

City Vision launches “Artists On the Hill” program

Incorporating artists’ studios and galleries as part of an urban neighborhood redevelopment strategy is not a new idea. But developing live/work spaces specifically for artists as part of a comprehensive residential redevelopment strategy is a concept gaining ground across the country. City Vision recently launched an effort to develop artist live/work spaces in the Strawberry Hill neighborhood in Kansas City, Kansas and has opened the first such space called “The Studio at Strawberry Hill” operated by artist/photographer, Layne Haley.

City Vision first began serving the real estate needs of artists in 2008 by opening the Pressroom Studios in the Kansan Building. “It was through our interactions with the Pressroom artists that we began to learn of the pressing needs for both affordable living and working space for artists with very modest incomes,” observed John Harvey,



Layne Haley welcomes visitors to her new Studio at Strawberry Hill.

City Vision’s President. “The idea to develop affordable live/work artist space began to percolate in our mind a few years ago.”

The Studio at Strawberry Hill occupies a former corner grocery store building built in 1916 and redeveloped by City Vision. The

building features both a storefront commercial work space but also a loft apartment space above the studio. Layne Haley occupies both spaces at very affordable rates thanks to charitable support for the program through Greater KC LISC. “I love the fact that I can run down to the studio in my bare feet” exclaimed Layne. Layne had formerly been running her studio out of a cramped apartment.

Another aspect of the *Artists On the Hill* program is to offer artists the opportunity to own their own live/work spaces through a lease-to-own financing program. The first such project is now underway at 807 N. 5th St. in a formerly vacant duplex building that will soon feature studio and gallery space as well as a 2 bedroom, 2 bath, living unit. The home is scheduled to celebrate an open house in early 2012. City Vision plans to develop at least six live/work spaces on Strawberry Hill within the next couple of years. ■



Recognizing City Vision’s award are, left to right, Damon Broadus of Greater Kansas City LISC, John Harvey of City Vision, Evelyn Hudson of City Vision, and Dennis Mesa of Kansas Housing Resource Corporation.

City Vision wins Ad Astra Award

City Vision was recently awarded the Ad Astra Award for Affordable Housing Partnerships. The statewide recognition was presented by the Kansas Housing Resources Corporation for City Vision’s redevelopment efforts in the Strawberry Hill neighborhood.

Beginning with the opening of Historic City Hall Lofts in 2005, City Vision has leveraged investments of nearly \$10 million in the housing redevelopment effort that has included a dozen different funding partners. More than 60 new housing units have been created within the eight block redevelopment area. The response to the new housing opportunities has been very positive and the physical changes in the neighborhood have been clear and visible. Redevelopment efforts are expected to continue for several more years. ■

New homes on Strawberry Hill open

At the corner of 5th and Armstrong where derelict houses and vacant lots once stood, the grand opening of three new Energy Star, Victorian style homes was celebrated with a ribbon-cutting and open house. During his remarks Unified Government Mayor Joe Reardon noted the importance of the development of new housing options to neighborhoods like Strawberry Hill.

The new homes were designed and developed by City Vision in partnership with the Unified Government's HOME Fundraising program, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Wells Fargo Housing Foundation.

The new homes are Energy Star 2.0 rated and feature historic craftsman architecture with contemporary floor plans. The homes offer double master bedrooms, hardwood floors, entertainment-style kitchens, front and back decks and 2 car tandem garages. Wells Fargo awarded the project a \$150,000 grant for the development of three new homes and the renovation of two adjacent existing homes. The homes are being made available to moderate income homebuyers.

Since the opening of the Historic City Hall Lofts in the Strawberry Hill



Mayor Joe Reardon cuts the ribbon at the new homes on Armstrong while guests look on.

Neighborhood in 2005, City Vision has been leading a comprehensive redevelopment effort in this historic community located adjacent to the downtown commercial district. To date over \$10 million has been invested in the redevelopment effort including the 42 new loft apartments in the

former 1911 City Hall building and the renovation of a dozen older homes in the community. The completion of the new homes on Armstrong continues the effort to bring brand new housing options to the neighborhood that has seen very little new construction over the past 30 years. ■

Michelle Jones Joins Staff

Michelle Jones recently joined City Vision's staff as Controller in September 2011 and is responsible for all of the accounting responsibilities of the company. She previously worked as an Internal Auditor for Hallmark Cards before deciding to stay home and start a family.

Remarked Jones, "Becoming a part of the City Vision family has been one of the best professional decisions I have made. Not only are the staff wonderful to work with, but the ability to work in an organization that makes a significant, tangible, and lasting impact in the community has been great."

Michelle graduated from Kansas State University with a B.S. degree in Accounting and Management. She is married with 2 children ages 7 and 3 and her husband, Mark, is an independent financial consultant. ■



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