

NEWS RELEASE

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## **NEXT MAJOR PHASE IN DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS HISTORIC GARMENT DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT UNVEILED**

### **Nationally renowned New York City-based Martinez+Johnson to lead design of revitalizing Washington Avenue's historic Garment District**

**St. Louis, MO (May 22, 2018)** -- Downtown STL, Inc. and City of St. Louis leaders today announced the next major phase in the redevelopment of Washington Avenue's historic Garment District, including the city's choice of a nationally-renowned design firm to lead the development of new architecture within the district.

The team of Martinez+Johnson Architecture and BJH Advisors, which redesigned New York's garment district, was chosen after an exhaustive national search and will partner with St. Louis-based architecture firm TAO + LEE Associates to lead planning efforts focused on revitalizing St. Louis' own Garment District on Washington Ave. This effort envisions leveraging the distinct history of the district as a national hub for fashion and apparel, as well as to develop a modern epicenter of the creative economy for the entire St. Louis region.

"In the past two decades, more than \$6 billion has been invested in the revitalization of downtown, including the Washington Avenue streetscape and the conversion of many historic structures into residential lofts and business establishments," said Missy Kelley, president, Downtown STL Inc. "This next phase will enable us to leverage this progress and further promote this area as a national hub for design, fashion and creative businesses."

Dubbed "Shoe Street, USA," Washington Avenue once claimed more shoe manufacturers than any other street in the world. However, during the second half of the 20th century, as seen in many cities across the U.S., the garment industry declined in the district and many buildings emptied out.

"A region is only as strong as its core," said Otis Williams, director of the city of St. Louis' Development Corporation. "Among other signature initiatives and investments, we see the rejuvenation of the historic Garment District to be a key towards the continued strengthening of downtown."

The past two decades has seen more than \$6 billion invested in Downtown St. Louis across a range of projects. These investments have catalyzed the revitalization of downtown and fueled an expansive design and creative ecosystem that stems from its rich history.

“At the heart of the matter is finding ways to get more people, more of the time, doing more things in the Garment District,” said Steven Stainbrook, Associate Principal, Martinez+Johnson Architecture. “If we get that right in parallel with smart policy initiatives that build on the recent successes of the Fashion Incubator and support development of a broader ecosystem of creative industries, we will have all laid the groundwork for transforming the neighborhood. The pieces are in place for success – amazing architecture, committed city/civic leadership, design-oriented entrepreneurs, and competitive market forces that rival other cities.”

The Garment District is roughly bounded by Delmar Blvd., Tucker Blvd., St. Charles Street, N. 15th Street, Olive Street, N. 18th Street, Washington Ave., and Lucas Ave. Elements of the placemaking plan for the District will include:

- An overall branding strategy and marketing framework for identity and promotion of the district;
- A framework for developing the built environment within the district that is appealing and visually consistent with its historic elements;
- A stakeholder engagement process to gather input and ongoing feedback from residents, business owners, visitors, and others;
- A sound and actionable implementation strategy that considers available resources and challenges related to the recommended plan and provides goals, guidelines, and cost estimates for the recommended plan.

“With so much construction activity and development in and around downtown, and with the near completion of the network of new and improved public parks, it is very exciting to envision what the role of this district can be to enhance the area,” said Peter Tao, principal of Tao + Lee Associates, Inc. “This placemaking planning study is very timely.”

Washington Avenue has been recently recognized by the American Planning Association as one of the ‘Top 10 Great Streets’ in America. The city of St. Louis has a bold vision to build upon this momentum and maximize its potential for fashion and design entrepreneurs. Upcoming enhancements include revitalizing infrastructure and establishing brand identity to support an integrated ecosystem of design and related businesses.

“Our goal is to turn young fashion designers into successful entrepreneurs,” said Susan Sherman, co-founder and chairman of the Saint Louis Fashion Fund. “By creating successful brands and serving as a resource for other St. Louis based designers, the Fund will continue to build a vibrant fashion ecosystem for our city and make St. Louis a center of fashion once again.”

#### **About Downtown STL, Inc.**

Downtown STL, Inc., a 501(c)6 organization, serves as a catalyst for creating and promoting a downtown that attracts investment, economic activity and vibrancy at the hub of its region. The organization also manages the Downtown St. Louis Community Improvement District, which supplements city services to make Downtown St. Louis a cleaner, safer and more inviting place.

**About Martinez+Johnson Architecture**

With a professional working relationship spanning three decades, Gary F. Martinez and Thomas E. Johnson founded Martinez+Johnson Architecture in 1994 in Washington, DC to bring their design sensitivities to cultural arts and institutional projects. The 25-architect firm is a nationally-recognized design leader with expertise in three primary areas of architecture: planning and design of world-class performing arts venues; enhancing community vitality with institutional and cultural arts Facilities; and restoration and adaptive reuse of historic structures.

**About TAO + LEE Associates, Inc.**

TAO + LEE Associates, Inc. is an award-winning St. Louis-based design firm providing architectural, planning, interior, and creative design services for a diversity of project types, sizes and applications. The firm has extensive experience in the planning, design and execution of commercial, cultural, educational, residential, healthcare and retail projects as well as unique creative design projects including art projects and installations.

**About the Garment District**

From the late 19th century until the end of WWII, St. Louis was second only to New York in terms of garment manufacturing. Dubbed "Shoe Street, USA," Washington Avenue once claimed more shoe manufacturers than any other street in the world. In the mid-1950s, the number of clothing manufacturers in St. Louis tripled, thanks in large part to the junior dress category, which got its start on Washington Avenue. Known today for artist lofts and nightlife, Washington Avenue is lined with galleries, restaurants, and bars.

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