Executive Summary

This project (“the Project”) will entail the historic restoration, remodeling and rebirth of Maryland’s largest stone mill, Union Mill (“Union Mill”), into an active and vibrant mixed-use residential and commercial development focused on those individuals doing some of Baltimore’s most important work. Utilizing Baltimore City Green Building Standards the building has been rehabilitated and brought back to life where it can once again add to the vibrancy and character of the Historic Hampden and Woodberry communities. Since its construction in 1866 and expansion in 1872, Union Mill has been, until recently, continuously occupied. Over the past two years the building has sat vacant as a result of the current tenant, Life-Like Products, LLC, shifting operations both overseas and to other more industrial parts of the United States. The adaptive reuse of this long productive building will act as an anchor and catalyst to the positive redevelopment momentum in a portion of Baltimore City that has begun to see a rebirth over the past 10 years.

The target tenants for the Project will be non-profit organizations and individuals that are bringing valuable resources, services and outcomes to Baltimore. When complete, the building will feature fifty-six one and two bedroom apartment units for new teachers to Baltimore and over 30,000 square feet of office space for non-profit organizations underpinning Baltimore’s health and human service needs. In addition to creating jobs, our ability to provide organizations and individuals with smart, environmentally sound space to live and work will allow them to focus on what they do best. The collaboration of like minded people all in one building will encourage positive thought and creative ideas that will make our city a better place.

The concept was born from the development team’s recent Miller’s Court project that turned a long abandoned historic tin can factory into a 90,000 square foot L.E.E.D. Gold certified Center for Educational and Community Excellence. Miller’s Court, which was fully leased months before opening its doors, provides 40 below market rate loft style apartments for teachers new to Baltimore and 35,000 square feet of office space for the non-profit organizations that serve Baltimore’s education, health and human service needs. The $20,000,000 project was financed through a combination of Historic Tax Credits, New Market Tax Credits and senior debt and has enjoyed wonderful publicity in both local and national newspapers and journals. Based on
Millers Court’s success the development team believes they have found the perfect building to replicate this successful model.

Like Miller’s Court, New Market and Historic Tax Credits, are critical components of the Project, as they will significantly underwrite the complete renovation of Union Mill and keep rents well below market rates for our intended audiences. Estimated project costs are $21 million.

The project is being developed by Seawall Development Company (Donald and Thibault Manekin, and Evan Morville) with Hamel Builders, Mark-Thomas Architects and The Reznick Group.
The Location

The Project is located in Baltimore City at 1500 Union Avenue on the western edge of the Hampden Community and the eastern edge of the Woodberry Community. Established in 1802, Hampden was built as a cluster of houses for workers who manned the newly erected flour and cotton mills along the Jones Falls Valley. During the next 100 years Hampden and its neighboring community, Woodberry, would grow to employ over 4,000 individuals and become a manufacturing leader of cotton duck during World War I.

With their rich historical significance, Hampden and Woodberry are located within blocks of Johns Hopkins University, the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Maryland Institute College of Art and new development on St. Paul Street at 33rd Street. Hampden and Woodberry’s small town feel, neighborly atmosphere, access to light rail and bus lines and proximity to downtown Baltimore along I-83 make it a great place to live, work and play.

Over the past 10 years, there has been an uptick in home ownership primarily from young professionals who are seeking “affordable” housing. The neighborhood associations including – the Hampden Community Council, the Concerned Citizens of Woodberry, the Medfield Community Association, the Jones Falls Watershed Coalition and the Jones Falls Watershed Association, have all been working hard to advocate for positive economic development, quality education and safe and clean neighborhoods. We are actively reaching out to each of the associations to garner their input and support for the Project. It is our intent that through significant upstream outreach and dialogue with all the communities, we will be able to design a project that everyone views as an asset to the area.

The Project, when complete, will have a significant impact on all of the surrounding households. It will transform the Union Avenue corridor and add to the momentum created by the redevelopment of Clipper Mill and Meadow Mill, which sit directly across the Jones Falls. The building through its “round the clock” occupancy will bring new jobs and energy, as well as stimulate the local economy.
**The Building**

Originally erected in 1866 and later expanded in 1872, Union Mill is the largest stone mill in the State of Maryland and at one point was the largest cotton duck producer in the world. Consisting of approximately 86,000 square feet, the beautiful stone structure situated on 3.69 acres is located at 1500 Union Avenue at its intersection with Buena Vista Road. Interstate 83 runs to the west and 41st street runs just to the north. The U-shaped complex incorporates the original three story stone building (1866), a large two story stone addition (1872), a single story stone structure and a 75’ brick tower originally used to generate steam power.

Union Mill represents a significant era in the city’s industrial history. It is an excellent example of the 19th-century mill structures that contributed to the development, heritage and culture of the Hampden and Woodberry communities. By the late 19th century the building combined with other mills in the area to produce over 80% of the world’s cotton duck. It is a wonderful example of Italianate Style architecture and the last stone mill building to be constructed in Maryland.

After numerous successful labor strikes, many mill owners began to move operations to the rural south in search of lower labor costs. By the mid 1920’s the building was converted from a cotton mill to a machine shop occupied by the Pool Engineering & Machine Company. During the 1940’s the building was again converted and used to manufacture furniture by the Wheelwright-Folger, Inc and H-B Manufacturing companies.

In 1962, the building was purchase by Sol and Lou Kramer of Life-Like Products, Inc. Over the next 45+ years, Life-Like Products would manufacture model railroad equipment, slot car equipment and molded foam products. After selling the company in 2000, the building continued to be used by the new owner of the manufacturing business, until 2007 when it vacated the building.

The redevelopment of Union Mill will take full advantage of the historic building’s open and expansive warehouse feel, as well as utilize the abundance of natural light that floods the interior space through massive windows. Rehabilitation of existing wainscoting, plaster, structural steal
and metal columns will all capture the industrial character of the building. Additionally, the massive center courtyard area will serve as an urban oasis-green space where ideas will be shared and collaboration can take place.
The Project - Union Mill (Center for Collaborative Excellence)

The Project will provide 30,000 square feet of office space for non-profits and 56 one and two bedroom apartments for teachers predominantly new to Baltimore. The project will also include a half-acre central courtyard, for the use of both the commercial and residential tenants. The Project was conceived for three important reasons.

- In numerous circles there have been consistent discussions on how to effectively reduce operating costs, increase efficiencies, provide more dollars to programs and advance greater collaboration for non-profit organizations.
- Baltimore’s school systems hire between 750-1,000 new school teachers each year and a significant portion of these teachers are new to Baltimore. Finding well located, affordable apartments for these young professionals is often a challenge.
- The development team’s Miller’s Court project has out performed all expectations and has proven that there is more demand then there is supply for such a forward thinking product.

The Office Component

Success in a venture of this kind can only be achieved with meticulous upstream planning and attention to detail. This has been accomplished by research not only through national models and potential sites, but also through understanding directly the needs of the tenants.

There are a large number of non-profit organizations that provide critical and outcome-based programs and services to Baltimore City and its residents. Each of them now lease or are contemplating leasing space in the city; space for which they pay rent on both their own space, a percentage of common areas, and in some cases parking and facilities for training. Additionally, each pays for space that includes conference/training rooms, technology centers (phones, faxes, and technology networks), and storage areas.

Our program proposes to facilitate the process by providing;
• **Reduced rent** (which is typically the second-largest operating expense) by leveraging all of the tax credits so the development team is able to offer below market rate rents.

• **Conference rooms and training facilities as an amenity** – The building will provide 1,800 square feet of free conference room space to be shared by all office users on an as needed basis.

• **Reduced square footage requirements** as a result of organization’s paying rent for what they actually utilize on a day to day basis.

• **Reduced capital and operating expenses** through collective tenant purchasing.

• **Reduced dedicated time** required by tenants to manage individual office space and make contact with and follow-up with landlords and/or vendors.

• **Reduced expenses** having to do with securing outside training and meeting facilities.

• **Increased resources** available for programs as a result of these savings.

• **Significant opportunity** to advance collaboration between the organizations that share the building.