Six Corners emerged in the late 1880’s as a commercial district. In its heyday it was second only to downtown Chicago for shopping.
By 1990: Decline occurred due to economic and civic lethargy as well as the neglect of elected officials.
By 2000: Six Corners had earned a notorious reputation for business flight, job loss, and boarded up storefronts.
By 2005: Pedestrian isolation, community alienation and loss of identity resulted in diminished pride and involvement of neighbors and community.
In 2011, Six Corners gains two new partners for economic revitalization.

Six Corners Association

6CA formed in 2005, established an SSA, and began initiating improvements based on the National Mainstreet model.

Alderman John Arena

A former creative director and owner of a design and marketing company, Alderman Arena knew the value of art for attracting business and building community.

Arts Alive Chicago

Started in 2011 as the Alderman’s Arts Initiative, it soon grew into an independent 501c3 connecting artists with opportunity and need.
Volunteers began painting vacant storefronts with donated paint.
Business owners met us on the street and told us what they’d like to see.
They invited us into their boarded up and/or empty buildings ...
... which hid the remnants of the past and unfulfilled dreams.
Immediately, the community noticed the change.
We experimented with everything: pop-up galleries, displays, even living dioramas ...
Poetry walks, community paint days and parklet performances ...
The phone began to ring. Filament Theatre hosted a pop-up performance in a vacant storefront.
At the end of that performance, they announced they were looking for a permanent theatre space.
Marc Sussman owned 4041 N. Milwaukee, formerly Strauss & Schram furniture warehouse, a building designed with clean modern lines.

Originally planned for office space, it was caught in the economic downturn. Sitting vacant as the tallest building on Milwaukee Ave., it was known for its security gates and broken windows.

Marc thought, “Why not?!”
In 2012, Filament Theatre Ensemble signed a lease for the ground floor.
Filament built a foundation and we attracted the National Veterans Art Museum and Inside Out Art Studio to the 2nd and 3rd floors for mutual collaboration and benefit.
Shops began opening along the block.
The Portage Theater reopened; a whole city block is reactivated.
6 Corners BBQ Fest continues to grow past 12,000+ people.
The Chicago Ballet Center builds out the 4th floor. 4041 is at full occupancy as an Arts Collaborative.
Six Corners continues to gain attention as an Arts District.
In (5) years, we’ve welcomed 30+ new businesses!

We will install (4) bike corrals, (10) murals, bike lanes, a Divvy station, and People Spot this spring.