

OBERLIN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CENTER NEWS & UPDATES

APRIL 2013

OBERLIN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD CENTER IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

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To Our Wonderful Donors —

It's been a BUSY 18 months for the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center ("OURC") Project! Here's what your generous donations have done to date:

Last summer, Phase I (stabilization and rehabilitation) construction was completed. The historic Gasholder Building, which will be the permanent home to the interpretive OURC, received a new roof (with sustainable recycled Ecostar slate), complete tuck-pointing (brick masonry work), and newly fabricated windows and door! We also removed the deteriorating second floor to open the dramatic space from ground-level to the tip of the conical roof and added stairs to the Gasholder's basement. For the past year the OURC Implementation Team has been working diligently to complete the development of the site plan (Phase II in this 3-phase project), recently approved (02/20/13) by the Design Review Board and Planning Commissions.

Take a look at the beautiful site plan drawings (on page 3) to see where we are going in the next 12-24 months! Once the additional matching funds for this project are raised (estimated at \$100,000), construction of the OURC's property will begin and our next letter will hopefully be one inviting you to attend a site opening for the OURC!

We welcome your feedback and we ask that you keep up with our progress by visiting us on Facebook™ or the City of Oberlin website at www.cityofoberlin.com.

We thank you for your sponsorship of this wonderful project and we hope to see you soon!

Sincerely,
Darlene Colaso
Assistant City Manager & OURC Project Coordinator

IN THE NEWS: ONT's #1 STORY OF 2011

In January 2012, the Oberlin News Tribune released its Top 10 news stories of 2011, with the Gasholder Building renovations being the number one story of the year. The ONT article spoke about the construction on the Gasholder Building, which began in November 2011 that was made possible by a community fundraising effort, and the support of people like you!

Since then, the continued renovation of the Gasholder Building has been very exciting and the media has definitely taken notice. The future Oberlin Underground Railroad Center has been featured in articles in both The Morning Journal and The Chronicle Telegram, as well as in Pulse Magazine and Oberlin College OnCampus. We expect even more coverage as progress continues to be made on the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center site in the coming year. To view any media coverage on the Center, please visit the OURC Project page on the City website (www.cityofoberlin.com).

A ROBUST HISTORY ON THE SMALL SCREEN

In May 2012, Mika Johnson, an Amherst, Ohio native and Oberlin College alumnus, was commissioned to produce a short documentary film about the Oberlin Underground Railroad. Perhaps best known for his documentary feature film, *Amerika: A Notebook in Three Parts* and the subsequent web-based documentary series *The Amerikans*, Mika Johnson has an extraordinary talent for documentary story-telling and his abilities definitely shined in this film.

Utilizing the sound and production assistance of Oberlin College students Gerard Marcus, Isaac Jones, Gabe Freed, Ben Tobin, and Leah Wood, as well as his wife, Kaori Mitsushima, Mika conveyed the story of the Underground Railroad as told by members of the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center Implementation Team. OURCIT Chair, George Abram, Team Members Barb Mehwald and Jessie Reeder, along with Staff Liaison/Oberlin Assistant City Manager Darlene Colaso recounted the history of the Underground Railroad and Oberlin's role within it for this short film.

In emphasizing the abolitionist stance that the City of Oberlin and Oberlin College were founded upon, the film portrays the importance of the City of Oberlin in aiding escaped slaves seeking freedom from the South. In the documentary, George Abram speaks of the importance of telling the story of slavery and the Underground Railroad in Oberlin, so that the public recognizes that "these things really happened," and he believes that the only way to tell this story is through projects like the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center.

The film was beautifully created and will undoubtedly remain a focal point in the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center's history. To view the film, please visit <http://vimeo.com/46250820> or check us out on Facebook™ at Oberlin Underground Railroad Center Project.



BIG PLANS UNDERWAY FOR THE OURC

The Oberlin Underground Railroad Center Implementation Team is very excited to announce that the site plan for the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center and Park & Ride Facility was approved at their December 2012 meeting. Rex Hagerling of Moody-Nolan decided to step down as the architect working on the OURC project in the fall of 2012 for personal reasons. As a result, Architect Jodi Vanderwiel began working on the project and she definitely hit the ground running!

Working together with Landscape Architect, Jim McKnight of McKnight & Associates, Jodi created a beautiful and innovative site plan for the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center and Park & Ride Facility, which was presented to City Council March 4th. In creating the designs, Jodi said she tried to make visual connections between the Gasholder Building, train depot-style structural elements, and African culture and art. Utilizing the rhythm and texture of radial shapes seen in African baskets, bike wheels, and the Gasholder Building ceiling structure, along with the structural rhythm of railroad ties as inspiration, Jodi created an impressive site plan for the project (see opposite page).

The site includes a bike path along Edison Street with a ceremonial walkway leading from the bike path to the Gasholder Building that will potentially include decorative pavers and LED lighting. A structure containing restroom facilities, a bike shelter, and a picnic shelter will be built along the bike path, with the center bike shelter area being an open structure creating sight lines to the Gasholder Building. The foliage throughout the site will consist of flowering trees, ornamental grasses, and cedar evergreens native to Ohio, while maintaining as many significant existing trees as possible.

The Oberlin Rotary Club will potentially fund an eternal flame/water feature structure on the OURC site as well. The feature will be located across from the proposed amphitheater and will be a point of reflection on the site. Many ideas have been proposed for the components of the feature, including a potential mosaic seating area, and a large lantern structure reminiscent of those used during the time of the Underground Railroad. There are still many details to work out with the eternal flame/water feature, but we are very excited to be moving forward with such an important and creative aspect of the site.

With the site plan approved by City Council and the Planning & Zoning Commissions, the OURC and Park & Ride Facility is one step closer to coming to fruition. The OURC Implementation Team has been diligently working toward bringing this important piece of Oberlin's history to life and is eager to see the project completed in the coming years. With the continued support of the community, the Team is confident that the OURC will become an historical, educational, and inspirational highlight of the City of Oberlin and the entire country.



Fountain/Lantern Rendering & Inspiration Imagery

IT'S AN HONOR TO BE HONORED



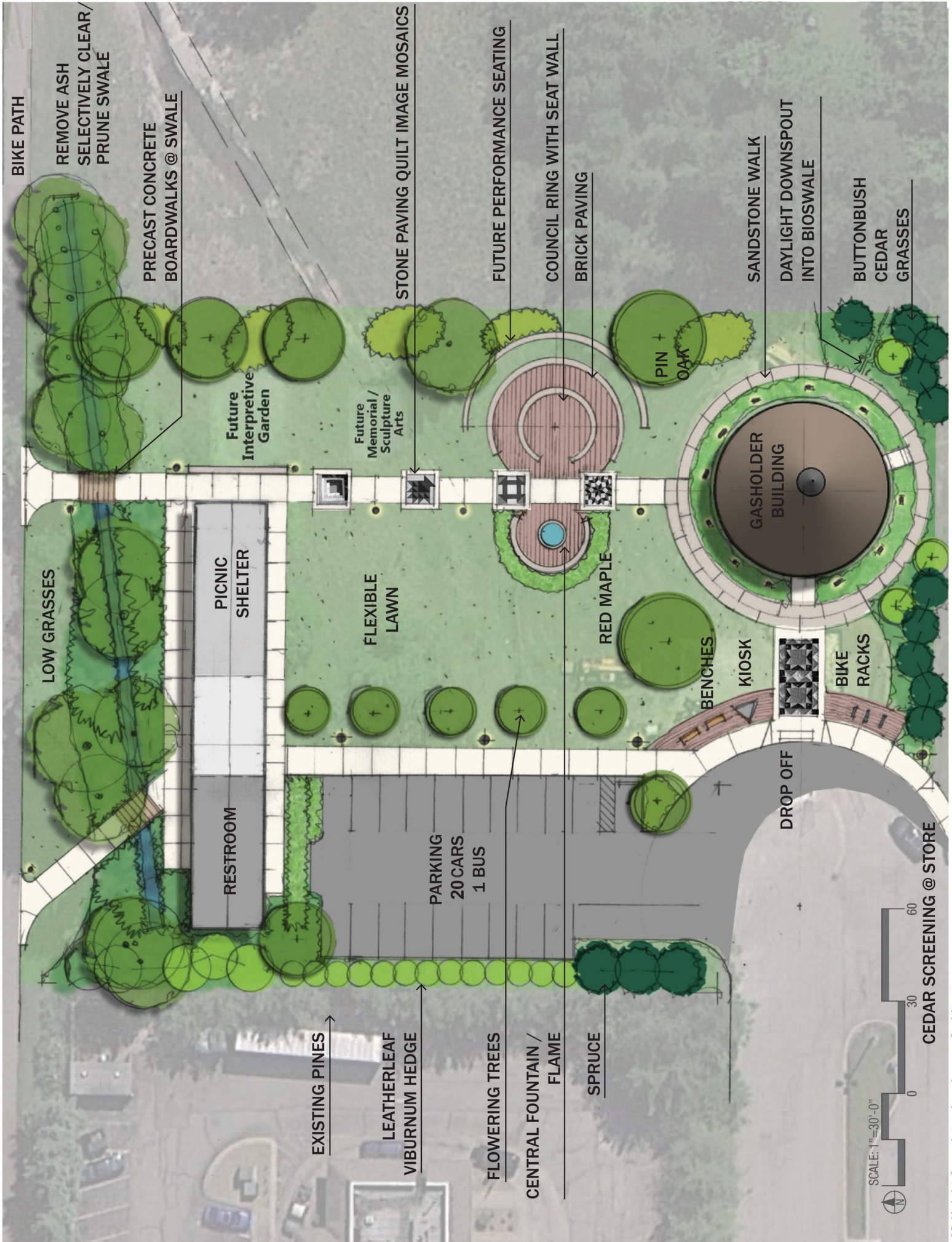
The Oberlin Underground Railroad Center is still in its 2nd phase of renovations, but that has not stopped the public from taking notice. This past fall, the Gasholder Building (future home to the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center) was nominated for and was a finalist for a Lorain County Beautiful Award in the Renovation category. Visit Lorain County and Lorain County Heritage presents the *Lorain County Beautiful Awards* every 2 years, which recognize local businesses and organizations for outstanding New Buildings, Green Buildings, Renovations, Landscapes, and Community Service sites. The award recipients are chosen by an outside team of architects after a thorough examination of each site. Although the Gasholder Building did not win a Lorain County Beautiful Award in 2012, it was an honor to be included among the other amazing finalists and we are confident in our prospects for future awards as progress on the OURC continues.

Another fun bit of exposure received by the OURC was at the 11th Annual Zero-Proof Mix Off. The Mix Off, which was sponsored by the Lorain County Safe Community Coalition and Lorain County Community College, took place at the college's Spitzer Conference Center on December 6, 2012. Darlene Colaso, Oberlin Assistant City Manager/Staff Liaison to the OURC Implementation Team, along with her daughter, Zoë, volunteered to present a delicious raspberry non-alcoholic beverage at the Mix Off representing the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center. The drink, appropriately named *Zoë's No Hangover Razberry Mocktail*, won an award for Best Name during the awards ceremony, but more importantly brought increased exposure to the Center, as more than 500 people attended the annual event.



Zoë and Darlene Colaso

It's clear that excitement is growing over the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center project and we're eager to see what's in store this coming year!



BIKE PATH

REMOVE ASH
SELECTIVELY CLEAR/
PRUNE SWALE

PRECAST CONCRETE
BOARDWALKS @ SWALE

Future
Interpretive
Garden

FLEXIBLE
LAWN

PICNIC
SHELTER

RESTROOM

PARKING
20 CARS
1 BUS

EXISTING PINES

LEATHERLEAF
VIBURNUM HEDGE

FLOWERING TREES

CENTRAL FOUNTAIN /
FLAME

SPRUCE

RED MAPLE

BENCHES
KIOSK

BIKE
RACKS

DROP OFF

GASHOLDER
BUILDING

SANDSTONE WALK

DAYLIGHT DOWNSPOUT
INTO BIOSWALE

BUTTONBUSH
CEDAR
GRASSES

PIN
OAK

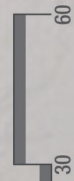
STONE PAVING QUILT IMAGE MOSAICS

FUTURE PERFORMANCE SEATING

COUNCIL RING WITH SEAT WALL

BRICK PAVING

SCALE: 1"=30'-0"



CEDAR SCREENING @ STORE



THREE MURALS PRESENTED TO THE OURC

During half-time of the January 20, 2012 Oberlin High School Varsity Boys Basketball game, three murals (see below) painted by Oberlin High School art students were presented to City Manager Eric Norenberg and Assistant City Manager/HR administrator Darlene Colaso. Each mural depicts a different aspect of Oberlin's history with the Underground Railroad, including an image of Harriet Tubman with a map of the different paths to freedom in Canada taken by slaves, slaves making their journey north in the darkness of night, and the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue participants.

The mural project was under the direction of Oberlin High School art teacher, Lorna Kretchmar until her retirement in 2011, and was taken over by current art teacher, Danielle Camino. The art students were asked to research the history of Oberlin's role in the Underground Railroad and come up with the designs of the murals. Over the course of two months, a group of five students completed the three murals, with one being painted jointly by Kasha Hilton and Stephanie Luczkowski, another being painted by Marissa Hart and Neva Rustad, and the third mural being painted by Rachel Mentzer.

The murals are currently on display at the *Visit Lorain County Visitors' Bureau* (8025 Leavitt Road, Amherst, Ohio) until they can be on permanent display at the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center upon its completion.



TOURS OF THE GASHOLDER BUILDING

Throughout 2012, OURCIT Chair George Abram, Team Member Tony Mealy, and ACM/Staff Liaison Darlene Colaso have given guided tours of the historic Gasholder Building and grounds to various residents and visitors, including groups from the Lorain County MetroParks and the Oberlin Heritage Center. If you or your organization is interested in receiving a tour of the Gasholder Building and future home of the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center, please contact the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center Implementation Team at (440) 775-7217 or dramos@cityofoberlin.com.

Visit or Donate to the Oberlin Underground Railroad Center Project online at
<http://www.cityofoberlin.com/CityManager/OberlinUndergroundRailroadCenterProject.page>

or Like Us on Facebook™:
Oberlin Underground Railroad Center



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