

Center for Health Care and Healthy Living at The Baltimore Hebrew Orphan Asylum

Partners:

Ballard Spahr, LLC

Baltimore City Health Department

Baltimore Heritage

Behavioral Health System of Baltimore

Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation

Cross Street Partners

Reinvestment Fund

Southway Builders / C.L. McCoy Joint Venture

Kann Partners

Waldon Studio Architects



Center for Health Care and Healthy Living at The Baltimore Hebrew Orphan Asylum

The Hebrew Orphan Asylum (HOA) is a 4-story Victorian Romanesque brick structure, built in 1876 in the Greater Rosemont Neighborhood of West Baltimore to house and school Jewish children. Around this time, Baltimore saw a significant immigration of Jewish families and the Asylum helped lead to the creation of the Jewish Associated, a charity organization that still exists today. In 1923, the Associated moved to family model, eliminating the need for an orphanage. Thus, the building was repurposed as a hospital that served a primarily African American community in West Baltimore until the 1989 when the structure became vacant. These deep roots provided the basis for neighbors, foundations, funders, and elected officials to join in the effort to save the building and turn it again into an asset for the neighborhood and Baltimore.

The project to save the nation's oldest standing Jewish orphanage began in 2005 when UM proposed to demolish the building due to serious deterioration, including partial collapse of the main roof. Baltimore Heritage began building a community coalition to fight against the demolition, consisting of neighborhood clergy and community activists, and including the Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation (CHCDC) which has a mission to promote community-led economic redevelopment in this African American neighborhood. The executive director for the CHCDC immediately recognized the importance of the building and the potential for redevelopment.

Ranked last in Maryland for health care outcomes, the Greater Rosemont community was experiencing a crisis, spurring the coalition to create a plan to bring health care back to the neighborhood. The combination of a signature vacant building and the desperate need for medical options created a powerful opportunity for HOA. After visiting a cutting-edge facility, neighborhood leaders came back with a passion to lobby for an opioid stabilization clinic at the site. At a time when other neighborhoods were fighting the location of drug treatment in their communities, Greater Rosemont and preservation advocates embraced it.

As a result of the coalition's effort, UM was pressured to abandon plans to demolish the building and agreed to sell to CHCDC. However, UM's legal team realized that there was no precedent for transferring a building outside of UM's ownership. In partnership with the CHCDC's pro bono lawyers, the legal issues were worked through, creating a new legal framework.

Meanwhile, the CHCDC worked to secure project financing which was complicated by delays during the property transfer and the last minute pull-out of a whole building tenant, causing the project to gain and then lose full project funding (\$17 million) at least three times. Still undaunted, and with strong community support, CHCDC worked with the Baltimore City Health Department and Behavioral Health System of Baltimore (a nonprofit treatment provider) to become the 100% tenant. With the city committed to the building and the project, CHCDC was finally able to secure

the necessary foundation and bank financing, but not without a final hurdle. The bank that pledged to provide construction lending changed hands and backed out as construction started. CHCDC's executive director managed to bring on a new bank and this final financial provider has stayed the course and made the project possible, bringing together nine funding sources, including NPS and MHT Historic Tax Credits.

During the project, the team achieved many firsts. This was the first time that UM sold a building. It was the first time Baltimore experienced an earthquake in over one hundred years, sending the project team scrambling to respond to collapsing brick walls and extreme building destabilization. Lastly, it was the first time, as far as we know, that a Volkswagen Beetle was decapitated from a piece of flying temporary roof during a windstorm.

Reconstructing a 140+ year old building presented a myriad of challenges including the collapse of the main roof, including the magnificent octagonal skylight and monumental terrazzo stair.

The building's wood frame structure had failed and was being supported by scaffolding to prevent collapse. The earlier attempt at stabilization removed any traces of the central stair and left scaffolding behind creating a supplemental skeleton to shore the structure. The team once again stabilized the building in 2015, designing for a one-year goal of construction start. This allowed the architectural team to fully survey the building and create a team approach to building rehabilitation. But even the temporary roof failed in the extended period to secure (and resecure) financing.

Throughout construction the team of Waldon Studio Architects, Southway-McCoy, and Cross Street Partners solved many challenges that come with such a complex project. In order to remove the failed interior wood structure, the entire perimeter of the building was shored/scaffolded, allowing all but the interior load bearing masonry walls to be removed. During demolition, the heavy timber wood structure that once supported a monumental three-story staircase was saved in place by carefully shoring the frame: it appeared to be hanging in midair for many weeks before it was tied into a new steel structure.

The building has 127 windows in 14 styles, each evaluated by the architectural team for condition. About 75% of the frames and molding were intact and restored, the missing replicated, and new windows installed based on historic photographs. Brick from areas of collapsed walls were carefully salvaged and used to rebuild. A monumental stair and skylight were designed, inspired from community memory and research.

Today, this challenging project and unique building is once again ready to serve the community not only as a healthcare center, but as a preservation marvel.

The Timeline of The Fight for Preservation

2010

The Asylum was entered in the National Trust's "This Place Matters" competition. Even though it did not win, **Friends of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum** was created with 1,000 members nationwide. The **Baltimore Sun** began covering the effort and the **Jewish Museum of Maryland** joined in the work.

2011

A \$10,000 grant was secured from **Preservation Maryland**. This allowed the partners to bring on Kann Partners (who has now joined **Waldon Studio Architects**) to do a conditions assessment and begin planning for stabilization.

2013

After 3 years of work, the team and the surrounding Greater Rosemont community finalized a vision plan for the Asylum. In 2008, the State of Maryland ranked Greater Rosemont as having the highest level of health care disparity in the state. The vision plans calls for restoring the Asylum and locating a health clinic there. The name **Center for Health Care and Healthy Living** is born.

2013

A \$3 million historic tax credit was obtained from the **State of Maryland** and another \$3 million from the **National Park Service**. Maryland's tax credit is exceedingly competitive, and the project earned the highest tax credit award that year. The University of Maryland continues plans to demolish the building.

2016

The state required a historic easement to be placed on the building as part of the transfer out of state ownership. The team and the **Maryland Historical Trust** (SHPO for Maryland) created an easement agreement that preserves the building and allows for flexibility to adaptively reuse it.

2018

After 5 years of work lining up project financing, the lead tenant backed out of the deal without notice. All of the financing fell through except the state and federal tax credit allocations. With the initial tax credit award in 2013, the project was now on its unprecedented 5th extension, indicating the **Maryland Historical Trust** remained committed to the making the project work.

2019

With a lease committed and funding secured, **Waldon Studio Architects** and **Southway Builders** put all available hands to work in order to complete the building by the end of the calendar year, a condition from the financiers.

2005

University of Maryland proposes to demolish the building and **Baltimore Heritage** begins building a community coalition to fight against demolition.

2010

With begrudging permission from the University of Maryland, the building was documented and nominated for the **National Register of Historic Places**. It was officially listed a year later.

2011

Maryland experienced a **5.8 magnitude earthquake** for the first time in over 100 years. Bricks fell from the tops of the North walls, turrets tumbled through the roof, and the project team had to work quickly to stabilize the building from further collapse. The failing heavy-timber framed structure had previously been stabilized with interior scaffolding supporting structural members. Additional stabilization was added.

2013

Southway Builders / C.L. McCoy Joint Venture is brought onto the team to further stabilize the building, including a temporary roof and interior stairs, which allows the design team safer entry for building assessment and redesign.

2015

After 10 years of grassroots advocacy, the University of Maryland agreed to abandon demolition plans and agreed to sell the building. The University had never sold a building before and its legal team and the **Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation** (CHCDC) had to create a new legal framework from scratch to make this happen. The work including having to secure the endorsement of the University's governing board of chancellors.

2017

After years of work, the ownership of the building transfers to the CHCDC. Law firm, **Ballard Spahr** stepped in pro bono to help with the transfer.

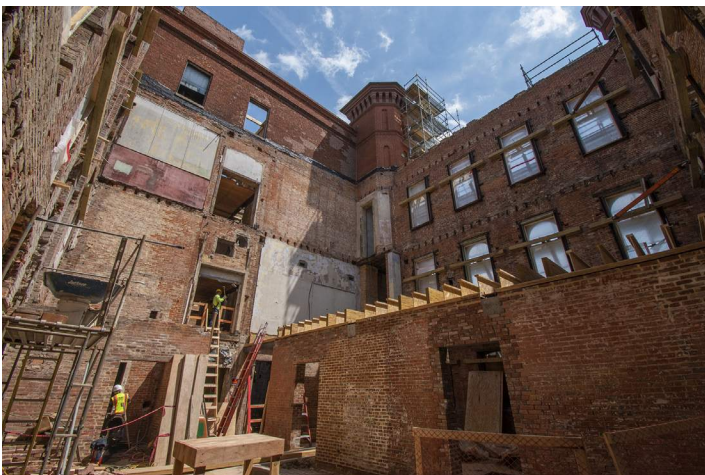
2018

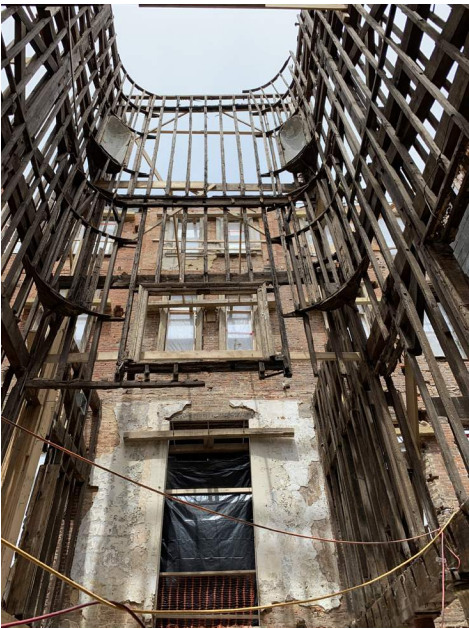
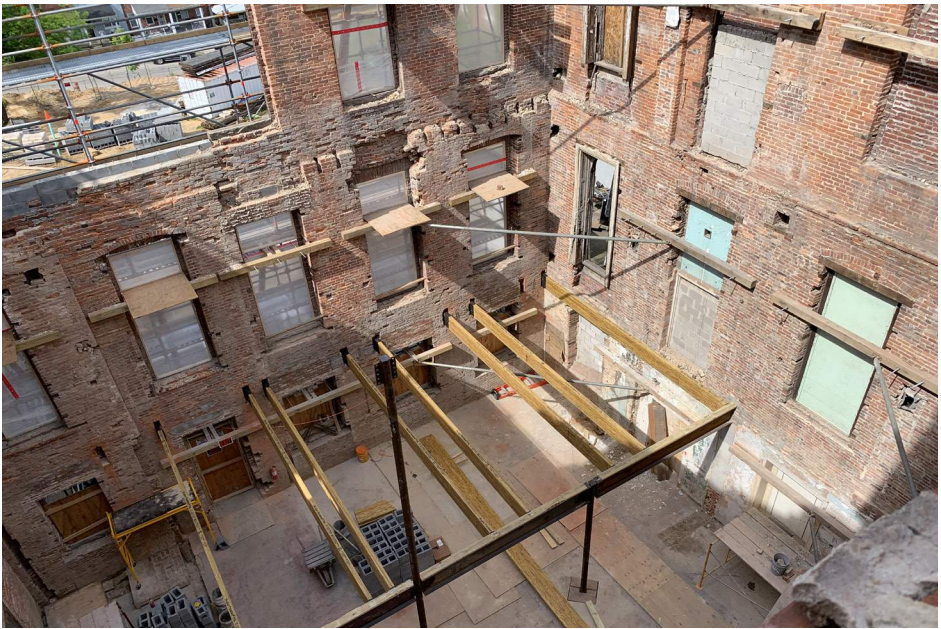
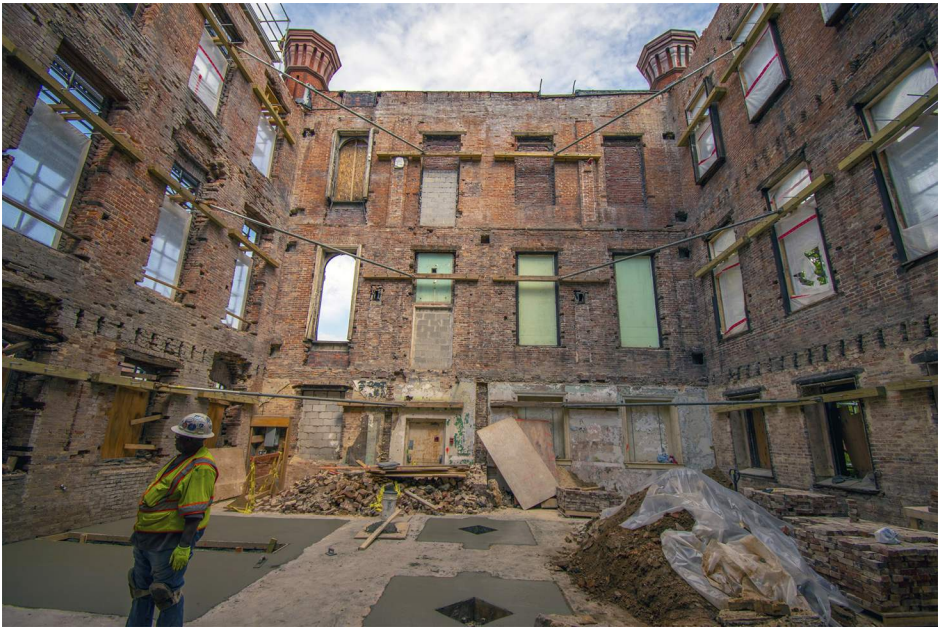
With active lobbying from community leaders and residents in Greater Rosemont, the City of Baltimore and the **Behavioral Health System of Baltimore** agree to lease the entire building for an opioid treatment facility and community health programs. With this commitment, the project secures financing.

December 31, 2019

After 15 years of advocacy, partnership building, small celebrations, tears, and constant work from dozens of people and organizations, Baltimore City issues a certificate for occupancy for the **Center for Health Care and Healthy Living** at the **Baltimore Hebrew Orphan Asylum**. The work to keep the 1876 orphanage from being demolished is complete, as is the decade-long effort by community leaders to fix up the vacant building and locate needed health care programs.

Construction Progress Photos





Post-Renovation Photos

