

Profile: Geoffrey H. Griffis, Founder & Managing Member, CityPartners

In three decades as a DC resident, Geoffrey Griffis has been extensively involved in design, planning, development, community and civic activities.



In the early 1990's, as a resident of the Columbia Heights neighborhood, and while working towards his Masters in Architecture at Catholic University, Mr. Griffis held the position of Affordable Housing Specialist at the non-profit, Reston Interfaith, Inc., where he coordinated the selection, purchase, and management of Section 8 townhouses; facilitated a \$12.5 million purchase of a 221(d)(3) property containing 198 units and established a home ownership counseling program that gained HUD certification.

During this time, Mr. Griffis volunteered to lead the community planning process that created the "Community Based Plan for the Columbia Heights Metro Station Area" in 1997.

Mr. Griffis was an associate and senior designer at several premier architecture firms in DC for ten years, where he was in charge of large planning initiatives, building renovations, urban multi-family and commercial design projects.

In 2001, Griffis was appointed by Mayor Anthony Williams to serve on the District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment. He served on the board for seven years, and was Chairman for six years.

Since forming his development group, CityPartners, in 2005, Mr. Griffis has partnered in the development and design of over 4 million square feet of mixed use projects, including The Wharf, The Hyatt Place DC | National Mall and Fire Station in SW DC, as well as other dynamic, urban, mixed-use projects. Mr. Griffis also owns two rental buildings in the District, and he is uniformly considered a responsive and attentive landlord. Mr. Griffis is the founder of CityPartners Pathways, the only professional hospitality program in DC serving return offenders and other underserved residents over 18-years-old.

Mr. Griffis is a founding member and is currently the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the SW Business Improvement District (SWBID).

400 E Street, SW

CityPartners is a managing member of E Street Development Group—a joint venture which won development rights to two parcels of land on E Street in Southwest DC.

The first parcel was a surface parking lot and is now 400 E Street, SW—a beautifully designed mixed-use building that is the manifestation of a successful public-private partnership. The ground floor houses the first brand new fire station to be built in D.C. for more than 20 years. This new home for Engine Company 13 features a state-of-the-art facility for the fire and emergency service units that serve the rapidly growing population of Southwest DC.

Built above the fire station is the 214-room Hyatt Place Hotel, a thriving and successful business serving the community and DC visitors.



400 E Street, SW

The building is also home to **CityPartners Pathways**, the first and only hotel training program for underserved 18-24 year-olds from Wards 7 and 8. Working with the District’s Department of Employment Services, and Court Services and Offender Agency (CSOSA), this pilot program has become an enormous success. Since its inception in 2016, CityPartners Pathways has trained 48 residents of Wards 7 & 8 at the Hyatt Place, and offered full time employment to 37 of them.

Also housed in 400 E Street is the brand new headquarters for Kid Power, Inc., a local non-profit



Kid Power Students at the 2018 Annual Student Leader Inauguration

providing afterschool and summer programs to underserved youth throughout the District. The development team built out the space for Kid Power at no cost to the non-profit, and rents them the space for only \$50 per month.

About the project, Geoffrey Griffis has said, “From day one, our team was committed to developing a project that would truly serve the community.”

555 E Street, SW

CityPartners and E Street Development Group continue to make an impact in SW DC as they build on the land where the old Engine Company 13 once sat. 555 E Street will be a 300,000-square-foot mixed-use building with strong retail, a 252 room boutique hotel, 136 market rate apartments, and 58 affordable apartments for seniors. Construction began in March 2018 with delivery in summer 2020.



Architectural Rendering of 555 E Street, SW

T Street, SE

In 2015, CityPartners purchased a 19 unit apartment building in Anacostia. The building was bought out of foreclosure and at the time of purchase, 40% of the units were vacant.

It was in terrible disrepair and there were squatters and drug dealers, making the tenants very unsafe and unhappy. Today, we have significantly changed the reality of the building, moving out the drug dealers, prostitutes and illegal gambling games held in the hallways and stairwells.

CityPartners has renovated nearly every apartment in the building, all the common areas, and done extensive work making the building safe and secure. It is 90% occupied.

Rents for the original tenants have increased by less than 3% in the past three years, and only one of the original tenants has moved out. The tenants in my building are uniformly happy with my company's management and ownership.



Typical Unoccupied Kitchen
at Time of Purchase



Typical Kitchen after CityPartners' Renovation

CityPartners Pathways

In 2015, CityPartners started a hospitality apprenticeship program that is the first and only one of its kind in the District of Columbia.

CityPartners Pathways provides hospitality training and job placement to young adults from Wards 7 and 8. It is the city's only apprenticeship program in the hospitality industry for residents ages 18 to 24--a population, whose opportunities often are limited.

CityPartners Pathways was founded by Geoffrey Griffis, Managing Member of CityPartners, and an owner of the Hyatt Place DC | National Mall in Southwest D.C., and the hotel's General Manager, Stacy Smith. Since its inception in 2015, CityPartners Pathways has taken on and trained 48 residents from Wards 7 and 8. These young women and men have been trained in all areas of the hospitality industry, from building engineering, to front desk operations, service and housekeeping. To date, 37 of those apprentices have gone on to hold permanent jobs at the Hyatt Place, with salaries, benefits, and opportunities for career advancement in the hospitality industry.

CityPartners Pathways partners works with the DC Department of Employment Services (DOES) and Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA) to find eligible candidates. After 90 days of training, that is paid for by the agencies, CityPartners Pathways evaluates the apprentices to determine if they are qualified for long-term employment.

Apprentices are trained for an average of three months and then may be offered staff positions. In 2016, its first full year, 66% of CityPartners Pathways apprentices were offered permanent jobs at the Hyatt Place. In 2017, 87% were hired. When an apprentice successfully completes training and there is no available position at the Hyatt Place, CityPartners Pathways will help that apprentice find hospitality jobs in other locations.



Rickia Epps, CityPartners Pathways Apprentice from April-May, 2017.

1440 Columbia Road, NW: The Berkeley

In 2006, CityPartners was selected as development partner by the 1440 Tenants Association. At that time, the building was owned by the 7-member tenant association, but was uninhabitable as it had been ravaged by fire years earlier.



Before CityPartners Renovation

CityPartners worked with the tenants' association to realize their vision of becoming homeowners, by renovating and preserving the building and creating 22 luxury condominiums. The original seven tenants paid substantially under-market prices for their units, gaining substantial equity at the day of purchase as the remaining units sold out at market prices within months of going to market.

1440 Columbia Road is a unique and complex project that offered affordable homeownership while providing luxury features most often associated with high-priced condos. Amenities include high-end finishes, extra storage, and terraces with some units. The Berkeley is located within walking distance of the Columbia Heights Metro Station.



Typical Berkeley Kitchen after CityPartners Renovation

The Wharf at the Southwest Waterfront

CityPartners is a development partner, owner and member of the project team that was awarded this exciting and monumental project. This unique development has created an active, urban waterfront and park system, showcasing distinctive cultural destinations, and in concert with the existing community.

Featuring market rate residential units and hundreds of affordable housing units, offices, cultural components, hotels, 10 acres of park space, improvements to the marina, and neighborhood serving retail, this project provides Washington, DC with a world-class waterfront destination. Phase I of the Wharf delivered in October 2017 and has proven to be a transformative development that has kept true to its original goals.



The Wharf, Architectural Rendering

Phase II broke ground in 2019 and will deliver in 2022.



The Wharf, Architectural Rendering