



CREATING A DOWNTOWN ARTS COLLECTIVE

STATUS: UNDERWAY

From the cryptic sign that reads "EMP" in letters made from scrap wood, passersby might infer that a secret club has moved into the newly renovated shoe factory on Redwood Street in West Baltimore. So, we need the secret password to get in, right?

Not this time: It's actually an art gallery, and unlike a secret club, this one is distinguished not by exclusivity, but by the wide range of artists and artwork it seeks to include. The gallery, which opened in early October, was launched by the EMP Collective, a group of visual artists, musicians, writers, filmmakers, and actors that formed in 2010. The group intends for EMP to serve as a space where artists of different backgrounds and artistic mediums can collaborate and show their work.

The multi-use venue is comprised of a rotating art gallery for developing artists that doubles as a rehearsal and performance space for theatrical and musical events, experimental collaboration, writing workshops, and film screenings.

"We are not a space for one specific medium," says EMP artistic director Carly Bales. "At all times, we try to cross-pollinate the talents of artists we work with into many different projects. We want to make EMP an established incubator for experimentation and artistic growth."

In addition to fostering collaboration among artists, the collective hopes to help "light up their new home and the surrounding neighborhood with life and activity," Bales says. The collective, which achieved its nonprofit status last August, received a \$10,000 grant from the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPOB) as part of the Operation Storefront program, which matches individuals and groups seeking space with first-floor storefronts in an effort to bring businesses and pedestrians back downtown.

Dovetailing with the goal of Operation Storefront, the collective hopes to make the gallery accessible to the community. "It's important for us to help in the downtown effort to increase foot traffic and activity in our area and make the neighborhood a more welcoming and inviting destination," Bales says. —KA

# 10 VISIONS TO CHANGE BALTIMORE

(FOR THE BETTER!)

It's a new year, so our thoughts are naturally turning to the future. And despite the economic downturn felt here and elsewhere, things are looking pretty bright in Charm City. The thing we're most excited about? The infusion of fresh ideas, both from newcomers and mainstays alike—everyone, it seems, has a stake in the future of Baltimore. What are the best and boldest of those ideas? We went in search of 10 of them, and found them in fields as diverse as senior care, social media, and urban housing. Not all have been implemented yet (although some have), and a few are just in the dreaming stage—but we think they'll all ultimately have a positive impact on Baltimore. In the end, we like the idea of Baltimore as a place where you can think big and where such pie-in-the-sky concepts can be nurtured, indulged, and turned into reality.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRISTOPHER SILAS NEAL

10 BIG IDEAS for BALTIMORE