

# Livable Communities Demonstration Account

PROJECT PROFILE

## Commons @ Penn Minneapolis, Minnesota



Before



After

### PROJECT SUMMARY

The Commons at Penn (C@P) is a mixed-use apartment building in North Minneapolis. With 47-units of affordable multi-family apartments and 4,500 square feet of commercial space, currently hosting Wirth Cooperative Grocery, the project provides housing, goods and services to a Racially Concentrated Area of Poverty. The lead member of the development team, Devean George, has a unique history with the neighborhood having grown up in the immediate area. The project also hosts Building Blocks, a non-profit organization organized by George. Building Blocks seeks to affect communities, families and youth through mentoring, community engagement and housing development.

### HOW THIS PROJECT SUPPORTS LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

**CONNECT** → As the first redevelopment at this intersection, C@P sets a standard that connects transit, housing, supportive services and retail, providing infrastructure and technology improvements that increase ridership and promote alternative transportation.

**DEMONSTRATE** → C@P represents a “bottom up” approach to addressing community needs through a capital building program and a social services approach that strives to resolve economic, social and racial disparities in a challenged neighborhood.

**CATALYZE** → C@P represents a critical first step for investment on the Northside. With 3,000 square feet of commercial space for community-based organizations and 1,500 square feet of micro retail, C@P will catalyze further development at the intersection in the future.

### LCDA GRANT INFORMATION

<b>Applicant:</b>	City of Minneapolis
<b>Funding Cycle:</b>	2013
<b>Grant Amount:</b>	\$1,000,000
<b>Other LCA Funding:</b>	\$22,500, TBRA, 2012

### Funded Elements:

Demolition, site preparation, sewer and water extensions, storm water management and public sidewalks, site lighting, site fencing, art installations, benches, bike racks, public transit shelter

### FAST FACTS

<b>Developer:</b> Building Blocks Non-Profit	<b>Project Type:</b> Affordable, mixed-use
<b>Estimated Total Development Cost:</b> \$11 million	<b>Total Housing Units:</b> 47
<b>Net Tax Capacity Increase:</b> \$47,253	<b>Affordable Units:</b> 45 at 50% AMI, 2 at 60% AMI
	<b>Jobs:</b> 35 temp, 36 permanent

## RISKS AND OUTCOMES

### FROM PROJECT DEVELOPER

George has stated in interviews that this project was tougher than his transition from Augsburg College to the NBA, particularly because he had never developed affordable housing. To fill the housing gap in North Minneapolis means building strong partnerships to support his vision. Allocating the right dollar amount to every cost requires patience, and since he had only developed market rate housing in the past, there's not a lot of wiggle room to make mistakes.

"This has been really difficult. It was a little bit like pre-draft for me," George said. "Coming from a small school I had to prove myself and play well all the time. It was similar to that." Despite the initial difficulties, all 47 units have been 100% leased after receiving 800 applications and 10-15 calls per day. In addition, commercial space has been built out for George's non-profit to help keep kids off the street.

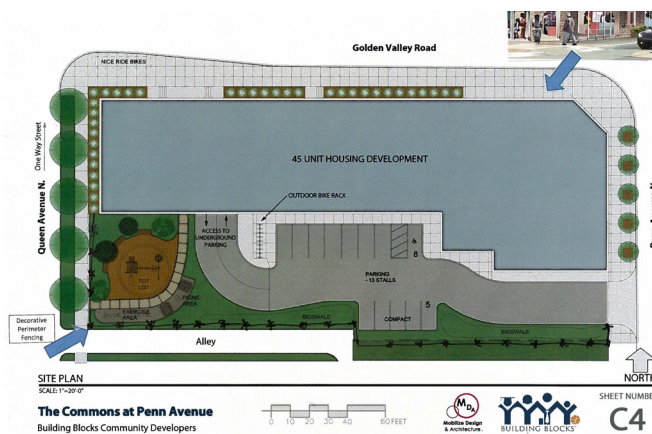
### FROM CITY STAFF

While the City of Minneapolis was eager to work with George, this also meant working with a brand new developer. Despite the learning curve and battles with the neighborhood organization, the project has been nothing short of successful.

Challenges and risks included site design, unexpected underground storage tanks, and building a high density development in a neighborhood dominated by single-family homes. Many neighbors' hesitations over density and urban design were mitigated, however, through transparent communication during the planning process, and the overwhelming number of rental applications and interest in the property.

**"Devean could have invested his money anywhere in the world, but he chose to invest in his own roots"**

Tiffany Glasper,  
City of Minneapolis



Site Plan



Rendering of the development

### ABOUT LCDA

The 1995 Livable Communities Act (LCA) funds community investment that revitalizes economies, creates affordable housing, and links different land uses and transportation. The council awards 4 types of grants to communities. The Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA) funds innovative development projects that efficiently link housing, jobs, services, and transit in an effort to create inspiring and lasting Livable Communities.

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### LEARN MORE

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