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# THE EVOLUTION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES AT URBAN LAND CONSERVANCY

BY ALAN GOTTLIEB



WITH SUPPORT FROM:

**Stapleton** FOUNDATION  
FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN COMMUNITIES



COLORADO LEAGUE of  
CHARTER SCHOOLS  
*Charter Schools are Public Schools*



**URBAN LAND CONSERVANCY INTERVENES IN THE REAL ESTATE MARKETPLACE ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY TO:**

- **RESPOND TO OPPORTUNITIES THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE LOST TO THE MARKET OR THAT THE MARKET MAY BE UNABLE TO ADDRESS; AND,**
- **ACQUIRE, DEVELOP, AND PRESERVE COMMUNITY ASSETS IN URBAN AREAS TO ADDRESS A VARIETY OF COMMUNITY NEEDS, SUCH AS SCHOOLS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, AND OFFICE SPACE FOR NONPROFITS.**



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# INTRODUCTION

Urban Land Conservancy (ULC) is a Colorado nonprofit organization that “acquires, develops, and preserves community real estate assets in urban areas for a variety of community needs such as schools, affordable housing, community centers and office space for nonprofits.”

**This report focuses on ULC’s work with school facilities, in most cases charter schools, to identify suitable properties to buy or lease in neighborhoods that lack strong traditional public school options. Since its founding in 2004, ULC has worked, with varying levels of intensity, with more than a dozen schools in search of high quality facilities.**

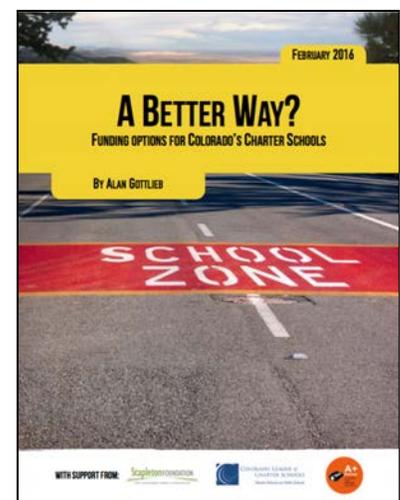
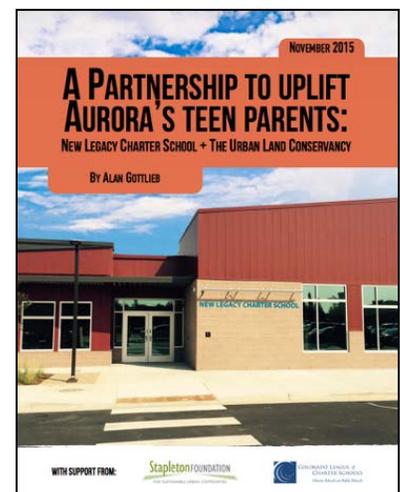
Helping nonprofits, including charter schools, with their facility needs is core to ULC’s mission because many of the neighborhoods it works in lack high performing schools. In Denver, as in cities across the country, patterns of socioeconomic housing segregation track with patterns of school performance. In other words, if you live in a low-income neighborhood, odds are that schools near your home are low-performing. Struggling neighborhoods in Southwest Denver provide perhaps the clearest example of this phenomenon. Schools in Westwood and other neighborhoods in the quadrant are among the city’s lowest performing, with among the highest percentage of students eligible for subsidized school lunches.

Some charter schools have demonstrated an ability to buck that trend. Most of the charter schools ULC has worked with feature proven leadership, a clear and coherent education model, and either a track record of success or emulation of models that have been successful elsewhere.

Ask charter school leaders about the greatest challenges they face, particularly in the early days and years, in getting a school off the ground, and they will tell you it’s identifying and securing an affordable facility that can function well as a school, or that can be renovated affordably to become a school.

Given ULC’s deep knowledge of the local real estate market, and its extensive experience helping schools explore and identify properties, it is little wonder that many aspiring charter school operators turn to ULC for help early in their search. Over the years, ULC has learned a great deal from its work on school facilities, and it is the goal of this three-part report to impart those lessons to ULC’s partners, funders, and to others with an interest in the charter school sector.

This report series consists of three parts. *Part 1: The evolution of School Facilities at Urban Land Conservancy* provides a brief, case by case history of ULC’s involvement with school facilities, dating back to its first investment in the Tennyson Center for Children in NW Denver. *Part 2: A Partnership to Uplift Aurora’s Teen Parents* takes a detailed look at ULC’s most ambitious charter school project to date: the building of a new facility for the New Legacy Charter School for teen



parents and their children in northwest Aurora. *Part 3: A Better Way? Funding Options for Colorado's Charter Schools* uses ULC's experiences with charter school facilities to provide recommendations on how a public-private partnership could devise creative funding solutions that would make facilities less of a financial and logistical burden to charter school leaders and boards. After all, visionary educators should be spending their time on designing a great school program and hiring a stellar staff rather than on real estate transactions far outside their area of expertise.



PS 1

## PART 1: LEARNING LESSONS, SOMETIMES THE HARD WAY

### **Early history: PS 1 Denver**

Before we walk step by step through ULC's experience with charter school facilities searches, let's provide a bit of perspective on why this issue is so vitally important. To do so, we'll travel back in time 20 years, to the charter school movement's early days.

The story of PS 1, one of Colorado's first charter schools, provides a near-perfect illustration of how looking for a building can prove such a distraction that it destabilizes, and ultimately, helps doom a school.

When Rex Brown announced in 1993 that he wanted to start a charter middle school in Denver, people sat up and took notice. Described by Westword as "a progressive education guru," Brown was known in local and national education circles as a deep thinker on education reform. At the time he floated the PS 1 idea he worked at the Education Commission of the States. In 1991 had written a highly regarded, philosophical treatise of a book called *Schools of Thought*, the tenets of which comprised the foundation of PS 1's curriculum.

First PS 1 @ former VFW building



THERE WAS JUST ONE PROBLEM: AS OPENING DAY APPROACHED, A REAL ESTATE DEAL COLLAPSED.

Denver's philanthropic community lined up to support the school. Scores of affluent families enrolled their children. Brown promised the school community that the city of Denver would be his students' classroom. There was just one problem: as opening day approached, a real estate deal collapsed and Brown had nowhere to house the school. In those early days, Denver Public Schools (DPS) was only a reluctant authorizer of charters and offered no help in finding facilities for the few schools it approved.

Brown originally hoped to place the school in the Mercantile Square Lofts development at 16th and Wynkoop streets in Lower Downtown. The property was owned by then-brewpub impresario John Hickenlooper (later Denver's mayor and Colorado's governor) and Tattered Cover Bookstore owner Joyce Meskis. But the construction schedule slipped and no longer fit into PS 1's plans to open in the fall of 1995. So Brown found himself in a tight spot: No place for PS 1 with the school's opening just a few months away. He contacted Bruce Berger, who owned a great deal of real estate in the Golden Triangle neighborhood just south of downtown. Berger offered to lease Brown an old Veteran of Foreign Wars hall at 955 Bannock Street. Brown signed the deal, but the place needed extensive work

and Brown had to raise money for at least enough renovations needed to make the building rudimentarily school-ready. This meant he needed a temporary home for the first couple of months of PS 1's inaugural year.

At the time, the Denver Public Library's central branch was brand new, and the sixth floor was unfinished and unoccupied. City Librarian Rick Ashton offered Brown some of that space on a short-term basis, until the VFW hall was ready. So on Sept. 4 1995, PS 1 opened in what amounted to nothing more than a concrete shell atop the library. While less than ideal, it allowed the school to open on schedule with its 64-student inaugural class.

By early October, the VFW hall was minimally ready for occupancy, and the school moved in. To say the space was less than ideal would be charitable. It was dark, stuffy and musty. "You could still smell the spilled booze and cigar smoke in the carpet and drapes," Brown said recently, chuckling at the memory. The building's deficiencies were a problem, but far from the biggest challenge. It was the lease that caused Brown heartburn. Under its terms, if Berger decided to sell the property -- and the Golden Triangle real estate market was heating up fast -- he was required to give the school only a 60-day notice to vacate.

After PS 1's first academic year, the wealthy grandmother of a student donated \$60,000 to spiff up the building. Old carpet was torn out, and the place was freshened up and brightened considerably. Then in late November 1996, Berger came to Brown with the news Brown had been hoping not to hear, at least for a while: There was a buyer for the building. Berger wanted PS 1 out, preferably by the end of the calendar year, just weeks away. "I said 'Bruce, we just put \$60,000 into the building and in any event we need more time.'" Berger relented and allowed the school to stay through the end of the school year. That location is now home to the popular Rooster and Moon coffee shop.

What this meant, of course, was that Brown, instead of running the school and keeping it true to its academic vision, spent a lion's share of his time that second year (1996-97) scrambling around trying to find a suitable facility in central Denver. Eventually he got a call from Mickey Zeppelin, another Golden Triangle real estate tycoon. He and a business partner owned the historic Rocky Mountain Bank Note building at West 11th Avenue and Delaware Street.

Built in 1929 to supply printed forms to the banking industry, the building needed substantial renovations – walls knocked down, classrooms built -- to be suitable for a school. But Zeppelin told Brown he wanted the school to remain in the Golden Triangle, and that he'd give him a good lease deal if Brown could raise money for renovations. Those renovations were going to cost serious money -- in the neighborhood of \$2 million.

Brown wasn't daunted by the challenge. He was a gifted fundraiser, but this time he found the going tougher than he had imagined. Local philanthropy's reluctance may have been caused in part by changes to PS 1's student population and its ensuing academic struggles, Brown speculated. The school as Brown envisioned it was to be racially and socioeconomically mixed. In its first couple of years, that proved to be the case, with several wealthy, powerful families enrolling their children. But over time, Denver Public Schools (DPS) started steering an increasing number of struggling middle school students to PS 1, many of them with behavioral issues. PS 1 eventually became a school populated by students who struggled or didn't fit in at more traditional schools. That wasn't the

school's initial design or purpose, and its staff struggled to meet these students' acute needs.

By the time Brown embarked on his fundraising campaign for renovations to Zeppelin's building, business and residential neighbors were expressing concern about PS 1 student behavior in the surrounding community. Funders, less than impressed by the school's academic struggles, balked at providing grants for facility renovations. The national Walton Family Foundation provided a grant of several hundred thousand dollars, but that was not nearly enough. "I borrowed \$500,000 from one set of parents who had just sold a business and needed to do something with their money," Brown recalled. Still, he found himself close to a half million short of the \$2.4 million needed to complete the renovation. There was only one alternative he could find: take out a \$400,000 bank loan, using his River North loft as collateral. So that's what he did.

Renovations were completed in Spring 1997, and PS 1 moved successfully into Zeppelin's Rocky Mountain Bank Note building in time for the 1997-98 school year. Once the school's charter was renewed in 2000 by DPS, Brown decided the time had come to for him to leave. The school's struggles with facilities as well as academics and education politics had taken a big toll on his health. He underwent a quintuple heart bypass shortly after resigning from PS 1.

Fast forward several years. Brown was long gone from PS 1, and the school was still paying off his loan. But its continued academic struggles finally exhausted the patience of the Denver school board. The school received a two-year charter renewal in 2005, with the caveat that many of the staff, including the principal, be replaced. At that point, Brown started to get nervous about his loan. He didn't want PS 1's struggles to force a foreclosure on his home. "I went to the PS 1 board and said 'guys, you've got to pay off the loan, or if DPS is going to close the school, you have to get an agreement that they'll pay off the school's debts.'"

“[FINDING AND KEEPING SCHOOL FACILITIES ARE] ABSOLUTELY AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT. YOU’VE GOT TO HAVE A PLACE FOR YOUR SCHOOL.”

-REX BROWN, FOUNDER OF PS 1

Ultimately the school won another three-year renewal in 2007 with additional conditions, before being closed for good in 2011. By then the loan had been paid off from the school's budget, and Brown's home was safe. But, he acknowledges, he lived through many years of stress caused by a decision he made in what he thought was in the best interest of his school and its students.

On the larger question of the struggle charters regularly undergo to find and keep facilities,

Brown said something has to change. "You can't even call it a distraction, really, because it's absolutely an essential component. You've got to have a place for your school," he said. "It's not so much finding properties, that isn't the hard part. It's paying for them, upfront and over the long haul."

After PS 1 closed, Zeppelin and his partner made a great profit selling the building for \$3.5M to a group that transformed the building into the tech hub, Galvanize.

"THE PURCHASE AND PRESERVATION OF THE 100 YEAR OLD TENNYSON SCHOOL WAS COMPLETED WITHOUT TAXPAYER DOLLARS AND IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF HOW PRIVATE INVESTMENT FROM GARY WILLIAMS ENERGY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ULC CAN PRESERVE A VITAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE."

-DAVE YOUNGGREN, PRESIDENT OF GCI AND FORMER ULC CHAIR

## ULC AND SCHOOL FACILITIES: A BRIEF HISTORY

ULC's first experience with school facilities came in 2005, when it purchased the Tennyson Center for Children out of bankruptcy for \$4.45M. Located in one of Denver's hottest markets at West 29th Avenue and Tennyson Street, if ULC had not purchased, the 4 acre campus, the property would have been lost to the market for high end housing. "The purchase and preservation of the 100 year old Tennyson School was completed without taxpayer dollars and is a great example of how private investment from Gary Williams Energy and the establishment of ULC can preserve a vital community resource," said Dave Younggren, President of Gary Community Investments and former ULC Chair. "Our work with Tennyson is a positive homegrown solution model for nonprofit real estate relationships." Tennyson purchased back the school from ULC in 2011 for the original purchase price and agreed to an 89 year covenant that prevents the property from being sold on the open market.



"We wanted to make sure that our investment to save the school is not lost in the future," said Aaron Miripol, President of ULC. "Our preference was to do a ground lease, for 99 years, whereby we sold the building for \$1M less to Tennyson and stayed in as owners of the land. This would have been the strongest way to ensure the property remains a community benefit."

Matters got a bit more complicated once ULC started working with charter schools and their significant facilities challenges.

In 2008, DPS had commissioned a study by the Urban Land Institute (ULI), which recommended that the district sell a number of its vacant buildings, including Byers Elementary.

“...there is a clear benefit to DPS in selling most of these properties,” the report said. “ULI Colorado’s Property Assessment estimates the gross disposition value of the twelve properties could be worth \$50 million to \$75 million over time, recognizing that net costs after marketing, relocation and other expenses are not known or netted out.”

ULI pointed out that DPS enrollment had hovered at or below 70,000 students for the past decade, and yet the district had enough space to school 100,000 kids. Maintaining all that excess space was expensive, the report concluded. Time has proven the ULI report wrong. In 2015-16, DPS enrollment topped 90,000, and all signs are for continued growth. The district has run out of vacant properties and, as this report describes, new schools are having a difficult time finding appropriate and affordable space in Denver. Fortunately DPS did not sell Byers or a number of other empty school facilities.

## EXAMPLES OF ULC’S WORK

### *Denver Venture School (2007-2008)*

Denver Venture High School founder Amy Slothower came to ULC in mid-2007 for help evaluating several possible homes for the school, which was slated to open in the fall of 2008. The school’s aim was to forge close ties to Denver’s business community, so that students could learn from internships at a variety of partner businesses. Miripol pulled together a pro forma on the old Planned Parenthood building at 9th Avenue and Broadway, and also looked at the Phipps Building in La Alma Park and the then-shuttered DPS-owned Crofton school building, located in Curtis Park, just blocks from Downtown Denver.

Denver Venture ultimately ended up in Crofton. After two years of academic struggles, the school merged with another struggling school, Envision Leadership Prep (discussed further below). The merged school, Venture Prep, moved into part of the Smiley Middle School building in northeast Denver’s Park Hill neighborhood, in the fall of 2010. At the time, the Smiley building was underutilized, and DPS was happy to have a tenant occupied unused space there. Venture Prep still resides there, and continues to struggle academically. It is rated “accredited on watch” on the DPS School Performance Framework, the districts second-lowest of four possible ratings.





William Smith High School and Stanley Property

### **William Smith High School, Aurora (2009-2011)**

William Smith is an Aurora Public Schools pilot school. According to the APS Pilot Schools Manual, “The goal of Pilot Schools is to provide schools with autonomy and maximum control over their resources in exchange for increased accountability...Pilot Schools are given more freedom but, in return, their students are expected to attain higher levels of student achievement that exceed district averages when they are compared to schools with similar demographics. Pilot Schools are free from many constraints in order to be more innovative, empower teachers and engage the community.”

William Smith is located in Eastern Aurora, at 400 Airport Boulevard, southeast of Denver International Airport. In 2009, Principal Jane Shirley approached ULC about opening a second campus for the school at the old Stanley Aviation site, in the section of northwest Aurora known as Original Aurora. Shirley wanted to serve a high needs community, and Original Aurora met that definition. She wanted the new campus to have an arts focus, with theater being a key component.

ULC had long been interested in the former Stanley Aviation site, just across Westerly Creek from Denver’s booming and affluent Stapleton neighborhood. The massive, 110,000 square-foot building and 20 plus acres of open space were more than the school needed, and Miripol and his team envisioned multiple uses for the facility.

ULC came close to buying the Stanley property in 2010, but the owner, Eaton Corporation, was insisting on purchase covenants that would have precluded a school being part of the redevelopment because of environmental issues on the property. Miripol said ULC would have bought the building with the covenants and the environmental risk if the seller had been willing to sell for \$2 million, which was more than \$1M below the asking price. But Eaton Corporation wouldn’t come down in the price, and the purchase did not move forward.

Then in 2011, the Shadow Theater, Colorado’s oldest African American theater company, located in the Aurora Arts District near East Colfax Avenue, went into foreclosure, and its building came on the market. The building was too small to house a full school, but Shirley thought it could become a great west side presence for the main Smith campus, with a strong theater program. Aurora City was interested in supporting ULC’s acquisition of the property for this purpose. The city already had already spent federal grant funds on the renovation of the theater and wanted to protect that initial investment but “APS wouldn’t step up and provide operational support to Smith,” Miripol said, and the deal did not move forward.

From Shirley’s perspective, the purchase could have happened if the top leadership at APS had

supported it. Lower levels of the bureaucracy pushed as hard as they could, but then-Superintendent John Barry wasn't interested. "There was some real old-school thinking going on," Shirley said. In the end, William Smith didn't expand to Original Aurora. The Stanley site was purchased by Flightline ventures, owned by Stapleton residents, and will become Stanley Marketplace. This project has received more than \$1 million from Aurora for environmental remediation, which Miripol years ago had said was needed. Stanley Marketplace was described by The Denver Post as a "\$25 million retail and events center that takes its inspiration from New York's Chelsea Market and San Francisco's ferry Building" is slated to open in 2016.

Miripol says Aurora Public Schools and the City need to better coordinate their strategic efforts to needed operational and capital dollars to develop high-quality schools and other vital community development in Original Aurora.



### **University Prep (2010)**

In the spring of 2010, board members and the founder of University Prep, a charter elementary school slated to open in Denver in August 2011, approached ULC about finding a property in the Five Points-Curtis Park area immediately northeast of downtown. ULC was already considering buying the vacant Curtis Park Community Center at the corner of 29th and Curtis street.

"UPrep wanted a facility where they could expand over time, and the Curtis Park Center and King Trimble looked promising," Miripol recalled. The Trimble Center is owned by the Denver Housing Authority (DHA). DHA couldn't sell it to ULC, but could offer a long term lease. According University Prep's growth plans, by 2014, the school would have expanded to grades K-5, exceeding the capacity of the Curtis Park Community Center and necessitating use of Trimble Center space.

August 2010, ULC and University Prep signed a memorandum of understanding under which UPrep would lease the Curtis Park property from ULC for six years beginning June 2011. In a related agreement, by January 2014, DHA would lease King Trimble to ULC, and ULC would sublease it to University Prep.

Later in 2010, however, the Crofton school building became available as the Denver Venture School merged with Envision and moved to Smiley Middle School. University Prep walked away from the MOU with ULC. The school's board preferred Crofton, Miripol said because "everything was in one building rather than our three building campus."

University Prep opened in Crofton in August 2011. It remains there to this day, a highly successful

Curtis Park Community Center and University Prep's  
David Singer with Students



charter elementary school. ULC purchased the Curtis Park Community Center in 2012 for \$650,000 from the American Baptist Church of the Rocky Mountain Region. The Center is home to anchor tenant, Family Star Montessori, a neighborhood institution that has been serving area families and children for over 25 years. The Center is also home to several smaller nonprofits including the administrative offices for a new K-5 charter school, Banneker-Jemison STEM Academy, which opened in the fall of 2015 at the King Trimble Building.

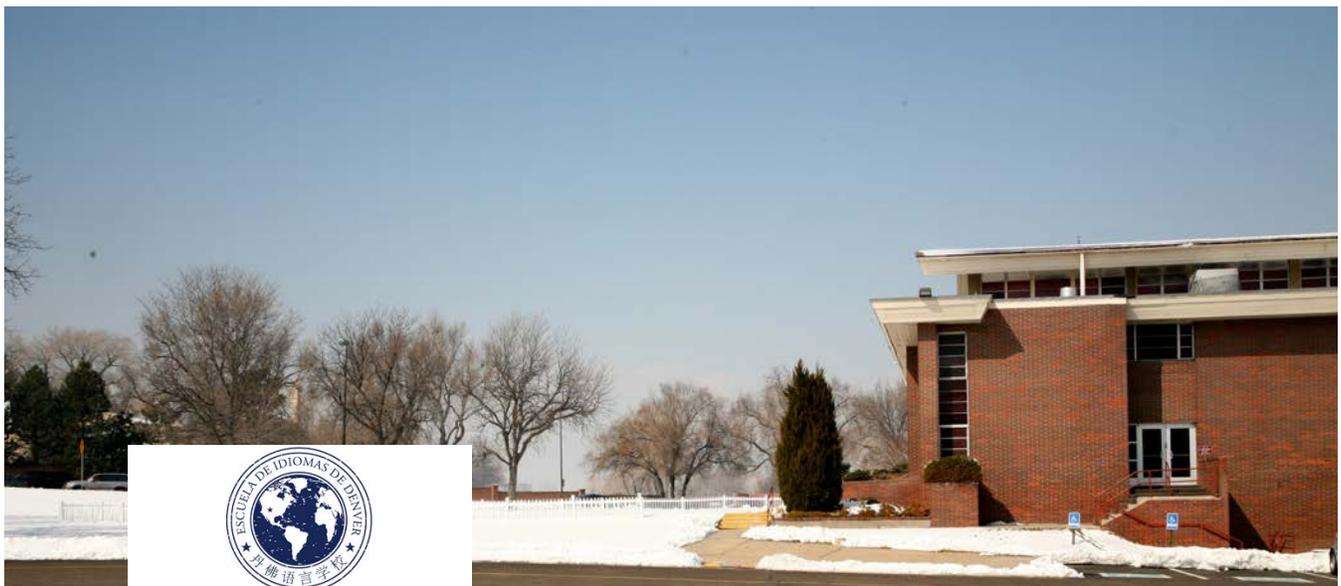
“AT THE END OF DAY WE GOT THE IDEAL PARTNER WITH FAMILY STAR, AN ORGANIZATION WITH A GREAT HISTORY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, FOCUSING ON FAMILIES OF LOW INCOME FROM THE COMMUNITY.”

- AARON MIRIPOL, CEO AND PRESIDENT OF ULC

“At the end of day we got the ideal partner with Family Star, an organization with a great history in the neighborhood, focusing on families of low income from the community” Miripol said. He estimates ULC staff spent several hundred hours on the UPrep Request for Statement of Interest (RFSI), and much of that work was transferable in completing \$1M in capital improvements in partnership with Family Star. ULC also understood that with Family Star investing over \$500,000 in Tenant Improvements they would want to have security in the building with a buy out option. With the Curtis Park land prices exceeding \$100 sq. ft. ULC understood it would have to come up with creative buy out option. “With our place based focus, we provided Family Star with a Community Land Trust (CLT) option whereby Family Star can buy the building back from us at \$850,000, and we will continue to own the land for another 198 years with an affordable monthly ground lease.”

### **Denver Language School (2010-2011 and 2013-2014)**

The Denver Language School (DLS), a successful charter school located in the former Whiteman Elementary School at 451 Newport St. in east Denver, first came to ULC in 2010, in response to the first RFSI proposal by Holly Area Redevelopment Project (HARP). Citing the school’s lack of track record at the time, HARP instead chose the Boys & Girls Club. More recently, DLS approached ULC to purchase the Waldorf School in the Congress Park neighborhood. DLS wanted to expand, and to open



DENVER LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Denver Language School

a separate campus for its kindergarten through second grade classrooms, keeping the older students (grades 3-5) at Whiteman. Denver Waldorf School was planning to sell the property and relocate to south-central Denver into a larger campus near the University of Denver.



Waldorf School

Although Congress Park is an affluent neighborhood not close to major public transportation hubs, and therefore did not fit neatly into ULC criteria, a couple of elements of this property were appealing. First, DLS had proven itself in its early years as a strong school with a unique educational model, offering Spanish and Mandarin immersion for elementary school students. Second, while DLS served only 25 percent low-income students, it planned, with its expansion to this new facility, to increase its at-risk student population to 40 percent.

With DLS as the anticipated tenant, ULC offered to buy the building from Waldorf for \$4.2 million. But ULC was outbid by Sewall Child Development Center, which moved its headquarters to the school in the Fall of 2015, also planning to open the REACH Charter School in the same building. REACH (Reimagining Excellence for All in a Community With Heart) is an elementary school with an inclusion model for special education students.

Denver Language School opened its K-2 campus in the Fall of 2015 at the Calvary Temple, East Alameda Avenue and South University Boulevard.

ULC generally avoids getting involved in real estate deals outside its focus areas, but “we made an exception because of the commitment DLS was making to increasing its service to low income children,” Miripol said.

### **Roots Elementary charter school (2013-present)**

Jon Hanover came to Northeast Park Hill on a mission to open a charter school to serve a community that until now has faced a dearth of strong educational options. Hanover had worked at the Broomfield-based Charter School Growth Fund. There, he discovered a passion for education that led him to a kindergarten teaching position at Denver’s Rocky Mountain Prep charter school. While teaching there, he began formulating plans to open his own school.

ULC’s Miripol met Hanover in early 2013 through ULC board member Mark Smith. Hanover shared with Miripol his vision, which is eventually to build Roots into a charter management organization that serves high-needs kids in urban and rural settings.

Miripol was impressed with Hanover’s diligence and encouraged him to begin discussing the idea for a new school directly with the residents, stakeholders and other neighborhood based organizations

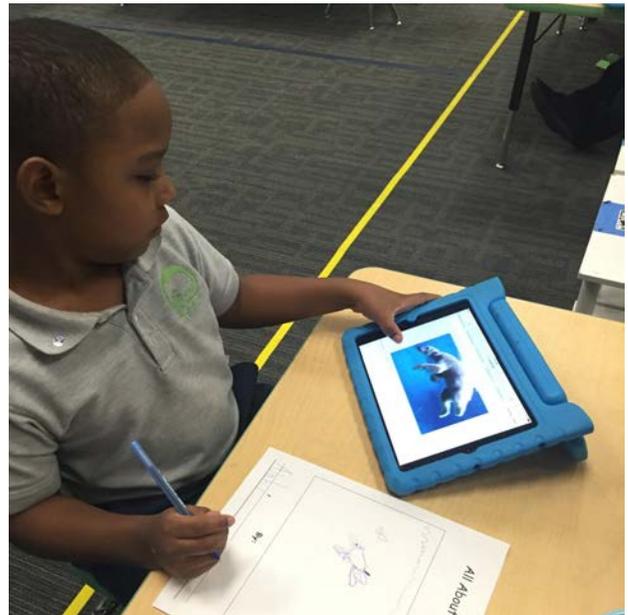


actively participating in the multi-year HARP effort, working to implement their 2010 vision masterplan for redevelopment of the former Holly Shopping Center in Northeast Park Hill. "Even when families don't have quality options, they won't automatically welcome new schools with open arms," Miripol said. "Jon spent time really listening to folks in the community, he did it right. He met with a number of stakeholders in Northeast Park Hill including HARP. He spent time building a level of trust and acceptance for the School's mission."

Early on in the relationship, Hanover made it clear that he would like to open his school in the redeveloped Holly Square and began to work to cultivate the necessary community connections. Hanover's proposed Roots Elementary School had been granted a charter by DPS in November 2014 and shortly after it garnered support from the highly respected local neighborhood based nonprofit HOPE Center CEO and leader Gerie Grimes. Roots at that time was already moving forward with a plan to renovate a portion of the existing HOPE Center facility at Holly Square as a temporary location for their first year of 2015-16 school operations. In December 2014, ULC's Vice President of Master Site Development Tony Pickett, issued a Request for Statements of Interest (RFSI), soliciting proposals from organizations interested in developing the sixth and last phase of the former Holly Shopping Center redevelopment site owned by ULC. Pickett describes the RFSI as a community-involved stakeholder process in which "ULC and HARP work to achieve collective decision making during the selection of potential redevelopment partners, insuring alignment with the goals of HARP's 2010 masterplan vision for Holly Square." Roots submitted an RFSI proposal along those of seven other nonprofits ranging in potential uses from a non-profit grocery store to affordable housing. On May 11 2015, Roots was selected by HARP as the community's collective first choice as a lead partner for the next phase of development at Holly. HARP also matched Roots with the Colorado Association of Black Professional Engineers and Scientists (CABPES); a high performing after school tutoring program, to maximize use of the new school facility for area youth activities beyond regular school hours.

According to Pickett, the HARP committee which vetted the proposals agreed on one thing: "The addition of Roots school makes Holly Square a unique Children's Campus where various educational and after school programming opportunities are available for kids of all ages. Thanks to the amazing assets that currently exist around the site including; HOPE Center, Hiawatha Davis Recreation Center, Vickers Boys & Girls Club and the Pauline Robinson Library, Roots Elementary School compliments and expands the potential collective impact of many wonderful programs. The outcome achieves the HARP masterplan vision and goals for vastly improving both the quality of life and future opportunities

THE OUTCOME ACHIEVES THE HARP MASTERPLAN VISION AND GOALS FOR VASTLY IMPROVING BOTH THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH AND WORKING FAMILIES WHO ARE DEEPLY COMMITTED TO MAKING POSITIVE CHANGES IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD.



Roots Elementary

for youth and working families who are deeply committed to making positive changes in their neighborhood.”

Roots and ULC entered into a 99-year ground lease (duplicating the existing agreement ULC executed with the Vickers Boys and Girls Club at Holly Square) for the property, under which ULC retains ownership of the land, but Roots finances, constructs and owns the building. Roots must maintain the property for nonprofit, educational purposes over the life of the lease.

“This is one of the most rewarding experiences we’ve had working on schools, along with New Legacy (see Part 2 of this report series),” Miripol said. “Roots benefited from an established process with deep and extensive community engagement over 6 years. It carries on the spirit and documented neighborhood principles of the HARP Vision Plan and the community will have a long-term investment in it.



Roots Elementary

## NEXT STEP: BUILD YOUR OWN BUILDING

Given ULC’s extensive and varied history of helping schools find facilities; it’s little wonder that over the past year, the organization has taken the next logical, albeit enormous, step: building a new facility for a charter school. The story of how ULC came to build the New Legacy Charter School facility in Original Aurora is fascinating and complex. It comprises the next section of this report.

**Photo Credits:**

<http://bicyclebrothers.org/>

<http://ozarch.com/portfolio/william-smith-alternative-high-school/>

PS 1

William Smith High School

University Prep

Roots Elementary School



Photo of New Legacy Charter School

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Denver Language School

Denver Venture School

Denver Waldorf School

Huffington Post



