



DOWNCITY DESIGN

2020
ANNUAL REPORT





REFLECTIONS ON 2020

At DownCity Design, we believe in the power of the design process to help generate innovative solutions to community challenges. This past year has certainly called for creative problem solving, resourcefulness and resilience. With the arrival of the COVID pandemic, our staff and educators bravely redesigned our programs so that our participants could continue to design and build service projects for public spaces and non-profit partners, while remaining safe and healthy.

2020 was a year filled with challenges, but our students and educators know that designers reframe challenges as opportunities. Using the toolkits we stocked with drills, impact drivers, and hardware, our teen designers collaborated with family members to create their own design/build projects at home. Our virtual events offered us rare opportunities to bring students, families and supporters of our free youth design programs together to celebrate. And our shift to remote platforms meant that we were able to engage DCD program alumni across the country as Design Educators within our virtual programs.

Throughout this year, our program staff worked tirelessly to coordinate logistics behind the scenes, troubleshoot tech issues and serve as coaches and cheerleaders for our educators and students. Our amazing educators worked hard to create safe spaces where our students could process their experiences, connect with one another, and channel their creative energy into meaningful work for their communities.

Through it all, our youth designers stayed engaged, committed to working together even when we couldn't be together. During this tough year, our students again and again showed that they are resourceful, resilient, flexible and strong. They are designers, and we feel so proud of all they were able to create and accomplish this year.

- ADRIENNE GAGNON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



OUR MISSION + OUR WORK

DownCity Design is a non-profit community design studio that empowers people to imagine and create better futures for their communities, using the tools of design.

In our free youth programs, Providence teens design and fabricate new amenities to improve their communities. Since our founding in 2009, over 2500 participants in our free afterschool and summer design programs have collaboratively built more than 87 permanent amenities for public spaces in and around Providence, including community gardens, outdoor classrooms for public schools and creative play structures for parks.

Currently, our 12 free youth programs engage 350 teens from marginalized communities in creating structures and graphics for public spaces. Our programs help participants develop essential skills and habits of mind like collaboration, communication, creative problem solving, and persistence.

More than 280 adults have also participated in our free professional development programs, learning to use the design process to generate innovative solutions for topics including affordable housing, community-based agriculture, creative placemaking and public education.

2020 PROJECT MAP



YOUTH PROGRAMS

DOWNCITY DESIGNERS

Our free afterschool design / build studio, **DownCity Designers**, serves RI teens throughout the year. In the fall session, participants learn about the design process, interview their community client to better understand their needs, and prototype design directions. In the spring session, students bring their designs to life, using power tools to build a new amenity for a public space.

In Fall 2019, **Providence Children's Museum** invited teens in DownCity Designers to create a new exhibit. Our students designed a **multi-sensory room** featuring a twilight forest with a giant tree kids can play within, glowing leaves of many textures and sizes that can be manipulated, twinkling fairy lights and enigmatic audio cues.

DOWNCITY DISCOVERY

In **DownCity Discovery**, a free afterschool program, middle schoolers learn the design process while creating service projects for community clients. Pre-teens learn the essentials of design and what it means to be a designer.

Our DownCity Discovery students designed a **Sensory Canopy** play area for **Mount Pleasant Community Library** in Fall 2019. The design included an elaborate tree canopy motif and translucent walls for shadow puppetry.



"DownCity design made me love my community more and care for it. It humbled me, matured me, made me realize that there's always more to everything around me."

- ODALYS
MET INTERN '19

MET DESIGN / BUILD STUDIO

Each year, 15 MET School students join DownCity Design two full days a week for an experiential service learning internship. This year-long design/build studio allows MET interns to realize ambitious designs for community spaces. In 2020, our MET Interns designed a **Compost Education Space** in partnership with **West Elmwood Housing** and **Groundwork RI**.

DOWNCITY DESIGN STUDIO

AT PROVIDENCE CAREER AND TECHNICAL ACADEMY (PCTA)

The **DownCity Design Studio @ PCTA** is a 21st Century Community Learning Center that provides free afterschool and summer programs for PCTA students. Our design studios and student-led clubs allow participants to learn new skills, practice leadership, and make friends while serving their community. Our Design Studio programs introduce students to design disciplines including Graphic Design, Industrial Design, Experience Design, and Design/Build. Participants in each studio work together to create innovative responses to community needs, then learn the skills to bring their ideas to life.



"I love the design thinking process because we can choose what ideas to use and how to use them. We can also choose how to use each of the students' strengths."

- JAKE
PCTA STUDENT

244

Students participated in DCD Studio programs at PCTA in the 2019- 2020 school year.

REGULARLY ATTENDING STUDENTS REPORTED STRENGTHENING SKILLS IN:

96%

Working as part of a team

91%

Facing a challenge and not giving up

87%

Brainstorming ideas to solve a challenge

91%

Giving and receiving feedback





DCD SUMMER DESIGN STUDIOS

Our 6-week **Summer Design Studios** engage over 70 RI teens in intensive design learning as they build new skills, explore careers, and create service projects for community organizations. We offer 3 program strands: Design/Build Studio, Creative Change Studio, and EXPLORE DESIGN (offered in partnership with DESIGNxRI).

In all 3 programs, participants receive a stipend to work with community clients who present our young designers with authentic challenges that can be addressed through design. Participants work collaboratively to investigate and better understand their client's challenge, propose and test potential solutions to share with the client for feedback, and finally fabricate new structures for public spaces and new processes, graphics or experiences.

*This was my first time using power tools, taking measurements, and making something for the community. **I felt like I was actually active in my Providence Community and made a change.** Working with DownCity Design really opened up the opportunity for me to learn something new, and also do something for my community.*

-SAMIA
DESIGN/BUILD INTERN '19



In Summer 2019, our 75 Summer Interns:

- Built an outdoor patio for **Urban Greens Co-Op Market**
- Created accessible garden beds for **Gilbert Stuart Middle School**
- Planned and hosted **Teenage Art Rage**, a social event for teens in Providence's **Burnside Park**

94%

Average daily attendance rate by summer interns

97%

of students reported that the Summer Design Studio helped them learn about potential jobs and careers





DOWNCITY DESIGN + **designxri** DESIGN FORWARD RI

DCD partners with **DESIGNxRI** to offer cohort-based professional development for practicing RI designers at every stage of their career. Our **DESIGN FORWARD RI** partnership, funded by REAL JOBS RI, supports designers as they develop communication and facilitation skills and seek opportunities for strategic innovation within their work.

EXPLORE

EXPLORE DESIGN is a free career exploration program for RI teens interested in design careers. Free monthly workshops introduce high school students to design industry pathways and prepare them to apply for college design programs. We also offer EXPLORE DESIGN as a free summer internship to RI teens.

We offered EXPLORE Design internships to 24 students in Summer 2019, as well as 9 EXPLORE workshops to students during the 2019-20 school year.

I've worked with DCD for 3 years now and one of the things I love the most is how students are able to make their voices heard and feel empowered to think creatively--the joy factor of DCD cannot be overstated!"

-MAXINE
EXPLORE EDUCATOR, 2019-20



EMERGE

EMERGE supports early-career designers through workshops on communication, organizational finance, and strategic problem-solving, while providing opportunities to connect with other local emerging designers.

In 2019-20, 14 designers participated in our EMERGE workshops.

ADVANCE

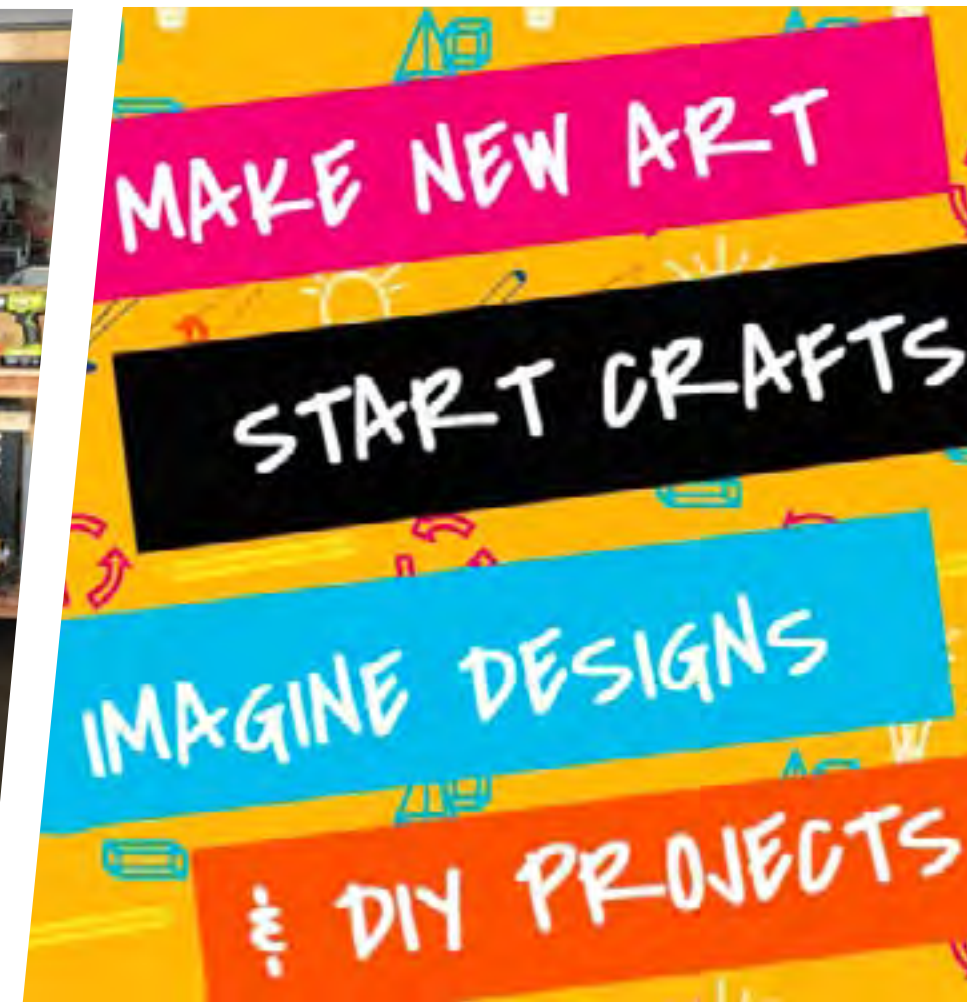
A free professional development program for Rhode Island's mid-career designers looking to expand their skills and networks, apply new strategies to their workplace, and build on existing knowledge.

In 2019-20, 14 designers participated in our ADVANCE workshops.

RESPONDING TO COVID-19

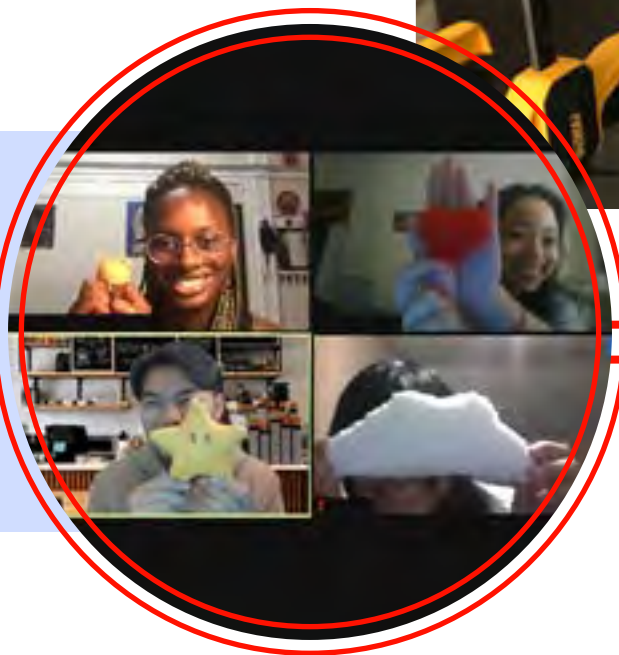
In response to the COVID-19 crisis, DCD shifted operations to remote work beginning March 15, 2020, and our afterschool programs transitioned to fully virtual programming. This shift required our staff and educators to radically reimagine how we do our work. Our staff and educators responded to this new challenge bravely and capably, redesigning curricula to meet our teaching and learning goals while working within new constraints.

While we faced many challenges in designing and implementing virtual programs given the hands-on nature of our work, we were impressed by the resilience and commitment of our students and educators. Our participants and their families expressed gratitude for the stability of DownCity Design's programs as spaces to connect with friends and mentors and create meaningful work.



"I feel like DownCity Design did a good job with virtual programs because I was still engaged in the activities, and the mentors did everything they could to help us out"

*-DCD STUDENT
FALL 2020*



COVID-19 & PROVIDENCE

While our Providence-based programs are available to all Providence public school students, 80% of our students come from the South Side, West End, and Olneyville neighborhoods. According to the RI Department of Health, COVID has hit these communities hard. The City of Providence has the highest infection rates in the state, with close to 18% of the population having tested positive for COVID-19 to date. For many families in these neighborhoods, sheltering in place and working from home have been luxuries they cannot afford, as they continue to work to provide vital services.

In light of this, DownCity Design has remained committed to designing responsive programming to meet our students' needs. Despite the challenges of remote teaching and learning, we strive to provide opportunities for students to connect with one another and with mentors, create community and a maintain collective sense of purpose.

At the close of our Summer 2020 programs, students shared that despite never meeting in person, they discovered new ways to work together as a team virtually and felt more confident sharing their ideas over the online platforms as a result. Many returning participants also reported their growth as leaders, and their ability to persevere through challenges.

STUDENTS IN OUR ONLINE PROGRAMS REPORTED:

98%

Feeling like they were part of a positive space

93%

Feeling like they strengthened their skills in collaboration

370 CRANSTON STREET

THE FUTURE HOME OF DOWNCITY DESIGN

In September 2019, we acquired 370 Cranston Street, the future home of DownCity Design!

After a decade of extraordinary growth, DownCity Design is thrilled to establish a permanent home in the heart of the community we serve. With a welcoming storefront for our offices, a central courtyard, and a rear building ready to accommodate a spacious carpentry studio, our new building will provide the spaces we need to deepen the quality and reach of our programs from the foundation of a stable, permanent location.

Realizing our dreams for this center will be our biggest design/build project ever! We plan to upgrade building systems, design inviting interiors and façade, and make our learning spaces fully accessible. The new building will showcase our community's skills, incubate the next generation of designers, and serve as a model for sustainable, community-driven design.



Since September 2019, volunteers have given over 130 total hours toward the renovation of 370 Cranston Street. The process is designed to help community members build skills in design and construction while physically building our future home. Renovations are continuing with the help of the newly formed DownCity Re|Design Team, and we anticipate moving into our new building in Summer 2022!

November 2019:
Community Builder

Our first public event in our new building! Friends of DownCity Design joined staff, educators, student leaders, and board members for an evening of food and fun in our new home before renovations began.



May 2020:
Demolition Completed!

February - March 2020:
Volunteer Demolition Days

17 members of the DCD community worked together to gut the current space and create a clean slate for renovations.



October 2019:
Community Design Charrette

28 members of the DCD community spent an evening brainstorming in small groups about the goals and constraints for each space; including the office, facade, entryway, courtyard, shop, tech, and lounge areas.



September 2019:
DownCity Design purchased the building at 370 Cranston Street, Providence



2020 FINANCIALS

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENSES & SUPPORT

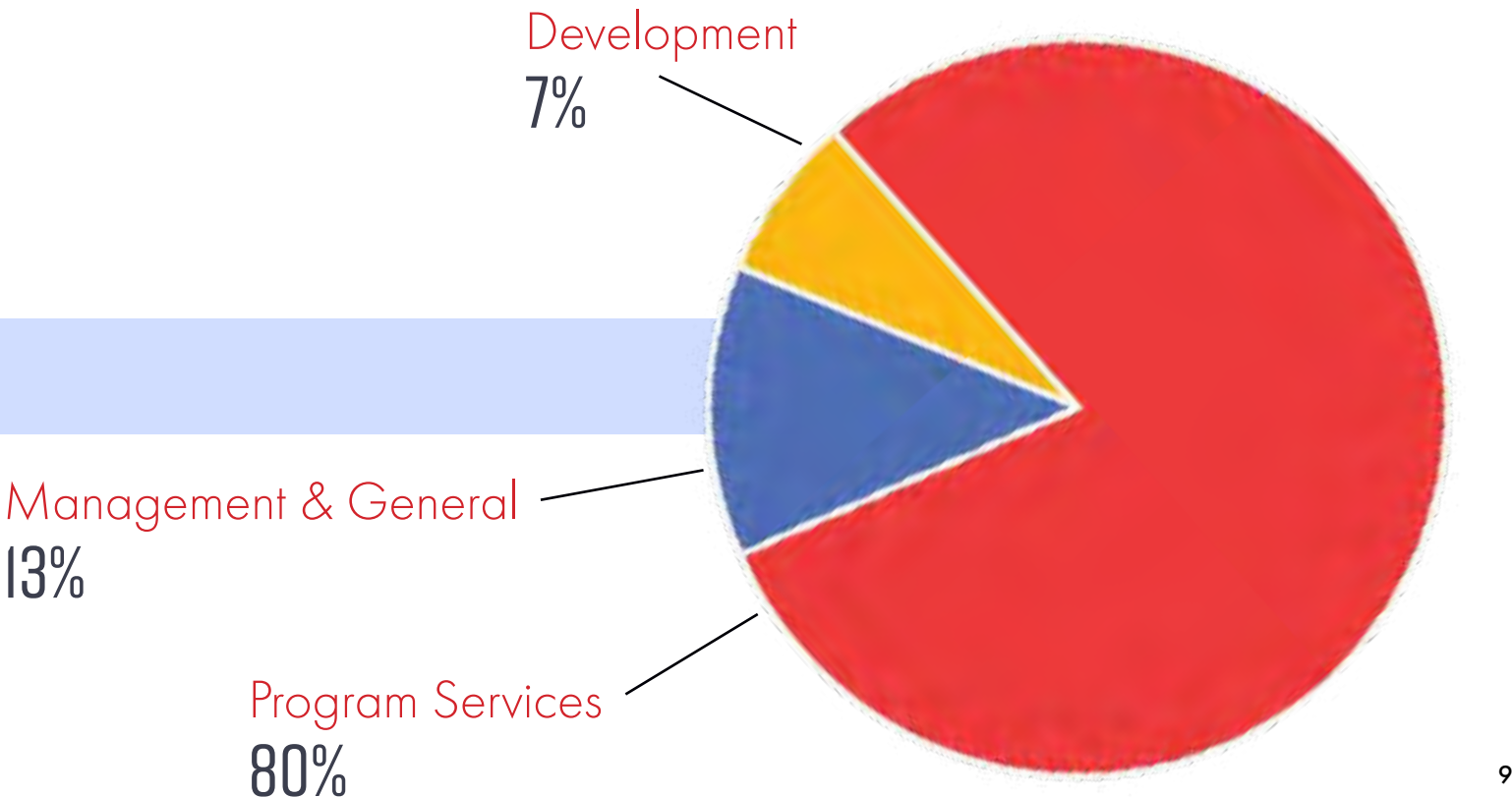
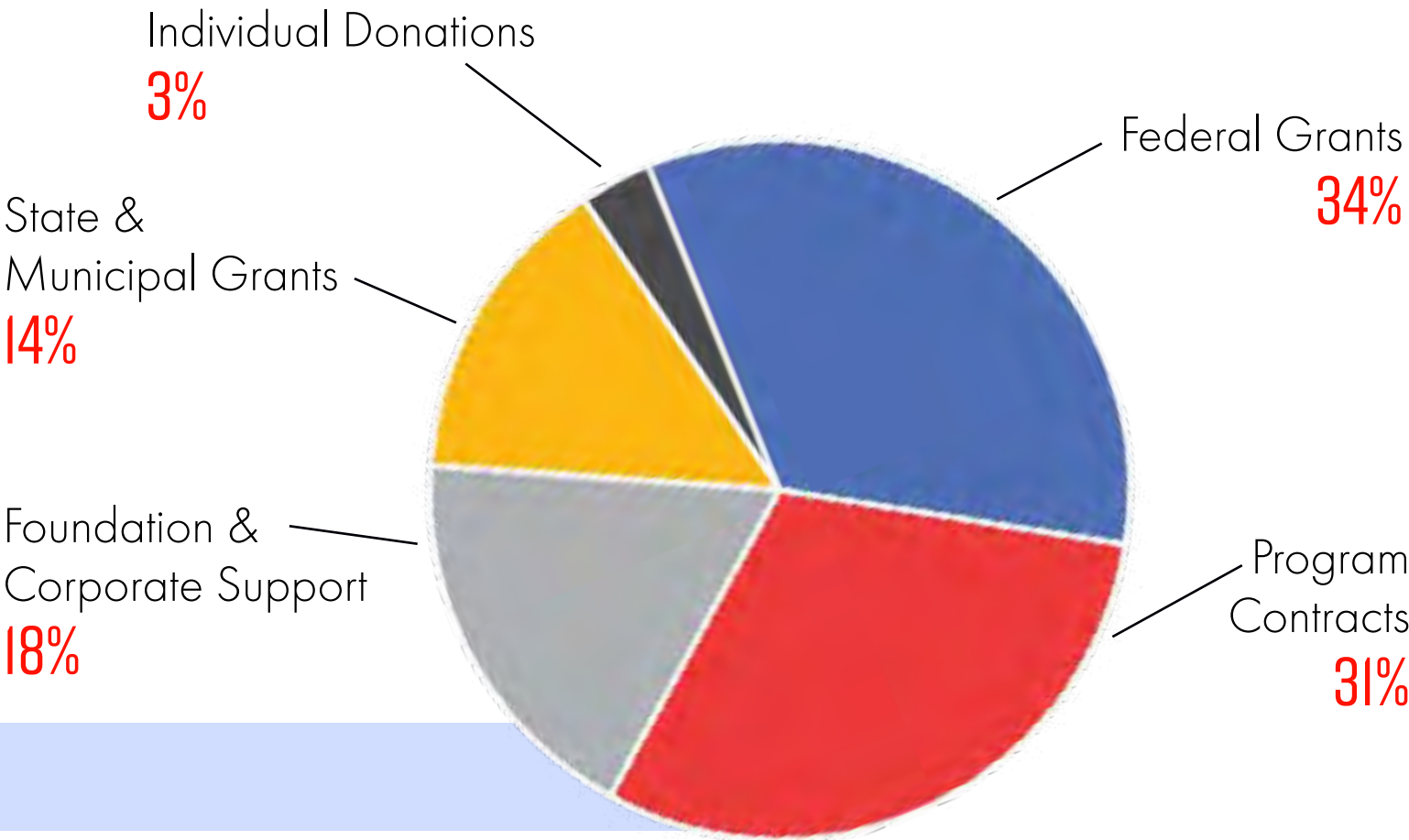
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (JUNE 30, 2020)

TOTAL ASSETS	\$784,547
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$278,462
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	\$506,085

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES (JULY 1, 2019 - JUNE 30, 2020)

REVENUE	
Foundation and Corporate Support	\$102,250
Government Grants	\$273,905
Program Contracts	\$175,225
Individual Donations	\$19,509
TOTAL REVENUE	\$570,889

EXPENSES	
Program Services	\$390,026
Management and General	\$65,737
Development	\$33,467
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$489,230



2019 - 2020 STAFF

ADRIENNE GAGNON
Executive Director

LEXIE WHIPPLE
Deputy Director

EMILY SELLON
PCTA Site Director

YASMINE HASSAN
Youth Program Manager

DEVON ARTIS-WHITE
Project Manager

JILL STAUFFER
Community Outreach VISTA

ZORRYBETH SANTIAGO
PCTA Program VISTA

CLARIBEL WU
Summer VISTA Associate

NICHOLAS ONG
Summer VISTA Associate

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ELENI DANAE CONTIS

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MOLLY HASTINGS

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HANNAH E SKLAR

SAMUEL JEAN-BAPTISTE

CASEY STEWART

LESLYANN OQUENDO

SELENA NICOLE TULLY

COLIN KENT-DAGGETT

LEWIS TURLEY

TANNER MCCARTHY

CONNAR FOLEY

LUCIA CARROLL

TYLER MILLS

CRISTIAN LOPEZ BAJAN

LUIS RODRIGUEZ

WESLEY SANDERS

MANUEL CORDERO

YASMINE HASSAN



THANK YOU

TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS & PARTNERS



... AND TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF OUR DONORS!



Your support in our 2019-2020 program year made it possible for us to continue to mentor designers of all ages, transform public spaces, and facilitate positive community change.

To learn more about supporting DownCity Design visit:
www.downcitydesign.org/support

