

INTERPRETIVE CENTER OF UNDERGROUND RAILROAD EDUCATION CENTER –
- CASE FOR SUPPORT DATA SHEET –
IT'S MORE THAN A PRETTY BUILDING

WHY BUILD AN INTERPRETIVE CENTER

Just as our communal ancestors worked for justice, Underground Railroad Education Center carries on in their footsteps being committed to using what it has for the empowerment of all people to be agents of change toward an equitable and just society.

The Interpretive Center, the only building in NYS combining Net Zero features with CORE Living Building Certification and a Pre-Revolutionary War Dutch Barn Timber Frame, has the ability to effect such change and is only limited by our imaginations as we learn the past, work in the present, and work together to create a more just and equitable future.

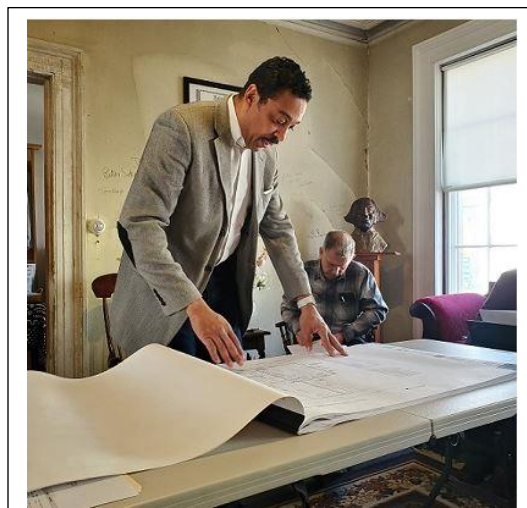
EXPANSION THROUGH THE INTERPRETIVE CENTER

In order for Underground Railroad Education Center to continue to expand its outreach and share its empowering reinterpretation of underground railroad history and its relevance with us today, UREC needs a facility fully dedicated to programs, events, exhibits, film production and viewing, research, work force development, children's engagement, and the arts, and that will serve as a Resilience Hub for the community. This facility will be the Interpretive Center of Underground Railroad Education Center.



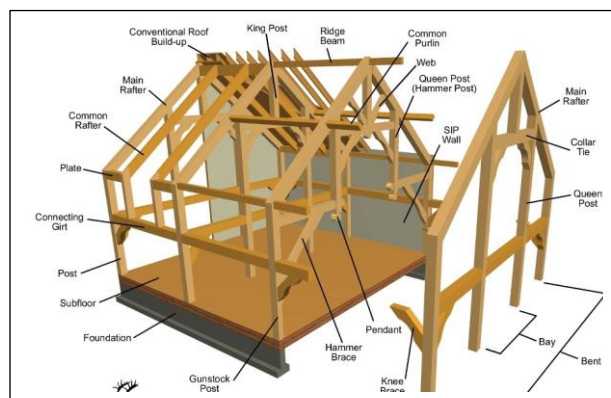
PROJECT FEATURES

- The Interpretive Center (IC) is the **ONLY** building in New York State that combines net zero features with Core Living Building Challenge certification with a 1760s Dutch barn timber frame – a cutting-edge model forcefully mitigating climate change
- Parcels on which IC is to be built are owned by Underground Railroad Education Center (UREC)
- Parcels have been rezoned from RT to MU-NE
- Architectural and construction plans are complete
- NYS SEQRA is in process, and the ESA is completed
- Underground Filtration Gallery is a uniquely designed underground water retention facility to manage stormwater runoff
- Marketing outreach includes local community neighborhood associations, churches, tabling events, workshops, audio and visual and print media, social media, and video production
- Bast Hatfield is the contracted construction company
- The IC complements the historic, award-winning, documented Underground Railroad building known as The Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence adjacent to the IC
- Designed with a sense of permeability – when inside the building one continues to have a relationship with the world outside the building
- Build America Buy America policy governs material purchases
- Building materials will be procured within a 500-mile radius of the IC



BUILDING FEATURES

- Pre-Revolutionary War Dutch Barn Timber Frame preserves New York State history within New York State, allows for the tangible presence of a structure used on a NYS farm worked by people enslaved, allows for conversations about New York State's involvement in the federally sanctioned institution of slavery, allows for discussion around the repurposing of such a structure to speak about liberty and democracy
- The Dutch Barn Timber Frame is of an age that, as salvaged timber, its carbon has been depleted thereby contributing to the net zero characteristic of the IC
- The IC will be certified as a CORE Living Building by the International Living Building Future Institute
- Cross Laminated Timber will replace steel
- The high-performance exterior envelope will be composed of thermally treated wood obtained from a sustainable forest, with the thermal treatment destroying sugars and resins that attract bugs and fungi, thereby resulting in pest- and mold-resistant materials without the use of chemicals
- A geothermal heat pump ground loop system will be in place for heating and cooling
- 120 solar panels will be located on the IC roof
- Energy usage will be reduced by 70% as compared to a code-built building
- Lighting strategies include 70% of lighting needs to be met by natural light
- Biophilic features will contribute to storm water control, energy efficiency, native plant inclusion, and beauty of the IC
- Complies with and will complement setback and height requirement of the residential community in which the IC will be located



IMPACT

- 35-45 construction jobs will be created
- 10 new FTE positions will be created to staff the IC
- Green job introductory workshops will be offered on a scheduled basis
- Farmers' markets, legal clinics, job fairs, residential resilience planning workshops will be part of the regularly scheduled program offerings
- Expecting a 100% increase in visitation that will contribute to economic stimulation of Albany City, County, and New York State
- Will attract other businesses to Arbor Hill wanting to tap into the fund-generating capacity of the IC
- The IC library will be the repository for NYS Underground Railroad research
- The IC will leverage unique regional assets that include African American history and culture, the local Underground Railroad story in its national and international context, Governor Hochel's Black Travel Initiative, and Governor Hochel's Green Building Initiative, along with its unique environmental and architectural features
- The IC will be the Resilience Hub of north Albany, complementing Trinity Alliance as the Resilience Hub of south Albany, providing respite and refuge to community members during community crises
- As a Resilience Hub UREC will collaborate with local first responder service providers to design implementable crises plans
- The IC is an investment in a community impacted by the legacy of the institution of slavery, redlining, disinvestment and urban renewal



INTERPRETIVE CENTER SPACES

Children's center

Exhibit and event space

Library and research center

Café and commercial kitchen

Conference room

Collections and Archival storage

Media center

Grand Staircase

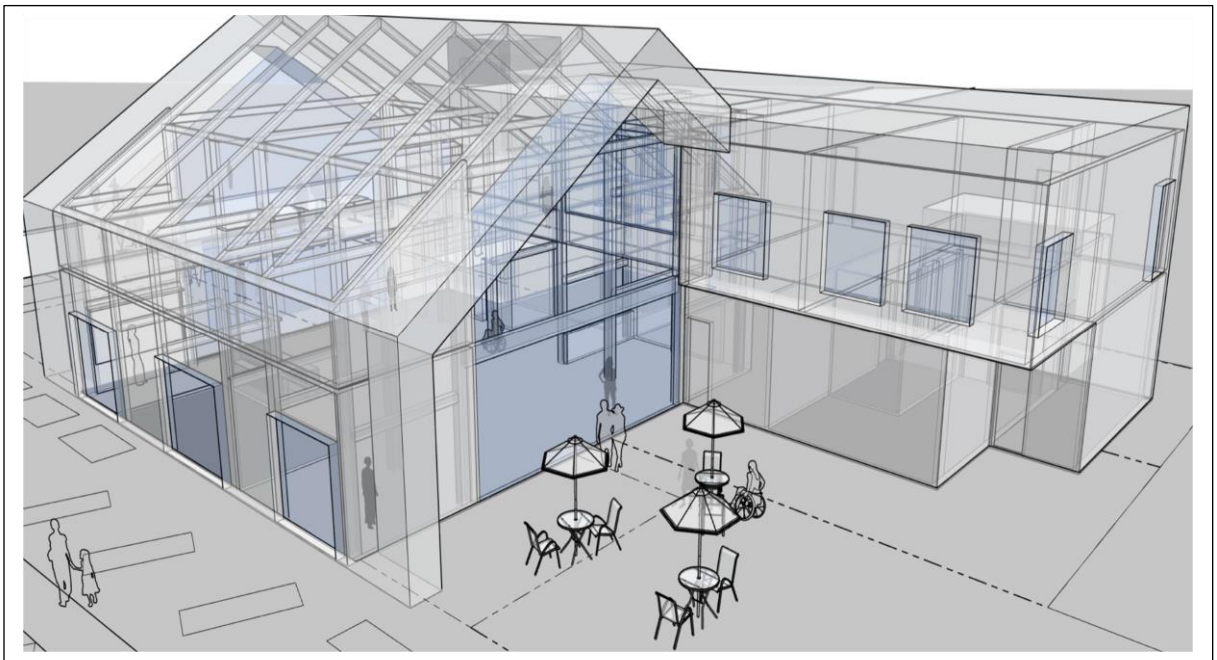
Outdoor patio

Offices

Myers Mercantile

One apartment for grounds/security staff

One apartment for visiting artists, scholars, and researchers



Consultants working on the Interpretive Center were asked why they are excited about working on this project and what it means to them

As a person of color, whose family came from the south during the Great Migration, the stories of slavery and emancipation were not always openly discussed. I am pleased to be a part of a project which intends to accurately document, store and present that history for all. (Shawn Hamlin, Hamlin Design Group)

We are excited to be involved in design of the Interpretive Center for UREC because the project will provide an important resource and become part of the fabric of the community. If we don't understand our history, we cannot learn from the past and grow to become better citizens and leaders. (Kevin Schaefer, Schaefer Engineering)

I am excited to contribute to this worthy project which captures a critical and often overlooked part of our national history. The human condition that was experienced resulting in the Underground Railroad was grim and its utility must never be forgotten as we strive to make for a better and more perfect Union. The issues surrounding the UR are timeless and no less relevant today than then. (Kurt Bedore, KB Engineering and Consulting)

Albany is full of history, and your mission highlights the character of Stephen and Harriet Myers and the Vigilance Committee. I cannot think of a more worthy cause. (Jack Healy, Ryan Biggs I Clark Davis)

The story of the Underground Railroad is a story of hope, perseverance, and triumph. It is a story that brings to light one of the ugliest parts of America's history while at the same time celebrating the bravery and the heroism of those who took a stand and worked to right the terrible wrong that was slavery. It is a story that everyone needs to know so that we can continue the path to a better America and a better world. The building of the new Interpretive Center embodies the very essence of that path. (Mary Moore Wallinger, LAndArt Studio)

Visit <https://undergroundrailroadhistory.org/interpretive-center-lp/> for more information.

(10/2025)