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The Means Group is a development and construction management firm headquartered in Detroit, Mich., that specializes in preservation. Founded in 1996 by Eric J. Means, a former U.S. Navy officer, the firm implemented, developed or managed more than \$120 million in public- and private-sector projects in FY 2012-13.

The firm was originally formed in partnership with a traditional construction firm, Freeman-Darling, and did conventional, new construction on swaths of open land. Though Mr. Means was responsible for business development, he was, as an engineer, also watching the work. And learning. He saw that open, buildable parcels were disappearing. He read about livable cities, New Urbanism and innovative land use; he talked to builders, architects, other engineers. He watched as the city of Detroit lost population, leaving vast, empty blocks of abandoned houses in interior neighborhoods and derelict buildings in the downtown.

His focus changed. When The Means Group parted ways with Freeman-Darling, Mr. Means wanted to do smart construction, focused on transforming urban blight and dereliction through re-use, redevelopment and re-purposing of land, materials and structures.

The firm has worked on a number of smaller preservation projects and one big one—the \$60 million Woodward Gardens redevelopment (see below, under Projects)—but it will put its embrace of re-use to the test with the Metropolitan Building.

Big addition to portfolio

In early 2014, The Means Group won a competitive bid for the exclusive right to rehabilitate the Metropolitan Building, a long-shuttered former office tower in downtown Detroit that was built in 1925. The 15-story, 111-square-foot building, with its Gothic flourishes and polished marble floors, had been under threat of demolition by the City for years. Means' \$23 million proposal calls for preservation of the turn-of-the-century look and feel of the tower's architecture while constructing a green, mixed-use development of about 90 residential units with some retail and commercial components. Preliminary plans call for a groundbreaking in September 2014.

The Metropolitan project is representative of what, today, The Means Group is about: devising ways to create and fund economically viable projects through the preservation and re-use of structures and land—especially in older cities that are, like Detroit, land locked but with sound, though deteriorated, structures. This work is literally, Eric Means says, the future of construction and land use planning.

How the work is done

It's not easy. Re-working old structures can be fraught with cost overruns and undesirable outcomes. As with plans for the Metropolitan, timing is critical. A weak economy can make funders skeptical. Severe deterioration and contamination hold lots of potential construction surprises and added costs. Technology helps. The 15 employees of The Means Group use state-of-the-art construction technology, such as infrared diagnostics and skeletal assembly, to keep costs in line, increase efficiency and ferret out

potential design flaws. Besides its Detroit-based staff, The Means Group has partnerships with a network of affiliates that contribute to its base of knowledge and experience. It also helps to have committed financial resources, which The Means Group does thanks to strong relationships with government agencies and private investors. And it certainly helps to have an ascendant Detroit, which is today drawing interest from around the world.

Leadership Team

Eric J. Means, Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Means is a former U.S. Navy lieutenant who studied engineering at the University of Florida, business at the University of Colorado and advanced building techniques at the Construction Association of Michigan. With nearly 20 years of construction, management and development experience, he is expert in quality control, OSHA compliance, vendor and materials management and estimating and budget analysis.

John Cova, Chief Operating Officer

Mr. Cova has a degree in business from the University of Michigan and has worked on the business side of a variety of industries, from professional golf to labor unions to sales and public relations. His focus at The Means Group is work flow, people management, customer service, project planning and contract negotiation.

Garrett S. Barnett, Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Barnett is responsible for all aspects of accounting, finance management and cost allocation. With an accounting degree from Ohio State University, Mr. Barnett has a long history of strategic financial planning, investor relations, job costing and forecasting at companies in Ohio and Michigan; he has been CFO at the Means Group since 2008.

Public- and Private-Sector Projects

In the last fiscal year, The Means Group developed and managed more than \$120 million in projects across Detroit and lower Michigan. For example, the firm has been closely associated with the Woodward Gardens project, which is said to be one of the largest, most difficult and most successful renovation projects in the City of Detroit. The decade-long project includes the rehabilitation of a performing arts center and residential tower and the construction of a parking structure and apartment complex. The Means Group handled all systems implementation, negotiated vendor contracts and instituted values-based engineering protocols, successfully shaving six percent off the project's \$60 million price tag.

The Means Group portfolio includes a list of wide-ranging projects, on which it has acted in a variety of capacities. Those projects include: