Crossroads Arts District; Kansas City, MO

“With a focus on art, entertainment, food and drink, Kansas City’s Crossroads neighborhood has come into its own as one of the Midwestern city’s CULTURAL MECCAS.”—March 15, 2014, American Way, a publication of American Airlines

BACKGROUND:

Almost 30 years ago, a few artists were in search of affordable studio space and a place where they could display and sell their work. This caused the organic beginnings of what is now the Crossroads Arts District. Amidst former abandoned warehouses and historic buildings on Kansas City’s famous Film Row, one now finds cutting edge entrepreneurial ventures, contemporary office spaces, and modern event venues.

Before it was called the Crossroads, the area was considered part of “Midtown” or sometimes just “the area between Downtown and Crown Center.” When galleries arrived in the 1980s, the name Crossroads Arts District had already taken hold, and was formalized with a new neighborhood association in 2001.

The Crossroad Arts District is now home to more than 400 local artists and 100 independent studios and has one of the most concentrated gallery districts in the nation. Beyond the galleries, restaurants, and storefronts, there are an equally impressive collection of professional design studios, architectural firms, advertising agencies, and other innovative businesses.

Major milestones in the history of the Crossroads:

- 1985  Leedy-Voulkos Gallery opens
- 1995  First Fridays begin
- 1998  Freight House renovation completed
- 1999  Union Station reopens
- 2001  Crossroads Community Association formed
- 2003  Renovated buildings bring influx of residents

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Now home to over 2,000 residents, the Crossroads is a fully functioning mixed use neighborhood. You’ll find small-scale grocers, bakeries, home décor, dentists, pet stores, yoga studios, banks, movie theaters, printing services, coffee shops, and restaurants.

MANAGEMENT:

The Crossroads Arts District is managed by a board of directors from the Crossroads Community Association (CCA) that was formed by property owners fighting blight and crime in what was a forgotten stretch between downtown and Crown Center. CCA has grown into a formal membership organization and represents residents and business owners. CCA maintains an organic approach for neighborhood development and acts as the liaison between the Crossroads and the city to
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make sure that the Crossroads continues to grow and prosper. CCA has one part time employee and 12 members on their Board of Directors.

CULTURAL FACILITIES:

The Crossroads is home to the Kansas City Symphony (kc symphony.org), the Kansas City Ballet (kc ballet.org) and the Kansas City Lyric Opera (kc opera.org) as well as more than 400 artists and 100 studios, the Crossroads Arts District is one of the most concentrated gallery districts in the nation. Professional design studios, architectural firms, advertising agencies, media production companies and other innovative businesses populate the area. One of the newest anchors of the Crossroads is the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts (kauffmancenter.org) which is one of the largest performing arts center in the United States.

Located adjacent to the Crossroads is the Power & Light District (powerandlightdistrict.com) which is a premier dining, entertainment and shopping district. It was developed by the Cordish Company of Baltimore, Maryland and designed by Beyer Blinder Belle and 360 Architecture. The district comprises nine blocks on the south side of the downtown loop. At the heart of the Power & Light District is Kansas City Live!, one block devoted to live music and entertainment venues. At the center of Kansas City Live! is a covered outdoor plaza to be used for concerts.

UNIQUENESS/DISTINCTIONS:

The Crossroads Arts District is a part of the greater downtown area of Kansas City, Missouri. As of 2010, downtown KC had roughly 22,500 residents and 14,200 housing units. Many of these residents are attracted to living in the Crossroads because of its diverse, youthful culture. In recent years, downtown KC has undergone a surge in new developments, costing a total of $5.5 billion since 2000. These new developments – the Sprint Center, the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Power & Light District, the Crossroads Arts District – have helped to create a vibrant cultural scene that is unlike any other in the nation.

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Performing Arts, and the Power & Light District -- have helped create the cultural and arts renaissance that is transforming Kansas City.

Part of the attraction to developing in this district is due to the Planned Industrial Expansion Authority (PIEA). The PIEA was formed to foster commercial and industrial development in specifically designated redevelopment areas. A 100% abatement of new property taxes resulting from new construction or rehabilitation may be available for 10 years, with 50% Abatement available during the following 15 years.

Since 2007, building owners who maintain over 51% of their business in the arts benefit from the Crossroads Arts District tax abatement. Over the course of 6 years, 40 properties have been saved through the use of this tax incentive.