



**News Release**  
*For Immediate Release*  
July 9, 2013

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## **Design Center Announces First Grants in New Program to Help Revitalize City Neighborhoods**

***First Projects Selected Are the Museum of History & Religion on Joseph Ave and Dazzle School Expansion on Webster Ave***

Rochester, NY--July 9, 2013--The [Rochester Regional Design Center](#) (RRCDC) announced its first Development/Design Grant awards today to help two projects in distressed northeast neighborhoods in the City of Rochester.

The awards, announced at a press conference today, were made possible through the RRCDC's new [Development/Design Fund Program](#). The program was established to be a catalyst for revitalization in distressed areas of Rochester. It provides professional architectural and planning services including design, planning and feasibility analysis, to non-profit community and neighborhood groups and community development corporations to help them engage citizens, and enhance the quality of their neighborhood improvement projects at the critical pre-development phase.

The program was established with two initial lead grants - \$28,000 from the Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation and \$15,000 from the Louis S. and Molly B. Wolk Foundation. Additional funding is being sought to grow the program. A similar program has been in place for 20 years in Pittsburgh PA, where 70 percent of grants awarded for pre-development work have materialized into actual projects, stimulating more than \$300 million in development.

**The neighborhood projects selected for the first grants of \$5,000 each are:**



### **The Joseph Avenue Business Association**

The Joseph Avenue Business Association (JABA) will receive funding for a pre-development feasibility study to create a [Museum of History and Religion](#) in the heart of the Joseph Avenue corridor on the site of the decommissioned former B'nai Israel Ahavas Achim Synagogue. The RRCDC has been working with the JABA to create a comprehensive Vision Plan for the corridor.

One goal is to increase community engagement. The newly realized Museum of History and Religion could be the central hub for that engagement and a catalyst for future redevelopment to bolster the revitalization efforts of the corridor.



### **Dazzle School of Visual & Performing Arts**

The [Dazzle School of Visual and Performing Arts](#), which serves those with developmental and intellectual disabilities, will receive funding for pre-development work for potential expansion to the currently vacant building located at 130-134 Webster Avenue. The grant, in combination with the guidance of a professional design consultant, will be

used to assess renovation costs, develop conceptual plans and drawings, explore options for leasing or renting building space, as well as obtaining funding to execute the renovations. The rehabilitation of this building will serve not only the Dazzle School but also the surrounding Beechwood community with the improvement of the overall streetscape.

"The fundamental goal of this program is to help good feasible projects like these that come from neighborhood organizations become better and attract the development funds they need to become a reality. Weak projects will die an early death without wasting resources," said Joni Monroe, RRCDC Executive Director.

"The program will foster collaboration and strengthen shared efforts and use of resources, and provide an alternative to demolition that disturbs and disconnects the physical fabric of the city. By incorporating grant amounts into their implementation budgets, funds are recaptured and reused for future grant giving."

The northeast area was chosen as a starting point for the program, since nearly 40 percent of the total population lives below the poverty line, 13.6 percent of all housing units are vacant, and there is a trend showing continued population loss, disinvestment and underutilized buildings.

"There is a growing need for intervention to rebuild these neighborhoods, which have experienced a downward cycle of decline over the past 40 years," said Monroe.

"These grants will serve as a catalyst to encourage high quality projects that are initiated by organizations and associations within challenged neighborhoods. If we can have a positive impact on investment and property ownership, and empower citizenry and stewardship, it will be a critical first step to save our neighborhoods, enhance public safety and public health, and contribute to the regeneration of our community."

To oversee the new program, the RRCDC has hired a part-time program manager. These first two projects designated for support were identified with input from the City of Rochester and neighborhood organizations. Next year, organizations will be able to submit applications for assistance in a competitive process.

Holli Budd, Executive Director of the Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation said, "The Development/Design Fund Program encourages our local nonprofits to be entrepreneurial and professional as they begin new projects that will improve our community. The Foundation trustees are glad to support this effort, which reflects the best business practices of our founder, Max Farash."

Harold Samloff, Trustee of the Louis S. and Molly B. Wolk Foundation, said, "We are pleased to help support the launch of this innovative program that will provide grants to fund selection and hiring of pre-qualified local design and planning professionals who agree to provide assistance at the critical pre-development stage of projects. The approach will increase the likelihood of better quality outcomes, enhancing neighborhood viability and economic value."

"We hope to achieve in Rochester what Pittsburgh has accomplished," said Monroe, who met with the Pittsburgh program leadership in creating the program here. "We

will be working with and reaching out to individuals, government, non-profit organizations and groups in the northeast target area that have already been receptive to what we can offer to collaborate and dovetail with other program projects and initiatives."

After year three, the program will be expanded to incorporate neighborhoods in the northwest and southwest quadrants of the city, while continuing to focus on the northeast quadrant.

For more information on these projects visit [RRCDC.org](http://RRCDC.org).

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*RRCDC celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to promoting healthy, sustainable communities by encouraging quality design and thoughtful use of built and natural resources. Its design professionals, planners, and citizens serve as a collaborative resource providing design guidance and recommendations.*

*RRCDC brings together community members and design professionals to create collaborative solutions for cities, towns and neighborhoods. Working with neighborhoods and communities, RRCDC has produced dozens of vision plans including the Village of Churchville, Town of Brighton, Corn Hill Neighborhood, ArtWalk, Susan B. Anthony Neighborhood, Marketview Heights, and more.*

*RRCDC also presents the annual [Reshaping Rochester Series](#) of lectures and events, the [Reshaping Rochester Awards](#), and hosts exhibitions of urban designers, architects, landscape architects, planners, artists, craftsmen and projects by other design professionals who enhance our communities through their contributions to the built environment and to the public realm.*