

CHEROKEE STREET: AN INSPIRATIONAL OUTING

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Across St. Louis, entrepreneurs, developers, and passionate residents are investing heavily in the improvement of our city neighborhoods. On a rainy day in late March, the Capes Sokol [Business](#) and [Real Estate](#) Practice Group journeyed to Cherokee Street to see firsthand the work being done to [revitalize this historic area](#).

Once a [vibrant commercial district](#) in the early 1900s, with stores like F. W. Woolworth and J.C. Penny lining the street, by the 1970s the street was in decline, and it has since struggled with many of the same problems, including crime and vacancies, seen throughout the city. However, as we witnessed on our Cherokee Street tour, adventurous, creative and community-minded individuals and organizations are [bringing about exciting change](#).

Cherokee Community Involvement

Creating a Conducive Environment

Over lunch at the [Mud House](#), Anne McCullough from the Cherokee [Business Association](#) gave our group an introduction to the area and the blend of arts, culture, and entrepreneurship that makes it

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unique. The Cherokee Business Association is a Missouri nonprofit corporation supported by area businesses and dedicated to advancement of the Cherokee Street community.

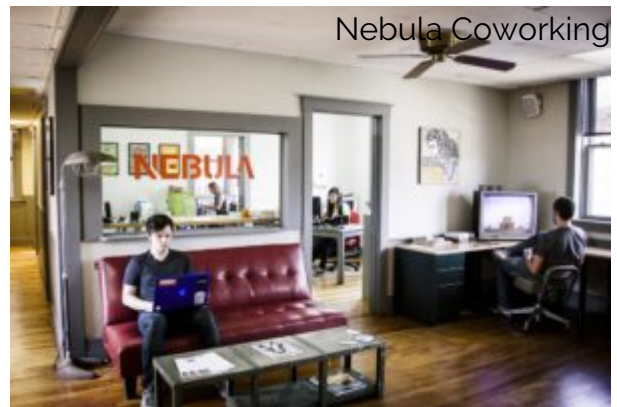
Cherokee Street is known to many in St. Louis primarily for its large Latino community, and the annual Cinco de Mayo festival—the largest in St. Louis— is one of many events that the Association and other area organizations host to attract visitors to the neighborhood. Other annual events include IndiHop and the Cookie Spree.

The Association is also busy pursuing a Community Improvement District (CID) for the Cherokee Street area. CIDs use revenue from sales taxes and assessments to support public facilities and services in the district. If successful, the hope is that CID revenues will provide a boost to Cherokee area development and benefits to its residents.

Nebula

Nurturing the Nascent Idea

Nebula, the coworking space located at the southwest corner of Jefferson Avenue and Cherokee Street, embodies the innovative and collaborative spirit of the area. When Jason Deem opened Nebula in 2010, it was the first coworking space in St. Louis. Deem led our group through the remodeled building and explained how he transformed the space, which included a former probation office, to provide what are now uniquely modern, funky, and state-of-the-art facilities.



Nebula offers 24/7 access to users, including both small businesses renting whole private areas on a long-term basis and individuals with monthly passes, whom we saw scattered across a lounge full of couches, cubicles and work tables. Reflecting its own origins and Deem's innovative aspirations, Nebula facilitates collaboration among the creative and community-minded, and Cherokee Street is enjoying the benefits as both Nebula and many of its tenants progress and expand.

Cherokee Street Storefronts

A Mosaic of Uses

Just outside Nebula, we continued our tour by walking west along Cherokee Street. Many of the properties in this area are owned by Jason Deem's company South Side Spaces and WJL

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Companies, owned by Will Liebermann. Liebermann took us on a tour of some of his buildings, which include finished restorations, preserved historic architecture, and renovations in progress, including the Cherokee Brewery Stock House, future home of the expanding Earthbound Beer.

Liebermann explained that one of the unique aspects of this pedestrian-friendly commercial district, and one reason it is so attractive to entrepreneurs, is that affordable rents minimize financial risk, thus making the dream of opening a storefront accessible to a wider range of tenants. Reasonable rent and community-minded developers like Deem and Liebermann also make Cherokee Street attractive to nonprofit tenants. As we walked the street we saw food banks and charitable organizations alongside independently owned for-profit bars, restaurants, and retail shops.



Capes Sokol explores Old Cherokee Brewery Stock House

We ended our day with a happy hour at one such independently owned establishment, Earthbound Beer. Earthbound was formed in 2014 by Stuart Keating, Jeff Siddons, and Rebecca Schranz. During our last stop Rebecca shared the company's history, the draught list, and the brewery's plans for expansion into the old Cherokee Brewery Stock House.

Our Capes Sokol group came away from our field trip with an enhanced appreciation for Cherokee Street. This summary of our trip cannot do justice to how the diversity, artistry, dedication and optimism of the business and community members are coalescing to revitalize the area. Like so many of our great St. Louis neighborhoods, Cherokee Street should be witnessed first-hand – we hope to see you there!

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