

Episode 17

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SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Cally Lange, Ethan DeLeon

C **Cally Lange** 00:00
You know, I joke all the time with my team. I'm at the point where all day long I'm just sharing my past mistakes with my team. And that's, you know, the most valuable learning tool, right? Hey, don't do this. I really screwed that up a few years ago, right? And you know, it's funny, but it's true. And let's not do that again. And this is how we can avoid it and how we can maybe turn this really huge challenge into the most amazing opportunity for the next building.

E **Ethan DeLeon** 00:38
Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon and I'm here with our founder and CEO of Small Nation, Jason Duff. Today we're happy to have the owner and principal architect at Revival Design Collective. We want to welcome you to the Small Nation podcast where we share some of the valuable lessons with what we have learned about entrepreneurship, real estate, and economic development and more. The point of this podcast is to create value for you, the listener, and to create a space to learn, talk about what's trending, and inspire others.

J **Jason Duff** 01:01
Hi, Callie, welcome.

C **Cally Lange** 01:04
Hi, thanks for having me.

J **Jason Duff** 01:05
Callie, we're so excited to have you in the studio today.

C **Cally Lange** 01:07
This is so much fun. Thanks, guys.

J**Jason Duff** 01:10

You're welcome. Well, Ethan, uh, thanks for, uh, the introduction today. I am so excited to have Callie Lange from Revival Design Collective here. I have to share the story of how we met. You know, Callie and I, uh, met— it's probably been about 8 years ago now. We were attending a chamber function in Van Wert, Ohio. And the Van Wert Chamber, you know, like a lot of other communities, brought together their annual meeting where they hand out awards. They, you know, highlight projects and things that they're proud of in the community. And it just happened to be that Callie and I were sat next to each other at the table. So we, you know, do all the nice things like, oh, so like, what do you do? And she's like, well, I'm an architect and I love old historic buildings. And there was a part of me, like, this light bulb went off where it's like, oh my gosh, there's someone else that loves historic buildings. So I said right back to her, I'm like, I love buildings too. And then we got to laughing and joking about, um, we actually love buildings more than people some days. Okay, we'll tell all of the secrets, but like, no, like, finding someone that appreciates architecture and history and character. And as we were kind of sharing, you know, what we do professionally, the next story was like, we're 'Where are you from? Where did you grow up?' And, uh, Callie said, 'I'm from Middle Point.' Tell us about Middle Point, Callie.

C**Cally Lange** 02:31

Middle Point, Ohio. I think population, I don't know, maybe 300 at best. So yeah, grew up on a farm right outside of Middle Point, um, graduated with I think maybe 60 people from a rural high school and loved every second of it. Absolutely loved everything about, you know, my hometown and, and my story growing up. And Jason shared that I was from Huntsville.

J**Jason Duff** 02:58

Our town had one stoplight. We had a really cool trolley that we refer to as our town restaurant, which is called the Town Trolley. And it was crazy because as she was describing the way that she grew up and, you know, her parents and her family and the way that, you know, she was interacting in the community, it felt very familiar to me. And I think that's where when we started talking about building and growing our businesses, it was like, we, we love small towns and we love small businesses. And Callie has a skill that I, I didn't have when I first started out buying and renovating buildings. I knew of contractors, people that had a lot of skill that, you know, would work on residential projects. And I bought my first building, and the first thing that I did is I set out to improve it. Renovate it. The building needed updated electric. Electric was old. It needed new framed walls. It needed new lighting. And so I started going to town and renovating that space. And all of a sudden I came and there was a gigantic stop work order posted on the front door.

C**Cally Lange** 04:03

So bad.

J**Jason Duff** 04:04

Well, listen, and this is the thing about most people starting out in real estate, you, especially in residential, you can hire your cousin that's got the great carpentry business. You can hire, you know, friends and family that do electric and plumbing. But the big thing that I had no idea is that when you move to commercial, there's a whole set of building codes and rules that govern how you can do it. And when I was, you know, learning about Callie and her business, that's something that she and her team specialize in. And I think for me starting out, when I got those red tags, it really frustrated me because I had not planned for project delays. I had not planned for the additional cost and time that would take to actually go through those processes. And then I learned about those processes and I'm like, reading this code, it's foreign to me. Like, I don't understand what this means. And then when I would take it back to my contractors, the price that I had to do some of this stuff it not only doubled and sometimes it actually quadrupled. And that's where I think so many businesses and entrepreneurs and people that want to buy and renovate historic buildings are sometimes out of business before they've even started because they don't know about this. And that's why I so important — I so appreciate the important work that you do, Callie.

C**Cally Lange** 05:24

Thank you, Jason.

J**Jason Duff** 05:25

Sorry, go ahead.

C**Cally Lange** 05:26

Well, I was, I was going to share that, you know, not only is it important to consider those code implications after you've purchased the building. But we've worked with so many entrepreneurs, so many small business owners who really should have let us tag along during their hunt for the building to begin with.

J**Jason Duff** 05:43

Tell us more about that.

C**Cally Lange** 05:45

Why? Sure. So existing buildings all come with their own sets of challenges and opportunities, right? And so depending on what type of business you're looking at opening in a certain building, there are buildings that are just better suited for that type of business, not only in terms of code compliance, but also size, style, so on and so forth. And so as you're doing that kind of hunt for real estate up front, you know, take an architect along as well as your real estate agent, which is always helpful also. But we can really explain like, hey, I know this one is, is a beauty, it's in a perfect location, but you're going to be looking at having to do XYZ to get that prepared to open your restaurant in this space. And that could kill project, like you mentioned, Jason, before they even open their doors. So, we could be there to suggest, you know, have you considered that building 3 doors down that's already fire suppressed? Or it's under a certain square footage, which will allow you to do certain things and still be code compliant. Consider accessibility, right? Those types of things that, you know, small business owners are so excited to just get in there and start working. We're there to kind of remind them, guide them, mentor them with those types of architectural and engineering decisions up front.

J**Jason Duff** 07:06

Did you know you wanted to be an architect when you're younger?

C**Cally Lange** 07:08

From the time I was in junior high school. All right. So yeah, taking it all the way back to good old Lincoln View, that tiny rural school I mentioned earlier. We were required— it was not an option— we were required to take what used to be called VoAg class, and then it kind of transitioned to industrial technology class, like the hip new term, right? But it was basically shop. And in shop class, we had to spend the first half of the 9 weeks in the classroom drafting, hand drafting 3D shapes and, you know, so on and so forth. And that, that first half of the end of the 9 weeks ended with we got to design our own house. And man, oh man, was I hooked. I was so hooked that I begged my teacher, please don't make me go out into the shop the second half of the 9 weeks? I don't want to make a clock. I don't, you know, I don't need to build anything out there. I said, can I just please stay in and keep drawing houses? And he said yes. Wow, what an incredible teacher, right? And so he gave me, you know, when everyone else was out in the shop, um, the last several weeks, he gave me design assignments and then showed me a video. I'll never forget this, on Frank Lloyd Wright, who I, you know, I'd never heard of Frank Lloyd Wright. I didn't even really know what an architect was at that point. But he showed me the video and when it was done, I was like, I don't know what that guy does, but I want to do that. And that was it. Wow. I just knew from there that—

J**Jason Duff** 08:30

So what was the next step for next after high school for you?

C**Cally Lange** 08:34

After high school, it was off to Ohio State University, which was a little bit of a change from Middle Point, Ohio. Right, right. And I enjoyed every second of it. Earned my bachelor degree in architecture at Ohio State. Nice. Took a year off to work and learn some things in between, and then went off to graduate school at Ball State University in Muncie and earned my master's in architecture there.

J**Jason Duff** 08:59

Wow. And then, I mean, obviously you're running your own business now, but what, what were your steps to get to that point?

C**Cally Lange** 09:05

So after grad school, next comes internship. This is all just part of the process of becoming a registered architect. So, you know, you got to work for an architectural firm, earn your internship hours, and then you can start sitting for your exams. So literally, I had a graduation ceremony on Sunday. I started my first quote unquote real job that Monday at a firm in Minster that designed primarily schools, K through 12 schools, and really cut my teeth there learning everything about commercial design, code compliance, the interaction between architects and consulting engineers, which was something that they don't teach you in school. Imagine that. Yeah, right, right. So that, you know, real-world experience was enormous. And, yeah, you know, in the, the entire time with that firm, I just knew in the back of my mind that owning my own firm was a goal. It just always had been. At that time, I thought, you know, high-end residential design was something I was really passionate about, as well as fixing up old buildings. And I think it just all took me back to playing around in really old barns as a kid. And my parents kind of let me redo my own bedroom as part of 4-H projects and things like that. You know, they really planted the seed. So that was always kind of there. And so after a couple of years at that firm in Minster, I decided, you know what, I'm just going to go for it. And here we are.

J**Jason Duff** 10:33

Where does, how is like building a new building and revitalizing like an old building, how are those two paths different in your field? I mean, obviously I feel like you can go either way. And why did you choose the route you did?

C**Cally Lange** 10:46

So there's just something about, for me, not that I don't love new construction, ground-up construction. I think there's a time and a place and appropriate projects for that, you know, for many clients. But for me, old buildings just come with inherent soul. And it's really, really difficult. And I honestly, I've yet to achieve it. And I feel like our firm is, You know, we, we have a load of super talented designers, but when we wrap up a downtown building renovation, it just feels better to me than when we wrap up a ground-up new construction project somewhere. And I think, you know, I know in my bones that that missing piece is soul and the story and the generational connection between us now and the people who have used those buildings for decades.

J**Jason Duff** 11:37

And you know, the work that we do at Small Nation is helping towns be able to revitalize. And we go into towns that oftentimes have buildings that are boarded up, that are vacant, and that are empty. And that has— that weighs on a town and a community. And what's so helpful for people that have the gifts like Callie does is like going in and studying what the building was historically, what history, why was it a dry goods store? Why was it a restaurant or a hotel and/or department store? And, and we may never see a department store come back to that particular town or community, but it doesn't mean we can't design something that still is retail focused and maybe even has a food component in it. And I think that's something that when you walk through your towns looking for opportunities, it's oftentimes the buildings that look the worst that could be the best. Where can people go to find maybe like the history of a building, um, to learn more about it as they— if they're interested in buying the building, if they just want to know more, just interested about your community?

C**Cally Lange** 12:43

Sure. Well, I'll share where we start at Revival. So right out of the gate, we head and look for the Sanborn map.

J**Jason Duff** 12:51

Tell us about that, because that is a secret That's a strategy that I don't think many people listening know how to do that.

C**Cally Lange** 12:57

So there are these fire insurance maps that date— Yeah, date clear back to the 1800s. And they're available at any local library. They're actually all in an online database now, at least within the state of Ohio they are. So they're accessible to the general public, where you can look at these historic insurance Sanborn maps. And they are— I'm trying to remember the increments of years, but let's just call it by decade. So if you want to look back at your map and your downtown from 1880, it will show the plat of downtown and it will say what the use of every space was. So it'll say harness shop, dry goods store, barber, saloon.

J**Jason Duff** 13:40

Cigar manufacturing. Like you see some of these things that are like, there's no way that took place. And you're like, yes. Yes, it did. And it did for decades.

C**Cally Lange** 13:47

It did. And there is just a wealth of information. These maps are filled with symbols used by the insurance industry. So it tells you how many stories there were, where the historic firewalls were, whether it had a historic sprinkler system. Believe it or not, a lot of these older buildings had really old school fire suppression systems. Incredible, right?

J**Jason Duff** 14:10

Cisterns sometimes that would collect the rainwater on the building. And there was this gigantic cistern or water storage pit in the back parking lot. Wow. Like, and this is like good, good and bad things because sometimes we found some of these cisterns that we didn't know even existed, right? And of course you have to fill them in, but like that, those maps are immensely helpful.

C**Cally Lange** 14:31

They are, they're incredible. And so that's kind of step one for us. From there we hit the books again at the library and we look through anything that the local community has, and typically it's the American Legion group or one of those like smaller community-oriented pieces that will pull together kind of historical videos or books or photographs. If there's a historical society in the county, we hit that reference. But also, believe it or not, if we blast out on Facebook or somewhere on social media and we say, hey, does anyone remember what used to be in the old Gross's Furniture building we will get 500 minimum messages. And those are the best comments to read because it's— Yeah. You get the, "I remember when my grandma bought her school shoes there," and so on and so forth. And that is just so incredibly special and valuable. And honestly, I don't think the general public realizes how many times we take those special stories and we pull that into the design of the new space. Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 15:34

I know I've seen some of those designs choices here, even in Bellefontaine, and just, you know, paying respects to what it used to be is really cool.

C**Cally Lange** 15:42

And making—

J**Jason Duff** 15:43

you can make it new in a new way, but the building comes alive that way. And just to share, we're working on the Historic Opera Block project here in downtown Bellefontaine, and we've used those maps working with Revival and Callie and her team. We needed to figure out what that history was, and as we were diving deeper, the— unfortunately, the opera house, which was in the back of this very beautiful, ornate decorative facade where the businesses lined. The opera house was in back. It was taken down in the '60s, and that's always a sad state when a town loses a beautiful structure like that. But what we did find is the kind of performances that took place there. Harry Houdini actually did a magic act in the space. I mean, those are things that once we found out and saw programs and photos and pictures— and I think another great resource is historic postcards that may exist in your town—

C**Cally Lange** 16:34

absolutely—

J**Jason Duff** 16:35

is to see, you know, what was in those spaces. Places. And I, I love when I see JCPenney's and Sears and Montgomery Ward, like all these stores like that eventually transition out to the malls. But now today, seeing that resurgence of specialty retail and restaurants and coming together, coming back downtown is super cool. That's awesome. So what was your guys's first project that you guys did together? So, um, when we met after that event, uh, Brittany Saxton, who's been a previous guest on our podcast, she had a vision for growing her business and directly next to 600 Downtown, which is this beautiful brick oven pizzeria, was a vacant storefront that was long and narrow. And, you know, we shared kind of Brittany and her story, but we found an opportunity. What pairs really well with pizza? Ice cream. So Wit's Frozen Custard that makes this amazing fresh Frozen custard daily located in the front part of the storefront, which was about 1,000 of the 4,000 square feet that was available. So we had this underutilized space that was not making money, was very difficult to program and figure out what could go in there. And so Brittany really brought that issue to us, and I put that challenge out to Callie, and I said, Brittany wants to have a place for parties and retirement get-togethers, just a space and a party room because her dining room is not set up to accommodate groups. But she has one request. She wants to sell a lot of wine. So I think in hearing that, you know, I also had to share, we, you know, Callie had lots of big visions and ideas and she's like telling, sharing that letter, tell the story, but I'm like, So that sounds really expensive, Callie. Like, that's not in our budget. But tell us about what you created.

C**Cally Lange** 18:33

So this was a big sell, especially being my very first project with Jason. I was a little nervous to present, but like, my mind, after meeting with Jason and hearing what Brittany wanted, what kind of experience she wanted— she wanted something intimate for groups, she wanted to sell a lot of wine— in my mind, it was like totally obvious, we've got to create a wine cave here. I mean, come on.

J**Jason Duff** 18:58

But, and first off, this is a downtown building. It's like, okay, just in hearing that, how are you going to create that, you know, Italy, Napa Valley, you know, cave experience in small town downtown Ohio? Yeah, like a 3-story brick building, right?

C**Cally Lange** 19:13

In a space that is not even 20 feet wide, is 100 feet deep, and oh, by the way, has like soaring 14 or 16-foot ceilings, like not the architecture of a wine cave, right? So I'm like, Jason, hear me out, man. What if, what if we build this beautiful brick arch ceiling and pop in a mezzanine up above it so you still have usable space up above on a mezzanine and we can hide the mechanicals and the yadda yaddas up there, but it creates this incredible intimate cave, wine cave vibe, right? This cellar vibe that will be completely unexpected when you walk in off of the street, you know, off of Main Street.

J**Jason Duff** 19:56

And he's like, huh, I'm always open to ideas. But you know, that's the thing we have to do too. You can vision up these amazing ideas, um, but can we afford it? Yeah. And you know, here's the thing I'm most proud of about it: Bella Vino Events and Wine Room. When you walk inside, there is this gorgeous barrel ceiling. Um, there is this amazing stone that's on the wall, and brick is lining that barrel ceiling. But let's tell them some of our secrets. The brick ceiling that if most— I would say 99% of people walking in don't know, but what is it?

C**Cally Lange** 20:37

It's wallpaper.

J**Jason Duff** 20:40

Oh my God. Yes. But that's the thing, the visual element I still think 99% of people, you could not tell the difference of that. And then the stone, which is this beautiful— there are browns and reds and taupes. It really is, it looks so real. But what is it?

C**Cally Lange** 21:00

It's just a thin stone veneer, peel and stick.

J**Jason Duff** 21:05

I mean, you can go to Lowe's and Home Depot, and we could peel and stick it on there. But does anyone know?

C**Cally Lange** 21:11

No way. So high-end, and it feels So Tuscan.

J**Jason Duff** 21:16

And I think that's the thing that people, when they walk in here and I share some of the secrets behind why the design team used creative, affordable solutions to do it, that's the value of hiring the right designer and the right architect. And I'm going to share, you, you have a business, you have to charge fees and to make money. And I think for some developers that are just starting out, it's like they look at that fee and it's like, well, oh my gosh, how how would I afford that? Well, let me have you ask the question: what if you don't spend the money to plan, design, and think about the end result? What's that going to cost you in lost sales? That's what— yeah, I was gonna— do you get that pushback a lot? I mean, I mean, I think when people think about bringing in an architect to do that kind of work, that's an immediate, like, concern, right? So what would you say to that?

C**Cally Lange** 22:04

I would say 90 to 95% of the new clients new entrepreneurs who we meet with for a discovery call or walkthrough are really taken aback when we say, okay, here's kind of a standard ballpark fee for the type of project you're looking at. And the reaction every time is, well, we didn't account for anything like this in our construction budget. And fair enough, you know, they're, they're new to the process. It's definitely not a criticism of these small business owners, but it's something that we're trying to teach and coach. And talk about all the time that this is something that honestly, like, you're gonna have to get building permits. You're gonna have to. And in order to get building permits, you're gonna have to have someone stamp them. We will stamp them, but we will also bring a million other positive things to the table.

J**Jason Duff** 22:54

Yeah.

C**Cally Lange** 22:55

For your project. And so, you know, that we bring all of that value up front, but it is, it is scary for a lot of our clients who, you know, it's their first go at it.

J**Jason Duff** 23:05

Yeah, you have to, if you want those kind of results, you have to expect to put in the investment. So yeah, thanks for sharing. Sure. What are some of those things as we're talking about building codes and things like that? I don't know if you have either a horror story or if just some valuable learning lessons or where to even start. 'Cause I know if I were to just jump into this right now, I wouldn't even know where to start. So yes, I have lots of stories. You know, I think one of the first things that we wanna strive to do is to understand how we make a building safe. Yeah. And the purpose and reason behind there are building codes and life safety codes, um, is there have been, you know, loss of life and major disasters that we want to make sure do not happen again. And so, uh, when I look at a building or a structure, you know, involving an architect, I want to think about what its highest and best use is. How can we, uh, take capital to purchase a building? How can we work with an investor or a bank to get a loan or use that working capital to renovate it and then find a tenant or business that we're going to start or recruit that wants to, to lease that space? That is a lot of steps. And I think that what, um, what— where the code stuff comes in is depending on how you're going to use that space, uh, that dictates if it will need a sprinkler system, an elevator, what types of fire-rated improvements you'll have to make. And I think there's a lot of misinformation out there. A lot of people think that you're required to put a sprinkler system in or an elevator in, and I'm here to say, and that's probably something I clear up at a lot of the speaking consulting events that we do, in— we have yet to put an elevator in any of the 56 historic buildings that we have renovated in downtown Beaufountain. Because based on the code, we found other ways to make our properties accessible where we can. And where we can't because it's economically or just not possible because of the age or the type of structure that it is, we found ways the code will allow us to navigate to not have to do that. Yeah, let's talk about that for a second. What are some of those? We don't have to go into the, the weeds all the way, but just like what— maybe give a few examples of what ways around those codes that You know, it's just not feasible for some of these historic buildings. One of my first goals when we started revitalizing downtown Bellefontaine was how do we get more upper floor residential? And I think I had not seen a lot of other small town developers do, do that in typically those 3-story historic downtown buildings because I had heard you have to have an elevator. It's going to be economically, economically not possible for, you know, by the time you put the sprinkler system and do those things, you just can't afford the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars that'd be necessary to do that. And I think that's when I got introduced to design professionals and architects and engineers that said, wait, you don't have to do that. There is a section of the building code, uh, that is called Chapter 34 that is designed within the state of Ohio. It's called the Historic Building Code. Callie, tell us more about that.

C**Cally Lange** 26:23

So the Historic Building Code boils down all of the life safety and accessibility requirements that are in, you know, we'll call it the front part of the code for new builds, and it distills it down and creates ways to make historic buildings safe, right?

J**Jason Duff** 26:40

Yeah.

C**Cally Lange** 26:41

So it's a more, you know, a common sense version, right? There are just some things within the building code for new builds that are technically infeasible for historic buildings, and Chapter 34 recognizes that. Allows for adjustments to certain portions of the code to accommodate as safe as we can get it as, and as accessible as we can possibly get it within the constraints of what we're working with.

J**Jason Duff** 27:09

Yeah. What are some of those things that, because you're facing some of that with the Opera Block right now, right?

C**Cally Lange** 27:14

We are. So one example would be, let's start with accessibility, right? A lot of these storefronts are situated 6 to 8 inches above public sidewalk height, right, which, you know, does not meet standard ADA requirements. And so we need to take a look at creative ways of making that public storefront, public entrance as accessible as we possibly can. And does that mean recessing the entry and sloping the approach up to it, which you see in a lot of downtown storefronts, or do we create some accessible parking on the back side of the building and a nice accessible entrance on the rear, at the rear of those storefronts, which is also something that we've had to do in the past. The Opera Block being one of those opportunities. And so that's, you know, one example of if it was being built brand new, the slope of that concrete approach has to be, you know, meet a certain maximum slope. Well, if it's a historical building and we only have 6 feet to work with and we gotta get people ramped up to it. Right.

J**Jason Duff** 28:18

What are you gonna do?

C**Cally Lange** 28:18

The code allows. Yeah., you know, for exceptions, which is awesome. And we really have to rely on that heavily, otherwise these downtown buildings would just sit.

J**Jason Duff** 28:28

And, you know, once we have that work that's been done, you know, Callie and the architect and the team prepare drawings. Those drawings include multiple things. There's an electrical print, there is a print that highlights any demolition, there's a print that highlights any structural changes that are made to it. There's a plumbing permit or plumbing sheet, an HVAC sheet, and then kind of an overall site sheet. So those are the kind of things that get wrapped up, prepared, and organized in your drawings. Once you have those done, you will submit that to your local commercial building authority. Sometimes that goes directly to Columbus at the State of Ohio. Oftentimes your community, whether it's your city, your county, or your region, may have a regional building authority and plan review that you'll submit those drawings. Tell us a little bit about plan review, what that process looks like, and, and then how you can actually then start your project once that plan review has been done.

C**Cally Lange** 29:25

Sure, so we pulled together what we call a set of construction documents that Jason just mentioned that has the site plan, the architectural drawings, structural, so on and so forth. Once that's all packaged, we send that off to the authority having jurisdiction. That's the technical term, right? Which is either the local building authority or within Ohio, it goes to the State of Ohio, goes to Reynoldsburg for plan review. And those plans examiners, as they're entitled, those plans examiners review the drawings and they check for code compliance. And so they're ensuring that, you know, we are not exceeding the maximum number of occupants that are permitted to be in a space, that we're meeting any fire separation requirements, sprinkler requirements, accessibility, so on and so forth. They're looking at this holistically to make sure that this building is going to be safe and usable for the general public. If they see any issues in the drawings, like, "Hey, I need clarification on this to make sure that you're meeting code section, yada, yada, yada," they will kick back a letter to us, the Architect of Record or Engineer of Record, and they'll say, "Hey, we need clarification or we need you to revise XYZ." just in kind of a list format. Sometimes we, we hit the nail on the head right away and there are no questions and cool, we have permits and we can move on. Sometimes we need to address those correction letter items. Once we have either partial plan approval or full plan approval from the authority having jurisdiction, then the client is ready to cut loose and hammers can swing and contractors can get to work. Then it's time for building inspections. So that's kind of the, the handoff in the sequence of events. The State of Ohio or your local building authority is still going to be involved all throughout construction in the form of building inspections to ensure what's being built matches what's on the drawings.

J**Jason Duff** 31:22

And how that process works is that your contractors will go ahead and oftentimes get the framing done. So that's actually building any new walls or any new changes, and they'll keep those walls open because your electric or your plumbing will be inside of those. And so you'll call in to the inspectors to actually schedule time for them to come out, and they'll sign off on the sign-off sheet that's coordinated with your drawings on when those certain approvals are done. Once the approvals are done, then you can start closing up walls. So I think part of what adds money and complexity to commercial projects is the time that it's taking your contractors and your subcontractors to go through those processes because I think sometimes in residential you can kind of do it all together and you're not going and having kind of each individual phase or trade inspected on site. So if you have a local building authority that's fast, that's efficient, that uses technology, thank— we are always so thankful to find— oh, it's a game changer because if you don't, everyone is hurry up and wait. And the problem is with the wait, the meter continues to run. And, you know, today's labor rates, you know, could be \$60, \$70, \$80, \$100+ an hour. So you can see you don't want people standing around waiting for inspections, right?

C**Cally Lange** 32:45

And that also creates a ripple effect if you have a tenant who is chomping at the bit to get in and open their retail store by holidays. Right. That's always a big one. You know, a boutique wants to be open by November 1st, right, at the very latest, so they can hit that kind of fall and Christmas sales that's going to carry them through January, February, March. If, if your construction timeline way back in March, you know, when people are thinking like, oh, we're not in a huge hurry, when that starts to get pushed back by 4 weeks, 8 weeks, 12 weeks, all of a sudden that becomes really scary for that new tenant. And if they can't open until January, that may kill their business before they even get their doors open.

J**Jason Duff** 33:25

And I, I do think that's something that we as a real estate developer and the work that we do at Small Nation is trying to educate people on everything that goes into preparing, renovating, and completing the construction of a space. And I think that's something that we're, we're in a lot of markets and towns, the landlord just says sign the lease, give me the security deposit, put the utilities in your name, Good luck. They put all of the requirements, all of the renovations, all of that figuring it out on the tenant, you know, tenant's back. And most people, that's where they get stuck, is they have not been through that process. And so they, they, they get stuck, they run out of money, and then it's kind of this vicious cycle where you don't see the positive results. And that's something that we've worked to solve. So as a landlord perspective, then what are some of the, the actions that you do to kind of mitigate some of that from happening? I think the big thing is, is just being fully transparent. When a tenant comes in, they have all of these dreams and ambitions and ideas. I want to add, uh, 2 sinks there. I bought this great sink at this farm market that's from 1900. I mean, they look at the kind of light fixtures. I just rewired this light fixture. I think it will work there. Man, I'm the same kind of— I love to reuse things and repurpose things, but then we learned that there are codes that dictate that sinks have to have certain type of hardware, you know, that's handicap accessible. Also, you know, the, the way the plumbing has to fit underneath it, there's certain types of things just won't work. And so we try to understand their vision, work with, you know, the architect and the designers to listen to the client, but then also educate them to say, we know you want to do this, but here's what the code says, and here's how we can find a compromise that will still get you that look and that feel, but it's going to be slightly different. And, and I think that hand-holding that communication is really, really important. Anything you want to add to that?

C**Cally Lange** 35:38

Yeah, I'll just echo that a massive amount of communication and collaboration is seriously the key to doing these tenant fit-outs. A lot of back and forth. You know, we joke all the time with Jason, like, whether or not our team wants to be best friends with your team, we're going to have to be because we are— we are communicating 10 times a day. Yeah, some days.

J**Jason Duff** 36:01

And sometimes it's 20 or 30 emails back and forth and And honestly, there's— it's okay. There sometimes is some creative, um, dissonance. We will talk about ceiling fans later, Callie, right?

C**Cally Lange** 36:16

You know, form over function, or what, you know, whatever. But, you know, we, we all respect everyone's point of view. And honestly, that's the secret sauce, because, you know, everyone at the table is coming in with their own perspective, their own set of, like, superpowers is how we like to describe it. And that's what gets the job done in the end, is everyone is bringing, you know, their knowledge set to the table. We're working together, we're figuring it out. And what Jason and his team have been able to do that is just so impressive from a development perspective is the speed at which they work. I've not seen this with any other client or any other developer. And really, I think the kind of key behind it all is communication.

J**Jason Duff** 37:00

What are some of the projects we have going on right now currently that— I mean, both Small Nation? Well, just to highlight, you know, since Bella Vino and Benson Wine Room, I think that we may be up to at least 15 or 20 projects, maybe more.

C**Cally Lange** 37:14

Oh yeah, I, I think we're up into the early 30s. Yeah, yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 37:18

I mean, and some of them are, are larger, um, some of them are smaller, but like, it's, uh, incremental development is really the, the term, um, is that If you go in Google Maps and go back and look at Bellefontaine 15 years ago to today, it is mind-blowing how much has changed. But year after year, you kind of forget the incremental changes. But it could be designing new signs for a building or a facade. It could be recolorizing a particular structure or adding new windows or a tenant fit-out. But, um, you know, I'm really proud. We've done some great work together. I think Build Coworking Space, along with the Flying Pepper Cantina. I know, Callie, that project was recognized with an American Institute of Architects award, is that right?

C**Cally Lange** 38:04

It is. We received an award for Flying Pepper Cantina and also for the Syndicate.

J**Jason Duff** 38:08

And for the Syndicate. So that's another one, you know, the Build Coworking Space is our shared office and, and cowork facility. The Flying Pepper Cantina was a business that started as this amazing food truck and then moved to a brick and mortar, and then the Syndicate was new construction that was done next to Brew Fountain in Bellefontaine, which has been the number one craft beer bar for the last 4 years running because that team was doing some amazing things from a culinary perspective. They did about a 5,000 square foot new build with a catering kitchen, beautiful bar that looks just like a newsstand right out of New York City. And then in back, it's an entertainment venue for live music. So the diversity of the projects, as you hear, is significant. And I think What we've been studying and working together, both from a real estate developer and also a design aesthetic, is what is the town missing? Yeah. And this Opera Block has been a property that I think you and I, we've always walked by it and said, man, goals. Goals. And it was a big one because it's 40,000 square feet, it's 3-story, and I'll be honest with you, it intimidated me. It was, it's just so massive. It's just so massive. And I think You know, seeing how fast and how bad it was deteriorating was a huge enterprise risk for our downtown and our community. So like, even though it's been a heavy lift, um, I think partnering up with Callie and her team, um, just seeing starting from one storefront and wrapping around like today, um, it's magical.

C**Cally Lange** 39:41

It is. It's, it's so magical that I had to claim a space for us and we actually opened up a second storefront in downtown Bellefontaine within the Opera Block. So I think, were we, were we the OG? Were we the original?

J**Jason Duff** 39:54

You're the OG. Yes.

C**Cally Lange** 39:56

Yeah, it's been amazing because, you know, we, we are continuing to fit out alongside Small Nation these commercial storefronts on the first floor, and we're, you know, looking at partnering with them on doing some offices on the second floor. And we are literally right there. You want to talk about boots on the ground, like It is walk outside of our door and walk next door and check out that space, which has been amazing.

J**Jason Duff** 40:18

How do you care about the building? Well, you have an office there, right?

C**Cally Lange** 40:21

I don't think we could care anymore.

J**Jason Duff** 40:23

Yeah, you know, can I tell you, as we dug into this, the bones of this building— as much as it's scary and as big as it was, the bones are phenomenal. Like, maybe, maybe some of the best. I mean, I know you travel around to a lot of historic downtowns. This is, I would say, with some of the architecture details and elements, one of the best that I've seen in the state.

C**Cally Lange** 40:46

So many details. And not only, you know, what I would consider kind of the big expensive moves of the late 1800s, early 1900s, but what really like tugs at my heartstrings with the Opera Block is the little details. Someone loved this building. Someone thought carefully about this building, right? And thankfully it has not really been re-muddled, as we like to call it, over the years. It's been kind of left alone, which is huge. That is enormous. Maybe it wasn't in the great shape, but at least it's still there so we can take care of it, we can fix it, and we can bring it back to life. And so yeah, I mean, this is gonna be just epic, Jason, when it's finished.

J**Jason Duff** 41:35

Thank you, and I, I'm super excited too. And I think that's one of the, the, the things that I am, am just processing and excited for what's next is that, you know, we've been hosting lots of groups from around the state and even some people from around the country coming to see and understand more about the revitalization that's happening here. And I think today's podcast, like, you helping connect the dots of why Working with engineers and architects are important, getting those construction plans together. But, you know, when they come here, they're kind of in awe about like, how do you get 56 buildings? And I appreciate the compliment about speed, and just to comment on that, it is about the team that you put together and your ability to solve problems and make decisions quickly. But I, I think now it's taking what we've learned here and helping all these other towns around the state and around the country. And I know you're doing that.

C**Cally Lange** 42:32

We're doing our best.

J**Jason Duff** 42:33

Yeah, but you tell us about how, you know, how, how you're taking what you're learning and how you're helping other towns and communities around the state.

C**Cally Lange** 42:42

Well, it's, you know, I think it's the same with, with anything, right? The more you do it, the more you learn. And, you know, I joke all the time with my team, I'm at the, the point where All day long, I'm just sharing my past mistakes with my team. And that's the most valuable learning tool, right? Hey, don't do this. I really screwed that up a few years ago, right? And it's funny, but it's true. And let's not do that again. And this is how we can avoid it and how we can maybe turn this really huge challenge into the most amazing opportunity for the next building. You know, we have kind of created this formula within the studio where, okay guys, this is our process when we are hired on to help renovate this downtown building. Let's call it a standard, like, single storefront, two-story, right? 20 feet wide, two-story, usually about 2,000 square feet per floor. All right, here's our process for going in and doing field documentation. Okay, and that's our let's get to know the building day. Yeah, and this is our process for measuring and photographing, and we've just really nailed down a system. And not only has that made it easier for us within the design process, but we've really been able to streamline and kind of pare down our fee on that front end, which, you know, any, any kind of economies we can pass along to some clients, awesome, right? Yeah. So, you know, really taking that process and, and coaching our team on Okay, if you run into this, because by and large, these old buildings within the state of Ohio that were built around the same time, it's a lot of repetitive construction, a lot of repetitive details. And we've learned over the years how to kind of manage all of those challenges. And so being able to share that knowledge from small town to small town, developer, developer, has been really fun for us. And then just seeing the amazing community response, I mean, does it get any better than that at work? I don't think it does.

J**Jason Duff** 44:46

I love that. And you just took the, the, the big move and risk of buying your own historic building.

C**Cally Lange** 44:52

We did. So we outgrew our cute little space in downtown Celina, and we, we looked long and hard in Celina, and we— there just wasn't a building available that fit our needs. And so we went one little town away to Coldwater, Ohio, and we pulled the trigger on a massive 16,000-square-foot tank of a building right in the heart of downtown Coldwater. It's gorgeous. Art Deco facade, built in the late 1930s, concrete floor between the first and second floor. I mean, this thing is a tank. There have— before we bought the building, there were only two owners. Previously, which is really unusual. Yeah, yeah, both furniture stores with in-house interior design. So it was like, could this be more perfect for Revival? So, you know, I'm on a high. We bought a building. This is so much fun. We have a fire.

J**Jason Duff** 45:51

Oh, like, I get a text— well, no, no, I'm looking on social media and I'm like, oh my gosh, because it is— I will tell you one of those things that I keep me up at night is when storms come in. I used to love— like, I was a weather geek. I always like wanted the gigantic tornado warnings and all this stuff. Now a thunderstorm like blows through, I'm panicking because I have all these roofs and buildings I'm worried about, like what could happen with them. Well, when I saw that there was a fire and it looked to be large in Coldwater, like my heart sank and I'm like, please don't be Callie's building, please don't be anyone's building. But it was. And you sent some pictures and like you just finished the hardwood, refinished the hardwood floors and sanded them on the first floor.

C**Cally Lange** 46:31

And we had, and, and we had, you know, moved all of our fun, you know, product and desks and all, you know, we were storing it in this back warehouse area and that's where the fire occurred. So we essentially lost all the things we had just moved over from our salon. I mean, it was crushing, crushing blow. So, you know, we're recovering from that, we're picking up the pieces and working with insurance and, you know, to Planning next steps. Kid you not, less than a month later, this— we are hit with this huge weird windstorm at like midnight. I don't know if you guys remember when— I think Bellefontaine was hit by it as well. Didn't think much of it when I was laying at home. You know, our house shook and I was worried about our house. Didn't really think about the downtown building. Get a photo next morning from our contractor, our masonry restoration contractor, of this like horrid hole in someone's roof, and it still hadn't clicked yet. And I'm like, what is— what is this? And he's like, that's your roof. That wind literally peeled our roof back like a tin can. I'd never seen anything like that.

J**Jason Duff** 47:39

And listen, I've seen a lot of roofs, a lot of buildings. When we looked at it, like, it, it, it literally just— that's the description— it peeled it all back, and you could see the exposed insulation.

C**Cally Lange** 47:49

And oh, you could see everything inside. The second floor of our building. I mean, come on, right?

J**Jason Duff** 47:56

Strike two.

C**Cally Lange** 47:57

Strike two. So, you know, we went through the process again, call insurance. I'm like, well, the agent knows where to find us, right? You know, and again, kind of reset and we're finally, finally, you know, making some headway and we're getting there. But it's been an interesting ride being on the other side of it, right?

J**Jason Duff** 48:19

Yeah.



Cally Lange 48:19

Not only obviously we're doing our own architectural design on this, this one, but we're also, you know, the develop— somewhat the developer as well. And so it's been— I just have a lot more respect and patience with Jason now.



Jason Duff 48:33

See, I knew there'd be a big benefit out of this.



Cally Lange 48:37

Seriously, I'm not— now that it's like my pocketbook and my timeline and my contractors that are being affected, I'm like, man, I really need to show some of our clients some more grace because—



Jason Duff 48:48

so you mean it's not easy to go buy a bunch of bunch of old buildings in downtown.



Cally Lange 48:52

I mean, as it turns out, it's a rocky road, but it is fun.



Jason Duff 48:58

I got it.



Cally Lange 48:59

Totally worth it. It is.



Jason Duff 49:00

And I think that's the thing, it brings us so much purpose and passion to see the transformation, because it's kind of, you know, just like Callie was saying when she was back in 6th grade and like visioning stuff on paper. And then probably the greatest joy is that, that we look at— like, we walk out to the opera block right now, we did these these renderings of recolorizing the facade, looking at it in person and then thinking back to that rendering, it makes it totally worth it. That's the why.



Cally Lange 49:29

Well, and I think about how much in— I'm in love with, you know, some of these really rough shape downtown buildings now, and we're restoring them, and we're going to be long gone, and 100 years from now someone else is going to be standing out there looking at that and it's still going to be there because we're all taking care of these buildings now. And that just— I don't know, that, that makes it so worth it. It gets me out of bed every day. It— I just love, love, love old buildings.

J**Jason Duff** 50:01

Thank you so much for sharing that, Callie. I— your, your passion for the buildings is contagious. And, um, I mean, it's kind of cool. I mean, as a, as a content creator, portfolios are everything. And to think that your portfolio is literally just these downtowns, like, that's so visual and so satisfying and something that whole communities can get behind. And you're like changing parts of the entire state, which is really cool. So I was super pumped to have you on as a guest today, um, and thanks for sharing some of, you know, the struggle too, your current buildings, because that's the other thing, it's not, it's not all sunshine and daisies.

C**Cally Lange** 50:38

It is not. This is real talk.

J**Jason Duff** 50:39

Yeah, but well, and here's the golden nugget that I take away from today is Kali said that she learns from her mistakes and she takes those mistakes and makes that her strength. And one of my mentors always said that mistakes are just accelerated learning. You can read in a textbook, you can, you know, try to conceptually understand what someone went through, but when you go through it yourself and can be able to articulate that lesson to someone else, That is learning, and I, I think that is your superpower. I, I try to also learn from you and others and make that our superpower, is that if we could do the Spock mind meld and give all of that lessons, knowledge, grit, courage, we would do that. And the, the next best thing is just to share from our mistakes and our life lessons.

C**Cally Lange** 51:31

Absolutely. You know, there aren't enough hours in the day or days in the year for Jason and I to help rehab every single downtown building everywhere.

J**Jason Duff** 51:40

We'd like to try.

C**Cally Lange** 51:40

We would, we'd love to.

J**Jason Duff** 51:42

But then we would be single and lonely and we'd only have buildings. Right, right. Yeah.

C**Cally Lange** 51:48

But man, if we can share this knowledge with other people and allow them to do this alongside us, I mean, think about what a difference we can make in our small communities. Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 51:59

Where can people follow you or Revival and keep up with what's happening with you guys?

C**Cally Lange** 52:04

All right, so you can find us online at revivaldesign.co. We're on Instagram, same handle. We're on Facebook, Pinterest, Houzz.com, just about everywhere.

J**Jason Duff** 52:14

Great.

C**Cally Lange** 52:14

So yeah, we would love you guys to follow along in our journey.

J**Jason Duff** 52:17

Yeah, also with specifically the Opera Block project, I'm trying— it's taking a lot of time and I expect it will take a lot, a lot longer, but to kind of just document the journey on video and kind of just capture Small Nations' perspective, Revival's perspective, and as, as it's being developed and turned into what it's going to be. I think it's going to be a very awesome transformation. So be looking for some of those videos and, and kind of documentary style videos to drop, and you can kind of— and that website is operablock.com. There you go. All right,

E**Ethan DeLeon** 52:53

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