

Managing 'the largest law garden in the U.S.'

Kramer & Connolly puts the acre behind its office to productive use

BY BEN MOOK

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When he's not up to his ears in work as the managing partner of **Kramer & Connolly**, you can often find Irwin R. Kramer out back, up to his ears in peppers, tomatoes, squash and herbs behind the four-lawyer firm's historic Main Street office in Reisterstown.

A first-time gardener, Kramer is bolstered enough by the bounty to claim some heavy bragging rights for himself and his colleagues.

"I've been told it's the largest law firm garden in the U.S.," he said, tongue firmly planted in cheek. "I can't prove that, of course, but I can't disprove it either, so I'm going to stick with it."

Kramer & Connolly moved in late 2010 to its new office, the historic Ebaugh House on the edge of Reisterstown's historic Main Street. The house, built in 1891, sits on land owned by John Reister, the town's namesake.

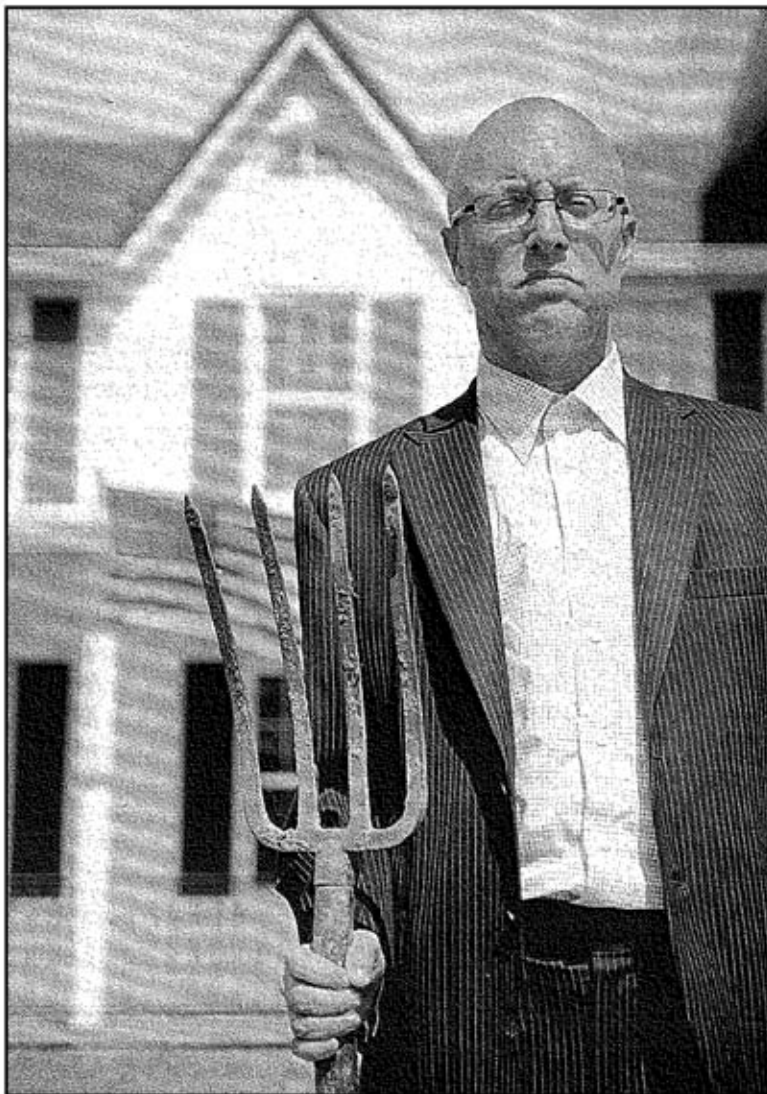
The house itself was built by Zachariah Ebaugh, a principal of Franklin High School and one of the first superintendents of Baltimore County Public Schools. The building sits close to the road, leaving the rest of the lot as a wooded grassland.

"We were blessed enough to have a law firm with an acre of land behind it, so, I thought, 'Let's use it and have a garden,'" Kramer said.

They started planting in April, and the garden is now hitting its stride with tomatoes, green peppers and yellow squash aplenty. The successful debut comes as a surprise to Kramer, who expected a lot more trial and error the first time.

"I told myself whatever I get out of it the first year is gravy," Kramer said. "I had no idea what I was doing, but thank God for YouTube."

While the peppers and tomatoes bat-



MAXIMILIAN FRANZ

Irwin R. Kramer's law firm moved into the historic Ebaugh House in Reisterstown in late 2010 and decided to plant a vegetable garden out back this year. 'I might not have the view of the Inner Harbor I used to have,' Kramer says, 'but I wouldn't trade it at all.'

tle it out in one corner of the garden for space, one vegetable so far has outstripped the others in terms of size and production.

"The most prolific grower so far has been the zucchini — I have zucchini

coming out of my eyeballs," Kramer said. "Just when I think I've pulled as much zucchini as I can, there's more."

Kramer said having a garden in the backyard has meant more than just a steady source of fresh produce for the



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Kramer contemplates a freshly picked yellow squash. Working in the garden is 'a nice way to decompress,' he says.

firm. He said it's a great place to go to unwind or just get away if things get too hectic.

"It's great to be literally paces from an office where there's a lot of pressure and be able to change the scenery just like that," Kramer said. "Just to be able to come out and pick a tomato or walk around, it's a nice way to decompress."

Having worked at larger firms before starting his own, Kramer has no regrets about choosing an office away from most of the hustle and bustle of the city.

"There's a quality of life you can have at a smaller firm that you can't replicate at a larger firm," Kramer said. "I might not have the view of the Inner Harbor I used to have, but I wouldn't trade it at all."

Next year, Kramer said he plans to continue the garden and even expand its footprint now that he has a better idea of how much space is needed. But, he said, he might rotate out at least one crop when he does the planting next year.

"I'm starting to get sick of zucchini, I must admit," Kramer said. "I've given a lot of it away, but I still have a ton. People think I'm kidding, but I'm pulling five-pound zucchinis out of here all the time."