



Detail view of this 30-unit residential gut renovation completed in the spring of 2009.

URBAN IMPROVEMENT CONSTRUCTION

Finding success through professional integration

BY CHRISTOPHER CUSSAT

UIC (URBAN IMPROVEMENT CONSTRUCTION) began as a pioneering vision for the design/build industry among four partners, each with unique backgrounds and talents. Brent Crittenden and Mark Groenda are both architects. Sarah Gibson is an urban designer, and Curtis Ridgeway has a background in construction and sales.

In 2005, this group purchased an abandoned, 110-year-old, 6,000-square-foot building in St. Louis, Missouri. After renovating the structure into residential condominiums with a ground-floor contemporary art gallery, the fledgling company strategically used this project as a showcase for its work. This also allowed the partners to develop key business relationships and foster a local client base

in architecture and construction.

Crittenden further describes UIC as an integrated practice that emphasizes urban environments and green construction. "We are capable of meeting our clients' needs across a broad spectrum of services—from architecture and urban and graphic design, to general construction and occasionally property development."

By not limiting itself strictly to design-build projects, UIC is better able to meet its clients' specific requests—whether they be for both designing and construction projects or just one of these options. Crittenden adds, "We didn't want to pigeonhole ourselves—this also allows us the flexibility to

constantly form new relationships and partnerships."

This operational flexibility is evident in the diverse ventures currently being implemented by UIC. Says Crittenden, "We presently have two projects that are LEED registered, where we are both the architect and contractor. We are also working on an urban design for an existing city neighborhood in St. Louis where we are acting as co-developers." This neighborhood project will utilize green techniques throughout, including 30 new LEED Platinum homes, a dozen LEED-certified renovations, and stormwater management. Crittenden believes this will be the first project of its kind in the Midwest.

As part of its environmental focus, UIC has made eco-friendly building the company standard. Crittenden explains, "Regardless of whether or not a project is LEED registered, we only do green projects and utilize green design standards, material selection, and construction practices."

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
ST. LOUIS, MO

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
DESIGN/BUILD & GREEN
CONSTRUCTION

ANNUAL SALES:
\$4.5 MILLION

EMPLOYEES:
8



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Thus, UIC has three essential support beams reinforcing its foundation of innovation and success:

1. UIC is a progressively advanced evolution of the design/build model.
2. It maintains a focused emphasis on green development and construction.
3. The company has a strong dedication to its clients.

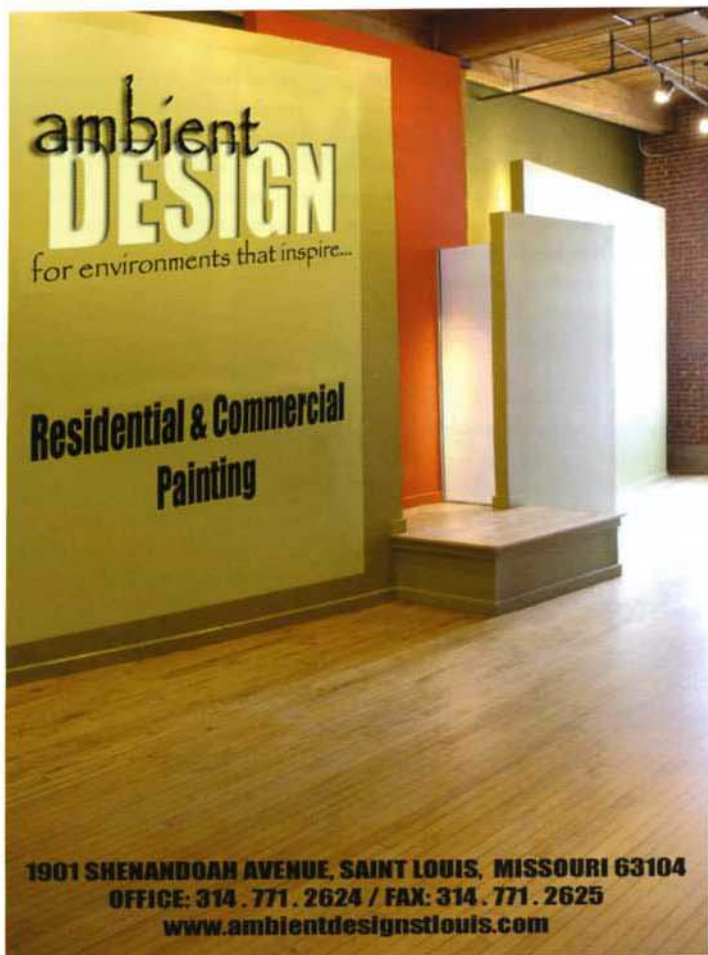
Crittenden summarizes, “We form new relationships on the basis of our diverse skill set, our reputation for having high design and quality standards, being fresh and innovative, and working tirelessly on behalf of our clients. Most importantly, we keep strong relationships with clients based on having the highest level of honesty and integrity.”

He also attributes much of UIC’s success to steady, solid, and even conservative business practices, as well as excellent personnel. Crittenden explains, “As a young company we have learned how important it is to keep the fundamentals of the business strong and to develop good operating procedures. By adding the right people to our team and forming key outside relationships, we feel that we have put our company on good footing.”

UIC is more than just a company located in St. Louis—it has become a vital artery that pumps life-giving energy into the city. This is because the partners at UIC sincerely believe in and love the work they do, and truly care about their community.

Crittenden concludes, “We work in an industry that is extremely fulfilling, in

that we get to see the products of our labor in the buildings and spaces we create. Beyond that, our company has an emphasis in the redevelopment of St. Louis, which we feel very strongly about. We are very proud to have been a part of the ongoing transformation that is happening in the city and in helping to guide investment in areas that have been neglected for many decades.” ABQ



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