

In the last 5 years, the Grand Avenue neighborhood from 7th Avenue to just northwest of 15th Avenue has evolved from an edgy industrial area to a significant part of the Phoenix Downtown arts community. Many industrial and storefront structures have been converted to galleries and shops making Grand Avenue a major attraction of the First Friday Art Walk scene. Restaurants and entertainment venues have established an eclectic, bohemian community. GAMA, the Grand Avenue Merchants Association, supports and promotes over 15 galleries, restaurants and entertainment venues in the Grand Avenue area. (grandavephoenix.com)



In an effort to stabilize this evolving artist neighborhood on Grand Avenue, Tom Carmody, a local Phoenix developer heavily involved in the redevelopment of

Downtown Phoenix real estate, assumed financial control of the Oasis Hotel located at the tri-street intersection of Grand Avenue, 15th Avenue and Roosevelt in the summer of 2007. At the time Carmody assumed control in 2007 and shut down the Property, the Oasis was known as a “den of sin” of drug dealers and prostitution. The story goes that the crime in the area dropped by 50% at its closure.

Over the years, the Property had seen uses ranging from a nursing home to a 1960’s motor lodge typical of the motels frequented by auto travelers on their way to and from California. Until the summer of 2007, the previous 10 years saw the Property operated as an SRO weekly rental motel. During this time, the Property fell into disrepair having an owner that invested only minimal funds to maintain the structures and avoid closure from fire and health authorities. As noted, it became a magnet for bad actors, drug deals and the origin of criminal activity for the Grand Avenue neighborhood.

After Carmody shut down all operations in 2007, he began rehab activities with demolition work and formally acquired title in January 2008 and later engaged Habitat Metro, LLC, another local developer involved in Downtown Phoenix projects, in the fall of 2008 to explore development opportunities. Carmody’s initial vision for the Property was to offer affordable “for sale” condominiums whereby he would assist homebuyers by internally financing their purchases. Unfortunately, the “for sale” residential condo market at all price levels collapsed in the fall of 2008 and the plan was aborted. Still wanting to establish affordable housing supporting the artist community of the Grand Avenue neighborhood, Carmody and Habitat Metro created the Oasis on Grand Apartment Community, an affordable apartment development focused on the artist community, extending their involvement in the Phoenix Downtown community.

The OASIS on GRAND Concept

The OASIS, which opened for business in the week before Thanksgiving, is a concept committed to supporting the visual and musical arts in Downtown Phoenix. The objective is to provide an environment for live, work and play that is dedicated to support the growth of the visual and musical arts in Downtown Phoenix. Entitlements for this adaptive reuse project were obtained to continue its commercial/retail uses and also allow

long-term residences—in other words, a true live/work environment.

Live/Work Residential: OASIS includes an affordable housing component comprised of 60 studio and one-bedroom units with live/work flexibility. It features 25 plus residences with “frontage” on Grand Avenue and Roosevelt Street providing exposure to “in-residence” art gallery/studios. Common area amenities include a community art studio and gallery space enabling its residents to create and display their work product and an outdoor area for local musicians.

Retail Space: OASIS features 3,000 square feet of retail space that is targeted for a local restaurant, coffee shop, bistro and complimentary services that will be a gathering place for the Grand Avenue community.

Oasis Website: The Oasis is supported by a website targeted to two audiences: prospective residents and the clients/customers of the resident artists. In addition to marketing the Oasis on Grand apartment community to future residents with the normal floor plan and community information, www.oasisongrand.com provides internal “website galleries” featuring resident artists and their art.

Oasis Development Team

The Oasis project was and is enthusiastically supported by the logical departments of the City of Phoenix (Housing and Economic Development) with Phoenix City Councilman Michael Nowakowski and Deputy City Manager Jerome Miller taking active roles to ensure the success of the development. The Oasis adaptive reuse redevelopment project was co-conceived and managed by Habitat Metro, LLC principals John Hill and Tim Sprague, the developers of the Portland Place Condominiums located in the Downtown Phoenix Roosevelt Arts District and who recently acquired the downtown Lexington Hotel for repositioning into an arts focused boutique hotel. Construction was performed by The Weitz Company. In addition to Tom Carmody’s investment, financing was provided by the City of Phoenix Housing Department and **Arizona MultiBank, a local, private community development company.**

Objectives Being Met

When the Certificate of Occupancy was obtained the second week of November 2011, three plus years of hard work and unwavering persistence took a gigantic step in fulfilling a vision and meeting important community redevelopment objectives. The impact to the Grand Avenue neighborhood began with the SRO’s closing in 2007 but now the neighborhood is well on its way to establish a stabile, residential component to support the existing and future commercial activity. The OASIS live/work space will enhance the growth of the Grand Avenue arts community and provide a foundation for its long-term success.

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