

## Rochester, v2.0

**Jennifer Indovina, co-founder of RocCity2.0, explains the philosophy behind one of Rochester's newest community-building efforts.**

### What is RocCity2.0?

RocCity2.0 is a group of young, energetic and creative urban designers from Rochester. We seek to unify the efforts of other organizations in the city that are looking to redefine and reconnect with their community. We are the doers.

### Are you a 501(c)(3)?

RocCity2.0 is not yet a registered 501(c)(3), but we're in the process of becoming one.

### Who is leading this effort?

The members and organizers of RocCity2.0 are all local. We met through other events in the city and came together after

the announcement of a contest to look for cities around the world that were focused on redesign-

ing for the future—for sustainability, for transportation, for social programs and for community. Everyone in RocCity2.0 is proud to call Rochester home; we believe in this city's potential, and we believe in our ability, as its citizens, to effect change in our home.

### What is your vision?

The goal of RocCity2.0 is to take back the "pro-loitering" lifestyle of our city's grand history. RocCity2.0 will host grassroots events throughout the year that will encourage citizens to come and spend the entire day in the city instead of just driving through it.

### What specific things are you involved in?

The plan of RocCity2.0 is to partner with other supporting organizations that are dedicated to revitalizing a sense of community in Rochester. For example, our guerilla pedestrian signs you see around the city (right) represented a partnership between



RocCity2.0, Emerging Rochester Architects, TEDxRochester and Badfish Consulting, among others.

Our yearly events will always be urban design projects and will thus require the involvement of new organizations over time.

### How can people get involved?

Anyone who wants to become involved with RocCity2.0 should like us on Facebook: facebook.com/RocCity2.0. We will post updates on upcoming events and interesting facts about the city of Rochester's urban design scene.

### Upcoming events?

We have planned our yearly guerilla urban design event to take place June 21. In the meantime we're supporting the RocCity Design Week, taking place all over the city of Rochester June 5 to 8. More information will be made available closer to Design Week on the event website: rocdesignweek.com.

Jennifer Indovina is CEO of Tenrehte Technologies Inc.

# Breathing new life into old buildings

Today's preservationists know how to balance history with progress, Caitlin Meives says

By SALLY PARKER

**C**aitlin Meives' fascination with old buildings is nothing new. As a child, she noticed things like porch details and other architectural features.

Meives, 29, is preservation planner for the Landmark Society of Western New York Inc. She works with communities on finding new uses for older structures.

A former store in a small town is a good example. Meives and fellow Landmark Society staff helped local preservation advocates get the Old Stone Store, owned by the town of Clarendon in Orleans County, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It also helped fund a condition report and market the 1836 building. A prospective buyer is eager to get started, and the town aims to transfer ownership by March.

"I get to meet lots of different kinds of people ... who really care about their communities," Meives says. "Those are really the people who are making things happen. We are more supporting them, giving them additional tools."

Meives says a common perception is that preservationists oppose progress and want to limit what people can do with their property. She acknowledges it can look that way at first glance. When Genesee Brewing Co. announced it would demolish the former Cataract Brewery, the Landmark Society led opposition, proposing instead it be folded into the brewery's expansion plans. But the building was torn down.

The Landmark Society also is involved in a dispute between the owner of a former church

on West Main Street, who wants to replace it with a Dollar General store, and community members who want the building saved.

The city's zoning code stipulates that the property owner has to show he has done due diligence.

"The onus is on him," Meives says. "That's why the zoning code exists. No one can do whatever they want with their property."

Meives says the Landmark Society's role is not to block progress but to encourage sensitivity about the community's architectural heritage and economic needs during the process.

"Preservation is really about economic development," she says. "What's going to benefit the community? You're not going to demolish your way to a thriving community."

Founded in 1937, the Landmark Society is one of the nation's oldest historic preservation groups. The organization led efforts that protected many of the mansions on East Avenue, resulting in one of the finest residential grand boulevards in the country. The group also fought to save Rochester's oldest neighborhood, Corn Hill, from the wrecking ball during urban renewal in the 1950s and '60s. While many buildings were lost, many were saved, giving the area its much-loved character.

Since that time, historic preservation has evolved, Meives says. Today's preservation advocates know that saving old structures should—and usually can—make good economic sense too. Like a growing number of developers who see value in adapting dated buildings for new uses, they are finding a balance between old and new.

"It's really evolved a lot over the last 30 years, and the larger part of it is community revitalization," says Meives, who lives with her boyfriend, two dogs and a cat in the Park Avenue area. "Living in a walkable community, with older buildings with modern in-fill, that's preservation. That's why preservation has such an economic value, because people

are drawn to those types of places."

Meives grew up in a Syracuse suburb with an interest in history shared by her father. She earned a degree in American history and Spanish in 2005 from the University of Rochester. She flirted with the idea of earning a master's degree in history, but a flow chart of career possibilities showed her how to blend her love of history with her interest in architecture. She went on to earn an M.S. in historic preservation at the University of Vermont in Burlington in 2008.

She moved to Manhattan, Kan., with her boyfriend so he could attend veterinary school. There she worked in the state historic preservation office as a survey coordinator documenting historic resources.

Meives liked Kansas. She enjoyed the small towns and saw virtually none of the sprawl common in New York. When she returned to her home state, she was struck by the lack of investment in small towns, where a building could sit dormant and decaying for years. In her job at the Landmark Society—where she has worked for 2 1/2 years—Meives says she has found a place to do her part to help.

She is on the board of Rochester Greenovation, an environmental group that aims to strengthen local communities through waste diversion and education. She also is involved in RocCity2.0 (see sidebar). Meives says the groups are evidence of a strong community of people in their 20s and 30s who view historic preservation, environmental advocacy and urban design as economic drivers in Rochester's future.

"There are a lot of people who are preservationists and don't self-identify that way. If you care about your community, you probably are a preservationist," she says. "You feel alive when you're in a city and there's people around and things going on."

sparker@rbj.net / 585-546-8303



Photo by Gerry Szymanski