Friday” events are a regular opportunity to bring together emerging artists with emerging art patrons. Over 44,000 people visited the Harrison Center last year for First Fridays, plus the Independent Music + Art Festival and other programs.

The Harrison Center hosts 32 artists and several nonprofit arts organizations, and has created Herron High School (a liberal arts charter high school), all to provide arts education and encouragement to new artists and new patrons alike. As a catalyst for renewal in the city of Indianapolis, the Harrison Center fosters the creation of new art, a sense of community, new partnerships in the arts, and public conversations between artists and the community.

The Harrison Center believes that its work is a catalyst for renewal far beyond our four walls. HCA introduces people to the surrounding core neighborhoods, supports the City of Indianapolis’ cultural development objectives, celebrates the arts as a tool for economic development, and fosters community pride. To see exactly how we’re doing these things, drop in anytime during gallery hours. We look forward to seeing you.

GALLERY HOURS:

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

1505 North Delaware • Indianapolis, IN 46202 • 317.396.3886

www.harrisoncenter.org

The Harrison Center for the Arts:

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT & CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

For the past several decades, the attention of community leaders, public and corporate funders, and civically engaged neighbors has focused on improving urban neighborhoods across the country. Often, the term “community development” is applied to the sustained improvement of social conditions, including a community’s housing, economic climate, and other physical assets. Recently, forward-thinking planners have adopted a more holistic approach to community development. In short, public and private entities also need to pay attention to education, public safety, commerce, physical health, and quality of life if their revitalization efforts are to have a lasting impact.

Lately, community developers are effectively using arts and culture as a means to improve a community’s health and quality of life. Where the arts flourish, a community benefits from an appreciation of beauty, lifelong learning, and intrigue. Community supported arts are evidence of a sense of ownership and civic pride, leading to safer, healthier communities for residents. Additionally, arts and culture provide a creative, non-threatening avenue to engage residents in the process of community renewal.

Indianapolis, Indiana, is home to a refreshing model that uses the arts as a platform for holistic community development and cultural renewal. The Harrison Center for the Arts (HCA) evolved from a for-profit studio center to a church-based art center to a 501(c)(3) non-religious public benefit corporation in 2003. Since then, HCA has continued to grow its creative approach to addressing community challenges with cultural solutions.

Mission: The Harrison Center for the Arts seeks to be a catalyst for renewal in the city of Indianapolis by fostering awareness, appreciation, and community for arts and culture.

HCA staff describe the center as a “cultural development corporation.” While cultural development is a perfect fit for HCA’s vision, initiatives, and grassroots model, the phrase was only gradually and organically adopted into the lexicon. HCA is renewing its Old Northside neighborhood and beyond, using art as a conversation starter.

In addition to fostering the creation of new art, HCA is building community among emerging artists and emerging patrons, creating new partnerships, and facilitating a dialogue between artists and residents about community values and fresh ideas. Through popular art and music events; an internship program that provides hands-on project management to young cultural entrepreneurs; educational outreach leading to a new public charter school; and collaborations with local business, non-profit, and civic groups, HCA is an invaluable asset to the City of Indianapolis and a national model for ambitious cultural development.

FROM OLD PRESIDENTS TO NEW PRECEDENTS

The Harrison Center for the Arts is located at the corner of 16th and Delaware Streets. The building was established around 1900 as 1st Presbyterian Church. Among the church's earliest congregants was Benjamin Harrison, 23rd President of the United States, who not only lived in the neighborhood, but was an elder and a Sunday School teacher.

Over the years, 1st Presbyterian's fortunes rose and fell with the neighborhood's, until the church finally closed its doors. By 1970, with the Old Northside neighborhood in a serious state of decline, the Presbyterian Metropolitan Center opened in the building to provide much-needed social services to the residents, including a thrift store, food pantry, adult day care, children's preschool, and many other programs. However, by the 1990s, years of ongoing neglect had taken a serious toll on the facility, and maintenance problems began to mount.

It wasn't until 2000 that local philanthropist Jeremy Efroymson purchased the building and stabilized its decline. Along with opening the Harrison Center as a for-profit art center, Efroymson recruited a number of tenants for the enormous facility, including VSA Arts of Indiana, the Nature Conservancy, IUPUI's Herron School of Art, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, and several local artists who were looking for inexpensive studio space.

In 2001, Efroymson closed the Harrison Center and sold the building to Redeemer Presbyterian Church. In November of the same year, the church hired Joanna Taft as Executive Director of a new organization under an already familiar name, the Harrison Center for the Arts. The center's first gallery event under new leadership opened February 2002, titled 'Love in the Time of Football', featuring the work of HCA's newly hired curator, Kyle Ragsdale. In 2003, HCA received its 501(c)(3) not-for-profit status, separated its budget from the church, and began to lease 60% of the 65,000 square foot facility.

HCA continues to set new precedents for building symbiotic partnerships between unlikely organizations, fully exploring the building's capacity to engage new audiences, and striving to maintain relevance to the needs of the surrounding community.

Just Around the Corner:

A 65,000 SQUARE-FOOT MAZE

From its early days, the Harrison Center for the Arts drew a growing audience through curious, creative exhibitions and events. Quickly identified as a grassroots community arts organization, HCA has built a strong reputation as a local leader and innovator. Today, the center annually averages well over 44,000 visitors and attendees to its intriguing three-story facility.

HCA has four art galleries, including the Harrison Gallery, Gallery No. 2, City Gallery, and Hank & Dolly's Gallery; a gymnasium that is used daily by youth and community residents; a performance space known as the Underground; and the Delaware Courtyard, an outdoor space used for music events and art installations, most notably, the annual Independent Music and Art Festival (IMAF).

Currently, 32 artists work in studios throughout the building, in spaces that were converted from closets, boiler rooms, and even sections of the sanctuary. The aging facility is not without a range of challenges: basement studios flood occasionally, some studios are difficult to heat in winter and cool in summer, lighting is not consistent among studios, and many walls are seemingly impenetrable for hanging work. According to Joanna Taft, "You might think all of these different entities would create problems. Actually, it creates a beautiful texture. The Harrison Center is a vibrant and exciting place to be." Far from creating turmoil, these challenges bring artists together and create a very comfortable, approachable environment for emerging patrons and visitors.

REDEFINING THE RELEVANCE OF ARTS & CULTURE

The Harrison Center for the Arts is both a haven for working artists and a gathering place for urban and suburban residents. In addition to renting studio space to artists, HCA has housed a wide range of non-profits and cultural initiatives; past and present tenants include IUPUI's Herron School of Art, The Nature Conservancy, VSA Arts of Indiana, Herron High School, The Indianapolis Downtown Artists and Dealers Association, and The ViewFinder Project.

HCA continues to build on its early reputation for innovative cultural development. This creative approach to community-building is evident as HCA builds connections among artists and art patrons, both emerging and established. HCA broadly defines "the arts" and welcomes a vibrant spectrum of traditional and nontraditional artistry, including

outsider art, performance art, interactive art, culinary art, film, video, music, dance, literature, and crafts, such as knitting, pottery, and papermaking. At HCA, “culture” is not formal, esoteric, and intimidating; instead, culture is an intrinsic, creative force running throughout the community. HCA celebrates and explores the artistic elements surrounding daily life.

HCA has reinforced a blossoming community of talented artists. Emerging artists benefit from affordable studio space; regular in-house exhibits and events; additional income by incubating their small businesses; and professional development opportunities alongside personal support groups. Above all, HCA has stirred an atmosphere of mutual inspiration, respect, and even healthy competition among its artists. Although many of the studios are small and have challenges, HCA maintains a steady waiting list for studio space.

HCA has drawn a large audience of emerging art patrons by creating a playful, interactive, and rewarding environment to invest in arts and culture. Emerging patrons, many of whom are young singles, couples, and families, find HCA to be a non-threatening environment, where most of the art is moderately priced. HCA serves its audience through regular, accessible opening events and monthly gallery exhibits, concerts, and youth programs.

Monthly gallery exhibits at HCA, held in conjunction with the Indianapolis Downtown Artists and Dealers Association (IDADA) First Friday program, are among the city’s best attended and most admired art events. These events provide a multi-sensory experience that encourages community and builds dialogue. Many of HCA’s thematic events are intended to disarm intimidated viewers. Newcomers, regular attendees, and artists meet on the same level as they participate, connecting with each other and with the art. For example HCA’s “Captain Crunch” group show depicted mermaids, pirates, ships, and other nautical elements. Instead of hushed chit-chat over the expected wine and hors d’oeuvres, HCA invited attendees to wander the galleries while eating bowls of Cap’n Crunch cereal and milk. This exhibition created a “sticky” experience for attendees; they feel comfortable connecting with art and remember the show - and HCA.

As a place-based organization, HCA includes Indianapolis’ surrounding urban neighborhoods under its mission to create awareness and build community. Most HCA artists live in the immediately surrounding neighborhood or in nearby downtown neighborhoods. Serving as an anchor institution, HCA offers its urban neighbors meeting space, hosts neighborhood events and festivals, curates exhibits that raise awareness around community issues, and spearheads mission-aligned catalyst projects to directly impact a pressing need in Indianapolis.

HCA has built an incredible platform for cultural development using the arts as a vehicle for renewal. HCA is creating lasting connections among emerging artists and emerging patrons, standing strong as a watchful anchor in a revitalizing neighborhood, creating and supporting quality schools, training rising community leaders to appreciate the arts and think like entrepreneurs, and continually exploring ways to address the challenges facing urban Indianapolis with cultural solutions.

Emerging Patrons:

A NEW (AND GROWING) AUDIENCE

Early on in the Harrison Center for the Arts' existence, the staff and board recognized a need to connect emerging artists with potential buyers. HCA identifies this non-traditional audience as emerging patrons, referring to individuals who, whether or not they realize it, hold a latent interest in supporting artists by purchasing work for their homes and workplaces.

Traditionally, art patrons are considered as individuals with money, class, and highly-developed aesthetic senses. They have an affinity for the "high arts" and heavily support the museum, the theater, and the symphony.

HCA is creating a new, more inclusive definition of a patron, to include those learning about art and developing a personal aesthetic taste. The center develops a rapport with these individuals, encouraging them to experiment with art and engage with new concepts. And, as an emerging patron grows willing and eager to purchase a one-of-a-kind piece of art, HCA facilitates the introduction to hip, affordable artwork along a range of price points through regular exhibits and open studio nights. The majority of HCA's shows feature work by local and regional artists; occasionally, the gallery's curator brings in exciting work from artists across the country.

HCA's monthly gallery exhibits are not predictable wine-and-cheese affairs, but big, interactive, multi-disciplined parties. The featured exhibit typically takes place in the Harrison Gallery, the center's 1,100-square-foot showplace. But the experience extends from the main gallery to the other three galleries, the hallways, the gymnasium, and the basement performance space. Visitors now expect to be surprised, finding something new and different on every floor, every time, from live music to bicycle polo in the gym to guerilla kitting to film screenings. Frequently, HCA artists open their studios to share where and how they work - creating a compelling and personal connection with potential buyers.

Sometimes, the monthly exhibits are connected with important causes, such as education, urban renewal, poverty relief, and green living. HCA recognizes the potential impact as its large, listening audience encounters issues and creative solutions in a cultural setting.

Today, HCA's First Friday openings attract an average of 1,000 guests, even up to some 3,000 visitors in a single night. Unparalleled, quality shows invite a crowd that's eager to interact with each other and the art. HCA has created a welcoming environment that says "yes" to children and families. The crowd is incredibly diverse, drawing everyone from the city's top philanthropists, prominent businesspeople, and influential politicians to working artists, students, young professionals, and families. Among this audience, HCA has helped many discover a fresh hunger for art and has provided an easy opportunity to replace youthful posters and mass-produced decorations with distinctive "conversation piece" works of art.

HCA continues to emerge as a national model for urban arts organizations by providing a non-threatening and relational bridge from emerging artist to emerging patron. And, as HCA's events grow bigger and better, the bond between artists and patrons grows stronger, and the perceived distance between them grows shorter. The emerging patrons have embraced their role as supporters of the arts in unique ways. One family offered living quarters in their home to one of HCA's artists. For another family, HCA provided a rich experience through which they built an incredible connection with the artists; having never before considered buying art for their home, they are now among HCA's most consistent emerging patrons and support their much-loved artists through the purchase of new work, month after month.

Herron High School: **THE NEXT GENERATION**

To date, The Harrison Center's most prominent—and innovative—achievement has been the creation and launch of Herron High School, a public charter school devoted to liberal arts education. Initial funds to explore this idea were provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and in total, HCA raised and managed \$600,000 to begin the school.

In 2003, HCA convened a group of neighborhood residents, non-profits, and businesses to talk about how to prevent a further drain on the neighborhood, as news broke that the historic John Herron Art Institute was slated to move across town to the Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) campus. Instead of letting this one-time neighborhood asset stand empty, HCA and neighbors conceived the creation of a school to grow a new, more diverse generation of art patrons. While city planners across the nation strive to recruit and retain the creative class, HCA's leadership challenged the planning group to view Herron High School as an opportunity to grow a creative class from within Indianapolis' existing population.

From the outset, the vision was clear: to develop the next generation of art patrons through the integration of academic subjects; the teaching of great works of literature through original source documents; formal instruction in Latin, logic, and rhetoric; and appreciation for the great works of visual, musical, and dramatic art. Additionally, the school was designed to serve a racially diverse student body, with a goal of 50% Caucasian and 50% African American.

The proposed liberal arts high school at the corner of 16th and N Pennsylvania gained wide support from the neighborhood and the broader community. Indianapolis has been a national leader in the development of charter schools, and Herron High School filled a perfect, overlooked niche. As a result, Herron High School was granted charter status by Indianapolis' Mayor Bart Peterson.

In the fall of 2006, 100 ninth grade students began classes in HCA's basement. The next year, Herron High moved into its permanent location and has added classes each year. In large part, the vision for a balance of diversity, both racially and socio-economically, has been a self-fulfilling prophesy year after year. In Spring 2010, the school celebrated the graduation of its inaugural class, and Newsweek Magazine ranked Herron High School 27th on a list of top public high schools in the nation. Today the school serves 560 students, grades 9-12.

HCA is nurturing a new generation of world-class citizens and art patrons as it connects quality arts education with real community needs. In doing so, the high school is addressing significant issues, including the achievement gap, graduation rates, racial healing, and the availability of excellent urban education.

A New Idea:

CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Through their ongoing experience with emerging artists and patrons, the Harrison Center's leadership recognized the crucial entrepreneurial skills needed to hang exhibits, produce successful events, drive urban renewal, and increase appreciation for the arts in cultural development. More and more, young people were eager to get involved in HCA's grassroots buzz-generating movement, whether or not they were initially driven by a love of the arts.

To tap into this potential, HCA developed the Cultural Entrepreneurship program: a unique internship program for high school and college students that provides hands-on experience in launching and sustaining successful ventures in the real world.

According to Joanna Taft, "Beyond a traditional internship, the Cultural Entrepreneurship program is an intentional training program that equips students to be change makers in Indianapolis. The initiative developed as way to better train our interns, who were working on projects that required them to take risks and leverage resources. Often their lack of entrepreneurial know-how led to less-than-successful endeavors in arts and culture. The Cultural Entrepreneurship program fills the real-world gap between having a great idea and having the ability to turn a concept into reality."

A cultural entrepreneur invests time and energy in building culture in the city. They see a need, take risks, invest energy, and leverage the resources around them to implement a solution. Cultural entrepreneurs have vision, creativity, and an ability to collaborate. Because HCA engages in local communities of politics, business, arts, education, and philanthropy, interns have outstanding opportunities to cultivate relationships with artists, neighborhood residents, industry leaders, corporate sponsors, and many others. Developing the networking skills of these emerging leaders enables them to leverage materials, labor, and creative approaches to problem solving.

The Cultural Entrepreneurship program pushes students outside their comfort zone and accelerates learning within a supportive framework, as they take on real responsibilities for staging events and programs. While many interns enter the doors without a particular interest in art, they exit the internship with a deep appreciation for arts and culture, and often, an undeniable passion and desire to do more. HCA is helping to shape the raw skills of young community leaders into valuable experience, leading to creative projects that impact culture and build community.

Urban Living: **IT'S A GOOD THING**

The Harrison Center for the Arts has demonstrated the ability to solve community challenges through cultural solutions, using the energy of the arts and the organization's grassroots networks. HCA's leadership has identified a pressing community need and, in response, is piloting a new catalyst project, City Gallery – Indy's Urban Living Center.

Downtown Indianapolis, roughly bounded by the White River and Interstates 65 and 70, has been reborn as a regional attraction over the past decade. However, the development of the regional center has not arrested the decay of the “doughnut” urban neighborhoods between downtown and the suburbs. Many realtors have ignored or overlooked these neighborhoods in favor of an easier sell outside the city; and Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and private investors have struggled for years to find enough buyers for redeveloped homes. In short, the number of Indianapolis' available, vacant, and upcoming homes far outpaces the pool of potential homebuyers. Urban Indianapolis desperately needs to attract new residents in order to create economic diversity, stabilized neighborhoods, and a stronger tax base that will support a growing population. While urban living is not for everyone, Indianapolis' neighborhoods offer a wide range of housing opportunities and lifestyle preferences. Introducing potential residents to new ideas and opportunities is a crucial component of neighborhood improvement and revitalization efforts, but it is all too often overlooked. We propose a creative solution through the City Gallery, which aims to connect people to culture, community and place. This program will increase demand for urban living and provide a point of entry for a wide array of housing options, from affordable housing to rental units to single-family homes to high-end condos. The City Gallery will send a clear, unmistakable message: community awaits you here, along with a sense of neighborly belonging, convenient location, and dynamic cultural amenities.

The full-scale plan includes (1) a physical storefront with a city gallery / resource cafe; (2) a line-up of high impact events to attract and cross-pollinate target markets; (3) a grassroots network of neighborhood mavens who will share their experiences and welcome newcomers to their community; (4) a website to orient potential residents to distinct neighborhood types and connect them with partnering realtors, CDCs, and developers; and (5) marketing through paid advertising and social media.

HCA is piloting the program through 2010 and 2011 by strengthening and expanding its grassroots network, gathering information from neighborhood mavens and potential residents at First Fridays and community events, renovation of the physical storefront and City Gallery, and pursuing community and financial support for the full-scale, comprehensive plan.

Through its current arts and culture initiatives, HCA has a strong rapport with an essential audience of potential urban residents. Additionally, HCA's facilities are rented from Redeemer Presbyterian Church, which has opened connections to other urban and suburban churches. And, HCA's alignment with downtown magnet, charter, and independent schools presents access to families with desirable demographics. These parent bodies are both racially and socio-economically diverse, and, having placed their children in an urban education setting, have partially "bought in" to downtown. Using its existing market audience and leveraging open networks, HCA provides a ready-made platform to target potential urban residents.

Drawing on its proven experience, networks, and creative promotional methods, HCA has the capacity to generate increased demand for urban living, for the benefit of neighborhoods, local community development corporations, and the city at large. The City Gallery is the next genesis of HCA's mission to renew Indianapolis through cultural initiatives.

The Harrison Center for the Arts: **A CATALYST FOR RENEWAL**

By championing cultural solutions to community problems, the Harrison Center for the Arts is creating a national model for thoughtful, innovative cultural development. HCA continues to strive toward its mission to be a catalyst for renewal through the arts, while maintaining relevance to the needs of the surrounding community. Meeting this healthy challenge has opened the doors for HCA to undertake truly ambitious projects for a lasting impact on the lives of residents and the quality of urban neighborhoods. HCA celebrates the advent of a new decade, ever emboldened to address pressing challenges in Indianapolis with thoughtful, innovative cultural solutions.

