

OUR MISSION: READS promotes regional equity and builds sustainable communities and socially progressive organizations through innovative real estate development.

READS is a full-service, nonprofit real estate development and consulting firm with a focus on community and economic development. READS provides guidance and direct real estate development services to organizations seeking to develop real estate to meet their organizational and client needs.

READS is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. To support READS, send your tax-deductible donation to READS at the address above.

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NJBIZ HONORS READS FOUNDER

Brian Keenan was honored in September as a recipient of the 2009 Forty Under 40 award, by NJ Biz. The Forty Under 40 program recognizes businessmen and businesswomen with a commitment to business growth, professional excellence and to the community.

Keenan, who founded Real Estate Advisory and Development Services six years ago, was honored by event organizer NJ Biz with 39 other business leaders from across the state, in a ceremony at The Palace at Somerset Park in Somerset on September 10.

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

READS would like to thank the following funders for supporting our work developing charter school facilities and preserving affordable housing:

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs
Corporation for Enterprise Development
First State Community Action Agency
Local Initiatives Support Corporation

The Victoria Foundation
The Bodman Foundation
Edna Wardlaw Charitable Trust

Newsletter prepared for READS
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“We react, consciously and unconsciously, to the places where we live and work...These places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done...in short, the places where we spend our time affect the people we are and can become.” – Tony Hiss, *The Experience of Place*

www.readsusa.org

NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2009

THE SCHOOL THAT READS BUILT IN TEANECK

After nine years of renting space, Teaneck Community Charter School finally has a place of its own, thanks to READS.

READS has helped the school move from a rented space on Palisades Avenue to a new school facility in a converted warehouse at 463 Chestnut St., a little more than two miles away. To do that, READS lined up nearly \$11 million in financing, including \$2.7 million to buy the property, and \$8 million for renovations.

Working with an underwriter, READS sold bonds privately to investors, and raised the \$11 million in tax-exempt bond financing. Done this way, the school still got the money it needed for the project, but the flexibility of this approach allowed it to get 100 percent financing.

“We used to rent space here in Teaneck,” said Rex Shaw, executive director of Teaneck Community Charter School. “Now, thanks to READS, we pay less each year for our mortgage than we did for our rent.”

Covering 45,000 square feet, the new school facility incorporates many of the distinctive architectural features of the former warehouse. Anchoring the school



A two-story atrium anchors the interior of Teaneck Community Charter School.

is a two-story atrium. Once through the doors, students immediately are connected visually with the school’s library, its main corridors, and its multipurpose room. And, like the classrooms, the atrium and hallways are illuminated with natural sunlight.

The high ceiling allowed the architect to outfit classrooms with impressive windows, 8 feet high and up to 20 feet long, not only granting students an expansive view of the outside, but also flooding the rooms with natural light.

Now that work has finished, the building has enough room for 288 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

“In addition to the first-rate education it provides, the school has taken an empty warehouse and made it a living, vibrant part of the community,” said Brian Keenan, director of READS. “Stories like this one are why we founded READS.”



READS helped Teaneck Community Charter School to buy and convert this former warehouse into a school building.



Dear Friends:
When READS began in 2003, it was a one-man operation. Now just six years later, it has grown to a dozen people working in three states. Yet some things haven’t changed. We

remain as committed as ever to building strong communities and organizations through innovative real estate development.

The talented staff at READS is impressive, and I thank my co-workers for their willingness to do whatever is needed. To that end, we have made some changes to our organizational structure at READS.

Jeff Crum is now overseeing all real estate work for READS. Christina Oztan will expand her work in marketing and development, and lead some of our innovative programs, like The Energy Institute.

Eric Felczak now coordinates all design work for READS, and will act as a liaison with our project professionals and our clients, to ensure high-quality design. Keith Timko will co-manage the organization with me, and will change his title from vice president to director.

The staff of READS is committed to the people with whom and the places where we work. It shows in the dramatic increase in new projects and in projects we have completed this year, the recognition we have received, and the increased financial support that has been given to us.

While many organizations have talented staff, I am grateful to work with a group of people who are so committed to our work, respectful of our clients and of each other.

Brian Keenan
Director

DID YOU KNOW?

Resident-owned manufactured housing communities are big winners

For many Americans, the word *home* conjures images of a three- or four-bedroom house built on a lot a half-acre or more, with or without a white picket fence.

But for nearly 9 million families nationwide, their homes were built in factories somewhere else and shipped to the communities where they now sit, with or without that same fence. A few interesting facts about these manufactured homes:

- Manufactured housing is the largest source of unsubsidized affordable housing in the country.
- In the late 1990s, manufactured housing represented two-thirds of new affordable housing in the U.S. Between 1993 and 1999, 23 percent of the growth in home ownership among very low income families was due to manufactured housing.
- Despite their common misnomer, manufactured homes are no more mobile

- **The U.S. has 50,000 manufactured home communities**
- **Resident ownership allows for self-governance**
- **Manufactured homes are affordable**

than houses built on site. This puts homeowners at risk of losing their homes if the community closes or is redeveloped.

- Resident-owned communities are formed when a community's homeowners association, made up of resident homeowners, purchases and operates the community.
- Among the benefits to homeowners in resident-owned communities: greater control over lot rents, maintenance, repairs, and improvements to the community; and a voice in drafting and approving community

policies. They also enjoy long-term security, since the park cannot be sold or closed.

- A December 2006 report by the University of New Hampshire showed that homeowners in resident-owned communities have significant economic advantages over counterparts in investor-owned communities, including higher average home sales prices, faster home sales, and access to fixed-rate home financing.
- Studies have found that appreciation of manufactured homes on resident-owned land is in line with the site-built market.
- There are about 50,000 manufactured home communities in the United States, with nearly 1,000 resident-owned. Through ROC USA™'s network of nonprofit certified technical assistance providers, 13 communities have been converted to resident ownership in the past year, preserving nearly 1,000 homes.

NEW HAPPENINGS AT READS

Delaware housing grant awarded

READS this August received a \$68,000 share of a Community Services Block Grant in Delaware to further its work at preserving affordable housing in that state.

The grant, awarded by First State Community Action Agency and funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, recognizes the work READS has been doing in Delaware to promote resident ownership of manufactured home communities. Grant partners include Community Legal Aid Society Inc. and the Delaware Manufactured Home Owners Association. The three groups earlier this year saw their first such project to completion in Delaware, with the purchase of Minquadale Mobile Home Village.

READS and its partners are using the grant to educate manufactured-home owners about the benefits of resident ownership and their rights under Delaware's Right of First Offer law, helping them through the process

of buying their communities, and helping them to manage repairs or upgrades to the infrastructure of the community.

Welcome to our new staff



READS is well known for the work it does in New Jersey, but with its latest hire, the organization hopes to raise its profile in Delaware as well.

Julie French has joined READS as a community organizer and organizational trainer to spearhead its growing work in Delaware. Julie will provide support, technical assistance and training to homeowners in manufactured home communities, by working directly with board members, committees and residents.

Julie will work with homeowners in manufactured home communities to help them organize homeowner associations to buy their communities when they go

up for sale, and to provide post-purchase assistance to ensure that the community operates successfully. Before coming to READS, Julie worked for NCALL Research Inc. in Dover, and with the Delaware State Housing Authority. She has a bachelor's degree in urban affairs from Delaware State University.

LISC awards \$500K to READS

Real Estate Advisory and Development Services Inc. has received a new grant to support up to five new charter school projects in Newark and Jersey City.

The grant will cover the predevelopment costs of developing buildings for schools, including routine expenses such as environmental studies, construction management and legal fees. The grant comes to READS from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation through \$500,000 in funding made available by the Walton Family Foundation.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

READS helps charter schools find their way home



Learning Community Charter School in Jersey City was able to buy a permanent facility after READS arranged the financing.

In Hudson County, the enrollment at Jersey City Community Charter School has swelled to 600 students, thanks to the new classrooms added last year.

The Lincoln Park neighborhood in Newark, meanwhile, has seen the debut of Newark Educators Collaborative Charter School, complete with a new school facility that holds 300 students.

And also in Jersey City, Learning Community Charter School has found a place of its own at the former Academy of St. Aloysius.

The common element to all three charter schools is their connection to Real Estate Advisory and Development Services Inc. In the past 12 months, each of these schools has benefited from the professional expertise READS brings to its projects, from finance to construction and everything in-between.

"We've helped some charter schools move into and update older school facilities, and we've helped them make school facilities out of everything from a warehouse to horse stables," said Brian Keenan, director of READS. "Each of our clients is a reflection of the history, the character and the resources of the community it grows in, and is an asset to that community too."

IN JERSEY CITY, IT'S FINANCING AND EXPANSION

Jersey City Community Charter School had a building, but it needed to grow bigger. When the work was finished, the school had 25,000 square feet of new space, including a new gym and cafeteria, and enough classrooms to raise its enrollment to 600 students.

"READS was our greatest ally during our expansion," said Carletta Martin-Goldston, the school's lead person. "Our expansion project wouldn't have been manageable without the work they did."

Learning Community Charter School had its eye on the former Academy of St. Aloysius in Jersey City when it approached READS for help. The property already had the structures to meet the facilities needs of the charter school, and it would even give them the freedom to add another 200 students to their enrollment.

"READS knew how to get us exactly what we needed," said Shelley Skinner, director of development and outreach. "They tapped their network of lenders and got us \$6.5 million in financing from The Reinvestment Fund of Philadelphia. Every day that I look around at this fine school that we have, I remember that we couldn't ever have done it without the help of READS."

With the financing in hand and a \$500,000 grant that they received from the Simon Foundation, Learning Community was able to purchase their school.

IN NEWARK, STABLES BECOME A SCHOOL

Called in at the last minute after the school broke off relations with another developer, READS delivered a brand-new school facility to Newark Educators Collaborative Charter School, for the school to open in this year.

With a seven-year loan for \$700,000 from Victoria Foundation, READS rehabilitated the former stables and built out the facility from 18,000 to 28,000 square feet. Even with these changes, the new school retains the historic character of the property, which is being leased from Crawford Street Partners.

"Like any other new charter school, we have a lot of work to do that's going to require our full attention," said Margot Hammond of Newark Educators Collaborative Charter School. "Thanks to READS, without distraction, we can make providing high-quality education for Newark's children our priority."

All three schools, like many other charter school clients of READS, are discovering firsthand the advantage of owning their own buildings. Besides letting the school build equity in its own real estate, it leaves the school no longer beholden to a landlord, and free to focus its attention squarely on the program and the students.

"Owning their own facility is one of the most important steps in the growth of any charter school," said Keith Timko, director of READS. "It gives the school the permanency it needs to put down roots and demonstrate how absolutely indispensable it is to the community."



In addition to the other education space added during its recent construction project, Jersey City Community Charter School also received a new gym, complete with a rock wall.



READS delivered a brand-new school facility to Newark Educators Collaborative Charter School, in time for the school to open this year.