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Small Business Innovators Open Doors for Area Entrepreneurs
Charles Village “shared space” venture brings both style and social benefit



The Charles Village Exchange

Baltimore, January 20, 2016: From consultants to writers to high-tech adventurers, The Charles Village Exchange is offering local entrepreneurs an opportunity to launch or expand their business in a stylish – and surprisingly affordable – shared office space, in the heart of the bustling Johns Hopkins community.

The Charles Village Exchange, an idea conceived by Eve and Doug Austin of North Baltimore, is located at 2526 Saint Paul Street, in a striking red brick corner building with a 20-foot high window tower taking in the sun on the northeast corner. “The goal of The Exchange is to offer what entrepreneurs *really* want — a quiet and flexible workspace, with thoughtful amenities and top-shelf business resources. That’s what they need to maximize their creativity and productivity,” said Doug, who is also the President and CEO of UPD Consulting, a public sector management consulting firm which operates from the same building.

The Austins purchased the spacious 3-story property in 2012, and spent a year completing a bevy of systemic and aesthetic changes. They upgraded the heating and air conditioning system, converted the basement into a modern office space, and artistically transformed the top floor into an organically-styled corporate suite. The result is a beautiful and well-resourced entrepreneurial hub within the city.

The Exchange is situated on the top floor. Its seven workstations are generously sunlit, courtesy of a dozen brand new casement windows, most of them facing an autumn wildwood of 60-foot treetops rising above the train tracks on the building’s north side. “We named each of the workstations for an historic Baltimore train station — such as Mount Royal, Calvert Street, and Penn Station — because it gives the modern suite a touch of history,” said Eve, who also works as a licensed therapist and runs her practice in the building’s newly renovated lower level.

The vogueish décor of The Exchange — brick wall, ample track lighting, sound-dampening wall panels, earth-toned carpet and vibrant accents throughout — was all part of the vision of creating a professional ambiance that doesn’t feel “corporate.” Holly Burke, a local photographer and graphic designer, assisted the couple in conceptualizing the space. “It’s not just functional; it’s cool!” said Doug. “Holly’s got a lot of experience working with interior designers and architects. The design of the space reflects her innovative and artistic sensibilities.”

Committed to business and social benefit, Doug serves on the Board of Directors of Healthy Neighborhoods, Inc. and the Advisory Board of the Greater Homewood Neighborhood Coalition. Shortly after moving into the building, UPD Consulting became a sponsor of the Margaret Brent Elementary/Middle School across the street. In 2012 UPD provided pro bono consulting services to assist the school's newly-formed Parent Advisory Committee in structuring its operating procedures. And UPD has pledged to keep the school's outdoor basketball courts in nets. "We're not just here to work and go home," says Doug. "We love being in Baltimore — in fact, we only looked for buildings in the city. We want to be part of the community we work in."

The Charles Village Exchange offers free trial work days. Contact us to arrange a tour and a try!

While Doug and Eve both keep an eye on social benefit, The Exchange is smartly geared to business. The penthouse suite is equipped with blazing-fast Internet connections and wireless and a zippy color laser machine for high-quality printing, copying, faxing and scanning. The conference room, with two skylights ushering down the sunshine to an oval boardroom table, seats up to seven and has a conference phone, a remote-controlled video projector, and a huge white board.

Throughout the suite, framed wall art — capturing The Exchange's railroad theme — inspires motion, work, destination, and commerce.

The Exchange is also not shy on amenities. The new-era kitchenette and artsy guest lounge have a leather sofa, coffee table, water cooler, fridge, café table, and a hot beverage brewer. The bathroom has a skylight, and a shower for eco-friendly cyclists who prefer to freshen up after taking the bike lane to the office. The building also has an outdoor deck and fenced patio, bike rack, free street parking, an advanced security system, including video cameras, and an on-site building manager.

Designed with small businesses in mind, tenants have the option of long-term or month-to-month leasing, for those who want to play it by ear. For big visions, there are creative options to rent multiple workstations or the entire floor. "With rates as low as \$275 per month, The Charles Village Exchange offers a great value," said Eve. "It's priced affordably and provides high-quality space for professionals who can't work at home, who are beyond working in libraries and coffee shops, and who can't afford — or don't want — to work in conventional corporate offices."

Reflecting on the three years since their initial investment, Eve recalled being impatient with how long it took to renovate and launch the co-working space. "We wanted to get it right. That took some time, but it was worth it," she said. "And as far as we know, there's no place in Baltimore quite like The Charles Village Exchange."

Hoping to be fully occupied soon, the Charles Village Exchange encourages anyone interested to contact us for a tour and a free trial work day.

To get more information, visit www.CharlesVillageExchange.com or visit our FB page.