

Acknowledgements

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Jenny Crakes
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Alex Smith
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Joey Pecora
Julia Kramer

Principal Urbandale storytellers

John Brown
Doris Sutherland
Heather McDaniel
Raoul "Rudy" Lopez
Richard Mull
Sarah Filius
Nancy Penner
Michelle Driver
Alex Bryan
Curley Lane
Rick Kibbey

Juanita "Janie" Barrera
Matthew McDermott
Molly Benjamin
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Lucille Williams
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Dorothy Matthews



URBANDALE:

a place, a people, a story

Houses will talk. Gardens will grumble,
and the Red Cedar River will overflow her banks.
See this Eastside Neighborhood come to life on stage.

Friday, February 1st
7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

RCAH Theater, Snyder Hall, MSU Campus

Friday, February 8th
6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Foster Community Center, Room 213



funded in part by a grant from the Michigan Humanities Council

The Place

Urbandale is a neighborhood on Lansing's eastside. It is an old neighborhood. Throughout history it has been a cross-road for travelers; it is the city's first blue-collar subdivision. Urbandale is a quiet, somewhat isolated, and sometimes forgotten neighborhood, one that has weathered many storms, both literally and figuratively. Its location in the city's 100-year flood plain has caused much damage and displacement.

But Urbandale is also a beautiful neighborhood. With its mature trees, green spaces, and occasional dirt roads, it looks more rural than urban. It is a walkable and bikeable neighborhood that is home to a grand diversity of residents - old, young, African American, Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian, African, homeowners, renters, students, the employed and unemployed. It is one of the few places in Lansing where people of modest means can own their own homes and enjoy the natural environment. It is a place of possibility and resilience.

The People

Urbandale has claimed the hearts of many, if not all, of its residents. The memories of past residents are still vivid. The stories of current residents are equally pointed - thoughtful, funny and bittersweet. The place has character. It is unique, but not unfamiliar. It means a great deal to those who live and work there.

Over the last year, the "Hearing Voices" project, funded in part through a grant from the Michigan Humanities Council, collected stories from dozens of Urbandale residents. Some lived in the neighborhood all their lives, others only a few years. Some were elderly, some quite young. Some were employed; some were not. Through their words and reflections, the personality of this real and fully inhabited place emerged.

Urbandale residents were honest about their problems, and they cited many. They were just as aware of Urbandale's many assets and committed to its future. It was clear that they all valued this neighborhood, and that each in his or her own way was working (or had worked) to keep their neighborhood alive-and-well despite the challenges. Their message was simple: Urbandale matters.

The Story

"Urbandale: A place, a people, a story" is a play based on the interviews and the experiences of actual Urbandale residents. We have changed their names and created composite characters. We have also used some literary license and given voice to inanimate objects like houses, gardens and the Red Cedar River. But - and this is an important "but" - the words used and the overall sentiment expressed have been taken from the interviews. These are the thoughts and the voices of Urbandale as we heard them.

We know that we have taken on a great responsibility by telling someone else's story. We are not proposing that this is the only story that can be told. We know it is one among millions. Rather we hope that this play will serve as a catalyst - that it will encourage all Urbandale residents, and those who live in other neighborhoods, to share their stories, to bring them into the public realm, and to actively negotiate and participate with their neighbors and public officials to honor their neighborhoods and to keep their vitality and promise alive.

Cast

Daniel Finegan	Lucas, Expert 3
Jennifer Marinelli	Liz, Expert 1
Jenny Crakes	Julie, Expert 2
Taylr Holbert	Ms. Lilly
Morgan Torre	Melanie
Tyler Conner	Hal
Heather Carroll	Terry
Crysta Harper	Cara
Andrew Jason	House
Asia Timmon	Garden
Rachel Kopec	Red Cedar River