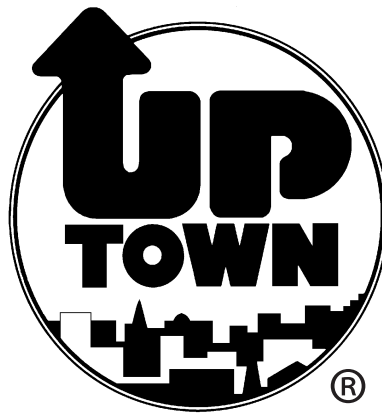


UPTOWN ASSOCIATION, INC.



1986 – 2006
The First 20 Years

UPTOWN TODAY



HISTORY OF UPTOWN ASSOCIATION, INC.

IN THE BEGINNING...

In late 1984, administrators of The Toledo Museum of Art and Mercy Hospital became concerned over deteriorating conditions in the Monroe-Jefferson corridor between their facilities and downtown Toledo. Representatives of these institutions met with City officials to discuss the problems and what could be done to resolve them. They found that little planning was being done but that there was considerable interest and support from business and property owners in the area for economic development activities. Along with the Toledo Economic Planning Council, a core group of businesses and other institutions in what was to become UpTown held meetings and laid the foundation for the UpTown Association. They defined boundaries, gathered data and developed plans for revitalization of the business district. At the September 1985 board meeting, members unanimously voted to change the name to the UpTown Association and adopted the UpTown logo. In March 1986, the Association was incorporated as a non-profit development corporation with a 16 member Board of Trustees. The first President of the Corporation was Glenn Meerdink who was the Vice President of Development at Mercy Hospital (Greg Smith from the Museum had led the organization prior to its incorporation).

With input from 100 members and an extensive area profile report from the Toledo Lucas County Plan Commission, the Association developed a number of objectives during the planning process to redevelop and stabilize the district. These included cleaning up slums, redevelopment of blighted residential areas, increasing commercial activities and reduction of crime. Several committees were formed to identify resources to resolve these issues and also to promote the Association as an advocate for businesses, institutions, residents and property owners of the district. These committees interfaced with Toledo city officials, looked at funding sources, sought increased police protection for businesses in the district, and considered ways of attracting new business to the area. As a non-profit organization, the Association applied for and received Community Development Block Grant funding through the City for the recruitment of an Executive Director and part time office person. The office was located in the Hillcrest Hotel, and in November 1987, the Association held its first annual meeting at the Hillcrest with 93 people in attendance.

During the late 1980s, the robust activities of the Association and its various committees continued:

- The Safety and Environment Committee developed an incident reporting system for its members so that crime reports could be tracked. Statistics of crimes that were acting as a deterrent to business and residential development were discussed with police and City officials. The Association also hired a part time security patrol to supplement City police protection.
- Facade Improvement Grants accessed through the Association helped restore and improve buildings in the district. During 1988, sixteen businesses in the UpTown area received facade improvement grants totaling nearly \$350,000.

- “Welcome to UpTown” signs were created by the City and added to street signs at ten key entry points to the district.
- UpTown Resources, Inc. was formed to acquire properties in the district for future residential development.
- Beginning in 1988, the first of a number of requests was made to the City to restore Monroe, Adams, Washington, and 16th Streets to two-way traffic and improve traffic flow by eliminating some traffic lights in the district. Requests were also made to improve street lighting and to repair crumbling streets and sidewalks. Many of these requests were eventually granted by City Council and funded thanks to the persistence of UpTown board members.
- Realtor/Developer meetings were held to market and promote property in the district and encourage new development.
- Communication was greatly enhanced with publication of the first UpTown Membership Directory, an inventory of available space in the district, and the publication of newsletters. The Public Relations Committee worked hard to promote UpTown as a viable business district and maintained communication with City administrators and media sources.
- The first of many neighborhood clean-ups, originally called “spruce-up day” was held in 1988.

These were just a few of the many initiatives during the Association’s formative years.

A NEW DECADE

Attorney Jerry Hoffer, who had restored the Kimbell Building at Monroe and 19th Streets, was the new president of the association as it moved into the 1990s. It had accomplished some of its early goals but also faced new challenges as businesses closed or moved out of the district. One major loss was due to a corporate merger: Sheller- Globe Corporation on Jefferson at 15th. Another blow was the closing of the Hillcrest Hotel, which raised concern about what would happen to that property and the block surrounding it; without a plan for development, the historic building faced the possibility of demolition. President Doug Shelton, a 16th Street resident and owner of Superior Impressions on 12th Street, worked with City administrators, developers, and neighbors of the Hillcrest to establish ways of improving the environment and encouraging development around the Hillcrest. Later, the property was purchased by the City under Mayor Carty Finkbeiner and developed into apartments.

In 1996 under the leadership of Judy Paschalis, owner (with husband Manos) of many UpTown properties, the Association became a member organization of Neighborhoods In Partnership (NIP), a community development corporation located in the Old West End. This partnership would provide UpTown with administrative and other support services while expanding the NIP service area, and there would also be an exchange of Board representatives between the two organizations. Adams Street was repaired with new sidewalks and landscaping and became the centerpiece of UpTown.

The Association became part of the TARTA lunchtime trolley program in 1998 when President Sara Hanselman, of the Toledo Metro Federal Credit Union on Adams Street, and the Board approved advertising its businesses and restaurants on the lunchtime trolley loop. Always eager to promote the UpTown district, the Board saw the loop as a way to introduce downtown workers to UpTown. Also during 1998, the Board got an early view of the major renovation project for the main Toledo Public Library, an imposing 1940 Art Deco structure that sits on the eastern border of the district. Although this project required vacating one block of 10th Street and the loss of the buildings on the west side of that block, the overall result has been very positive for UpTown.

In 1999, the City of Toledo commissioned an extensive study that resulted in the Monroe Street Corridor Overlay District proposal to revitalize Monroe Street from downtown to the Colony area at The Toledo Hospital. Concerned that any changes should represent the interests of Association members, UpTown President (and Adams Street Attorney) John Birmingham sent out a questionnaire seeking ideas that would become part of a presentation to City planners. Restoring Monroe Street to two-way traffic had been proposed by UpTown for a decade and was now part of the overlay plan. Although several modifications to the original proposal followed, today's remarkable change on Monroe has been beneficial to the entire UpTown district. Also, the first new residential construction in about 50 years occurred with new apartment complexes on Adams at 17th and in the 300 block of 14th between Adams and Madison.

A NEW CENTURY

Following the brief presidency of 16th Street resident Carly Mys, who then relocated away from Toledo, the office was assumed in late 2001 by Attorney J. P. Smith, who had redeveloped the vacant former veterinary hospital on 14th near Adams into law offices. In 2001, NIP proposed to introduce a nationally recognized program called *Main Street* for Adams Street from 11th to 23rd in the UpTown district. Matt Wiederhold was hired by NIP as *Main Street* Program Manager. Following a training period, several committees were formed to address specific program functions; one of the first projects was to visually distinguish this section of Adams Street. To accomplish this, flags of the 50 states and the U.S. territories were purchased and mounted on light poles along the *Main Street* blocks; the flags were flown for three summers. To encourage more visitors to the street, "Adams Amble" events were held on the third Thursday of each month. Artists, crafters, vendors, and musicians lined Adams Street, performed in vacant lots, or set up shop in buildings. The Adams Amble events brought shoppers and browsers to the district and generated news coverage by The Blade and The City Paper, an UpTown business. Unfortunately, the successes of *Main Street* did not last. Matt Wiederhold left to take a position as Economic Development Director for a much larger organization in Cleveland in September 2003 after the successful Triple AAA on Adams (Art, Autos, and Architecture); also, NIP funding cuts eliminated the program at the end of 2004 after the Association had experienced a severely truncated version of *Main Street* that year.

The UpTown Association has always encouraged its members to maintain and improve their property and to help keep the district clean. The organization has assisted in awarding of facade grants to members by facilitating access to City resources. The Association also sponsors a paint program with assistance from Vallet Paint on Adams at 18th Street. Many neighborhood clean-ups have been held during the past 20 years and in 2002, Mayor Jack Ford introduced his "elegant city" initiative and assigned members of his staff to zip code sectors of the City. Chief Michael Bell and the Toledo Fire Department were assigned the area that included UpTown. Spring and fall clean-ups, which included fire personnel, UpTown and NIP volunteers, have eliminated tons of

trash from the area. The first cleanup in 1988 produced 130 tires. But by this time, only two tires were recovered. Progress was being made.

At the 2005 annual meeting, a proposal was made to create an entertainment district in a part of UpTown, similar to the area around Fifth Third Field. Such a district would include galleries, restaurants, bars, coffee houses and specialty retail stores. Toledo City Council's recognition of the entertainment district would promote commercial development, increase property values and encourage mixed use properties that would bring new residents to the area and the legislation was ultimately enacted into law by the Council in summer 2005.

The Arts and Entertainment Village Committee was formed in 2005 and continues to work on and promote the entertainment district project. Many volunteers believed that it was vital for the long term health of the Arts and Entertainment Village to develop a strategy for future growth and development that incorporates design elements, so a two-day Visioning Charrette was held in cooperation with the Toledo Warehouse District, our sister neighborhood. The Charrette was hosted by the Toledo School for the Arts on 14th Street, and this led the group to creative ideas for the future of the two neighborhoods. Also, Architectural students from Bowling Green State University from a class in Public and Private Spaces created some of the most amazing and futuristic ideas for the UpTown and Warehouse District neighborhoods. At an open meeting, the students discussed their concepts with attendees.

Continuing the momentum, two committees meet every other week to follow up on the ideas generated at the Charrette. One committee is focusing on the actual plan for the neighborhoods and the other is working on how to market and develop the Plan. Volunteers are always welcome to participate. Another element of the planning process is the creation of an Urban Neighborhood Zoning Overlay that would create design requirements to keep the overall look and feel of an urban village as envisioned in the Arts and Entertainment Village concept.

INTO THE FUTURE

Shortly after returning to office in January 2006, was invited to be the featured speaker at the Association's annual meeting in February 2006, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of its incorporation. The UpTown Board anticipates continued partnering with the City administration on projects beneficial to UpTown in particular and to the City as a whole.

The UpTown Association has accomplished a great deal during the past 20 years. Some businesses in the district have opened, others have closed. Urban pioneers have bought properties that are being converted into both housing and retail space. Fifth Third Field, the attractive improvement of Monroe Street, and the City's commitment to revitalization of downtown Toledo are all beneficial to UpTown and its future. Like the people who started the Association 20 years ago, the organization will continue to seek energetic, visionary members willing to invest their time and talents in the challenges of building a more vital, thriving UpTown district.

The Association has ongoing goals of making it an advocate for and promoter of business in UpTown by developing and maintaining strong ties with government officials and other community leaders, and by encouraging residential and commercial development. Although clean-ups and paint programs will always be part of the UpTown tradition, the future prosperity of the district lies in the ability of the Association to change course and redefine goals as necessary to adapt to the very fluid conditions in Toledo.



UPTOWN PRESIDENTS

UPTOWN COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

1984 – 1985

Greg Smith

Monroe Street — Toledo Museum of Art

UPTOWN ASSOCIATION, INC.

1986 – 1989

A. Glenn Meerdink

Jefferson Avenue — Mercy Hospital

1990 – 1993

Jerry Hoffer

Monroe Street — Attorney at Law

1994 – 1995

Douglas Shelton

12th Street — Superior Impressions

1996 – 1997

Judy Paschalis

Adams Street — Manos Greek Restaurant

1998

Sarah Hanselman

Adams Street — Toledo Metro Credit Union

1999 – 2000

John Birmingham

Adams Street — Attorney at Law

2001

Carly Mys

16th Street Resident

2001 – Present

J. P. Smith

14th Street — Attorney at Law



This brief history of the UpTown Association was published in conjunction with the February 28, 2006 annual meeting of the Association in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of its incorporation.

The UpTown Board of Trustees extends its heartfelt thanks to Penny Martinsons for her efforts in reviewing the archives and compiling this document.