

Kim Drobos ([00:00](#)):

A new development is promising to reconnect neighborhoods and restore opportunity. In our city's core, it's called Boulevard Next and City Lights Collective co-host John Goode went to the groundbreaking ceremony to learn more about the arts organization that has been tapped to collaborate.

Jon Goode ([00:21](#)):

The Atlanta Medical Center sat in the old Fourth Ward between Ralph McGill, Highland Parkway Drive, and Boulevard. It began as a small church infirmary in 1901. Went through several hands in even a location change before landing in the old Fourth Ward and being named Atlanta Medical Center in 1997. On November 1st, 2022, it shuttered its doors and closed for good, but Atlanta is, if nothing else, a story of birth and rebirth. In 2024, it was announced that the Atlanta Medical Center would be redeveloped and become Boulevard Next, a development that promised to reconnect neighborhoods and restore opportunity to the city's core. As the property is being transformed, Faith Carmichael and her arts organization, which is appropriately called next, has been tapped to provide art to skirt the construction, beautified the area, and lived inside the Boulevard. Next Structures once complete. I was honored to be given the opportunity to sit down with Faith Carmichael, CEO, and Creative Director of Next, and ask her a few questions about her company's involvement with this project.

Faith Carmichael ([01:31](#)):

Hey John, how are you?

Jon Goode ([01:32](#)):

I am fantastic and excited about this conversation. So first things first, what is next?

Faith Carmichael ([01:40](#)):

We are an organization that is focused on doing a couple things. One is amplifying and elevating the voices and talents of the amazing rising artists in our community, particularly those of color don't have the same access to visibility or art journalism platforms as their counterparts. And then on the other side really harnessing the talents and the gifts of these art activists to make real powerful change in our communities.

Jon Goode ([02:06](#)):

I love that. So the Integral Group is a real estate development firm whose stated mission is in part to create vibrant and inclusive communities. Boulevard Next is a development they have just broken ground on in the Old Fourth Ward, and they have partnered with you and your arts organization next to provide art to support the project. What was the process and idea behind having NEXT come in and be a part of this new footprint as it goes into the Old Fourth Ward and beyond?

Faith Carmichael ([02:36](#)):

Great question. So I want to say actually that Integral is one of those companies, one of those organizations that just gets it. They understand the critical role of art in our civic life and our health and our economics, and they for the very longest have really thought of art, not as something that comes in at the end as a decoration, but really is there at the very beginning, sitting at the table because they very clearly understand the power of art to actually help them advance their own missions, to strengthen community. And they reached out to us because I think it's really clear that they understand that art can do those things more powerfully than just about anything else.

Jon Goode ([03:20](#)):

Before speaking with Faith, I attended the Boulevard Next groundbreaking, and I was able to get a moment to speak with Integral Chairman Egbert Perry. And I said to him, “you have a long relationship with Next and with art. So how important was it for you to have both be a part of this new project?”

Egbert Perry ([03:38](#)):

“It happens to be one of those things that's an early definer of community. We made it to embrace it early and often if we want to have a community that doesn't live over this.”

Jon Goode ([03:52](#)):

Jack Hammers were jackhammering. As the Atlanta Medical Center was being demolished behind us and it was loud. I cleaned up the audio as best I could, but in case it wasn't clear, Mr. Perry said, “Art happens to be one of those things that's an early definer of community. We made a decision that we need to embrace it early and often if we want to have a community that lives through it.” So Faith, the artist you tapped to represent this first partnership with Boulevard Next is Tracy Morell. What made you choose Tracy?

Faith Carmichael ([04:24](#)):

Tracy Morell is first. She's just an incredible artist. I mean, if anyone knows Tracy Morell's artwork, it is these beautiful, stunning, bold silhouettes that showcase our communities in the most elegant and graceful and powerful ways. And when we think about what we're trying to represent there at Boulevard Next, it seemed like a seamless fit. She's also Atlanta. She's in this community. She's a major artist in this community, a curator in this community. She's a next alum and she cares deeply about this community. And so I think when we sat down to think about who we wanted to be the inaugural artist, it was something that we at Next thought would be a perfect fit. And then when we shared that with Integral and with the team ultimately at WellStar, they wholeheartedly agreed she is known around the world, but she is Atlanta's own and now she's at Boulevard. Next,

Jon Goode ([05:24](#)):

In case you're just joining us, I'm in conversation with Faith Carmichael, the CEO and Creative director of Next about the art partnership between Next and Boulevard Next, which is a new

footprint being established in the old fourth Ward. When people go down to Boulevard Next and they see Tracy Morell's artwork, what is it that you hope that artwork inspires in them?

Faith Carmichael ([05:45](#)):

So I think that community has seen a lot. It's experienced a lot. It's seen a lot of disinvestment over the years and I think that what we are hoping, the story we're hoping to tell through this artwork is that we see you and that this development and all that is being rebuilt or expanded upon in this space is really a reflection of this community.

Jon Goode ([06:12](#)):

I think that that is powerful. I think it is thoughtful and I think it is necessary. I think it's always vital to invite the community to the table. So I definitely applaud you for that. I also think it's apropos that next is working with Boulevard Next because not only do you share a name, but your company is much like a boulevard or a walkway that helps artists expand and continue on their path. So who are some of the other artists that have come through next?

Faith Carmichael ([06:42](#)):

Yeah, we are really proud and honored to have some of the city's most amazing artists come through. Next. I can sort of very boastfully list some of them. They include Dr. Jelani Cobb, who is now Dean of the School of Journalism at Columbia University. Shannon McCollum, who's an incredible photographer and is sort of known worldwide for the images he's captured of Atlanta's hip hop community. Ham Peku, who was our 2014 visual artist is again world renowned or Corey. Okay. Cello Johnson. I could keep going. Brendan, Nicole Murr. We are really proud at how we've been able to offer additional visibility and platform to these incredible artists.

Jon Goode ([07:34](#)):

Next is excellent at identifying emerging talent. So what's next for Next?

Faith Carmichael ([07:40](#)):

Yeah, I mean, I think not to be corny about it, I think in many ways next is next. I think we are, we're excited about the trajectory that we're on. I think it started off as just a group of artists saying, we are not seeing our community represented the way we want to and we need to just stop complaining about it and do something about it and fill the gap. We are continuing to do work with Marta to be able to speak to the power of transit and why that's critically needed in our community. We are going to continue to do this amazing work with Boulevard Next and every six months we get to choose a different visual artist who deserves to have even greater visibility and showcase them on this sort of open air gallery that we've been able to develop there in Old Fort Ward or working with National Black Arts Festival around issues of health inequities as it relates to racism. And so I think there's lots of exciting efforts that are right there on Horizon, and we're excited to continue to do this really important work.

Jon Goode ([08:49](#)):

If you find yourself in the Old Fourth Ward near the former home of the Atlanta Medical Center, staring at a tapestry of beautiful art, I hope you see yourself. I hope you see the future, and I hope you see what comes next. To find out more about Faith Carmichael in the next arts organization, please visit [wabe.org/citylights](http://wabe.org/citylights).

Kim Drobos ([09:12](#)):

That was a great conversation, Jon.

Jon Goode ([09:14](#)):

Some would call it groundbreaking.

Kim Drobos ([09:17](#)):

Oh, I'd have to go ruin it. I'm just kidding. Totally kidding. What was your biggest takeaway from being able to attend the groundbreaking ceremony?

Jon Goode ([09:29](#)):

Number one is bring a mask, because once they start tearing a building down the dust and debris is legion. Number two, I was reminded of the ways in which art can make everything better. Like there's a scrim of Tracy Morell's art surrounding the construction site, just yards and yards of fabric and art. And when you walk past, your eye goes to the art and what could easily miss the fact that there's a building being demolished behind it. That's the beauty of art. When everything is falling apart, it's still there to comfort and lift us.

Kim Drobos ([09:59](#)):

I have to agree with you there. I actually drove by it yesterday and the first thing I noticed was the art.

Jon Goode ([10:07](#)):

Yeah, man. Man, listen. I just love what they're doing. Love what NEX is doing with the art all around Atlanta. It's just really, really something.

### **Transcript Disclaimer**

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