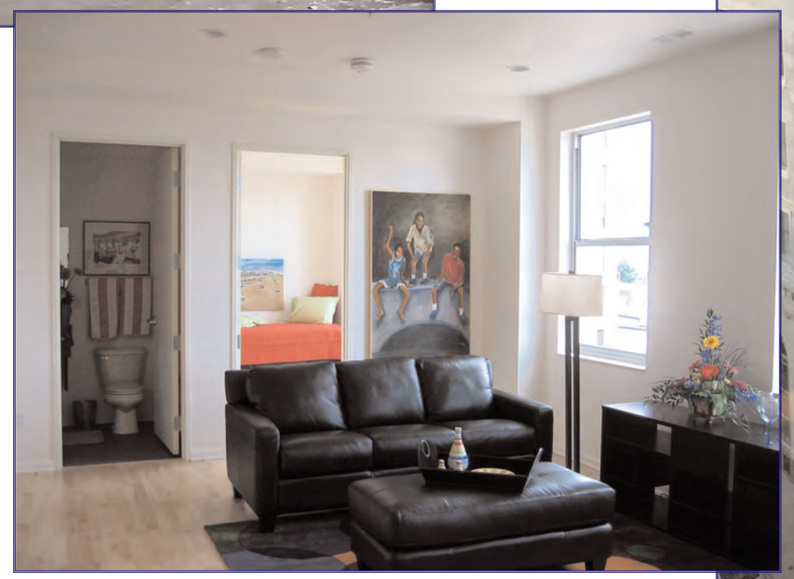
Uptown Developments LLC, G.A.V. Associates Architects, Cornerstone Architects and Sorenson Gross Construction for the Rehabilitation of the First National Bank and Trust Company Building, Flint

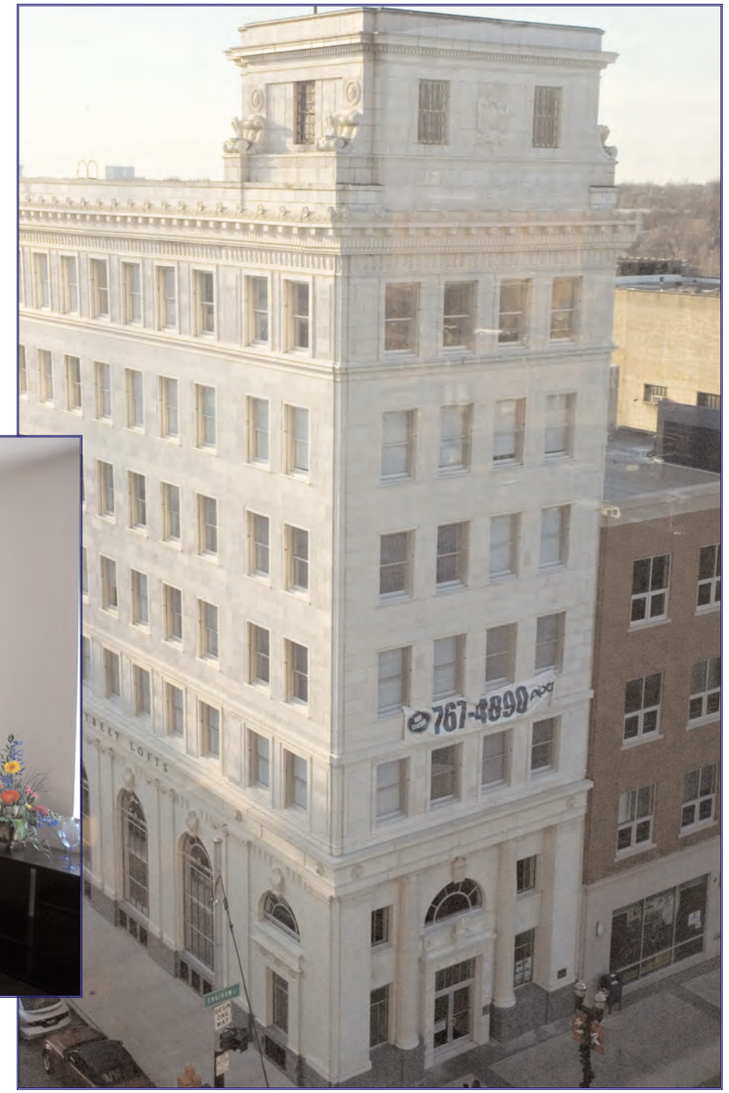
The First National Bank and Trust of Flint opened the doors of its seven-story high-rise in 1923. Originally envisioned to house the bank on the first floor and physicians' offices on the upper floors, the building was enlarged to its current size in 1929-30. Like so many other banks in the nation, however, it closed its doors during the Banking Holiday of 1933 and never reopened.

During the early 1940s, extensive exterior changes were made at the street level for Morrison's, a woman's clothier that occupied the street level spaces into the 1960s. As a part of the renovations the first story terra cotta was removed from the building's east and south elevations and the main entry was significantly altered. In the early 1970s the building's first floor was extensively modified for use as a bank once again, but it eventually closed and fell into disuse.

After being vacant for almost two decades, the building was acquired by Uptown Developments LLC in 2001 and planning for its rehabilitation as a mixed-use property began. With the assistance of Freeman Greer of GAV Associates Architects, Cornerstone Architects, and Sorenson Gross Construction, Uptown Developments – using the federal and state historic preservation tax credits – returned this significant historic property – now known as the First Street Lofts – to its role as a key contributor to the vitality of downtown Flint. Housing Republic Bank and one and two bedroom apartments, the building connects Flint's history with a new vision for downtown. With its first floor façade and original cornice fully restored, the First Street Lofts demonstrate the role rehabilitated historic buildings can play in shaping the re-emergence of traditional downtowns as centers of urban life.

Before





After

Historic Preservation in Michigan

Michigan Historical Center
State Historic Preservation Office

New Amsterdam Activation I LLC, Quinn Evans Architects, Rossetti Architects, and Jonna Construction Company for the Rehabilitation of the Graphic Arts Building, Detroit

Constructed in 1926 the Graphic Arts Building was specifically designed and located to cater to Detroit's growing graphic arts and advertising industry. Located in the New Center area, the building housed a variety of photo engraving, linoleum block printing, and art studios that specialized in advertising art, particularly auto industry related advertising. Built with a unique mix of modern technology and Italian Romanesque inspired details, the building features an Albert Kahn-inspired cast concrete structural system, which created large, open and flexible floor plates. The exterior is a combination of an elaborate terra cotta and variegated marble primary elevation, and simple brick, industrial steel windows, and exposed concrete structure secondary elevations.

After an extended period of vacancy and at least one failed attempt at rehabilitation, New Amsterdam Activation I, LLC, a subsidiary of the Jonna Companies, purchased the building in 2004. New Amsterdam applied for state and federal historic preservation tax credits and began the task of transforming this tarnished gem from public nuisance to community asset. With assistance from Elisabeth Knibbe of Quinn Evans Architects, Rossetti Architects, and Jonna Construction Company the building has been rehabilitated into thirty-eight market rate loft style apartment units, and space for two retail outlets on the lower level. Offering ready access to the many amenities and activities in the New Center area and only three miles from the heart of downtown, the Lofts at New Amsterdam, as they are now known, are perfectly positioned to contribute to and benefit from the growing excitement in downtown Detroit.

Before

After

Historic Preservation in Michigan

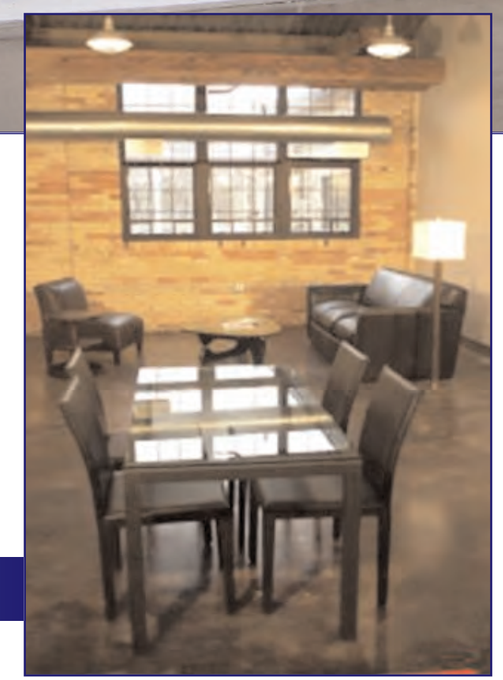
Michigan Historical Center
State Historic Preservation Office

Boilerworks LLC, Hooker|DeJong Architects and Engineers, and the Muskegon Construction Company for the Rehabilitation of the Muskegon Boiler Works

The Muskegon Boiler Works building is one of the oldest structures in Muskegon's downtown area. The company originated in 1865 as the Turnbull Boiler Works, which produced boilers and repaired machinery for Muskegon's thriving lumber industry. Through a variety of mergers, acquisitions, and reorganizations the boiler works and its assets came into the Clifton Stevens family in 1887. The company was renamed the Muskegon Boiler Works in 1905 when the current building was constructed according to plans by newly hired engineer Roy E. Ashley. As the dominance of the lumber industry waned during the early twentieth century, the company diversified its product base to include equipment tailored to the oil refinery, paper, chemical, forging, sugar, and power production industries. The boilers produced in the building fueled Muskegon's many industries. The Stevens family continued operations on the site until 1998. The Muskegon Boiler Works building represents 133 years of industrial experience and innovation unique to Muskegon.

In 2005 the Boilerworks LLC, led by HDC Construction Company of Novi, began the process of returning the vacant building to a productive use. The project vision was to transform the simple yet significant historic factory into creative artist live/work spaces that would capitalize on Michigan's growing creative/arts industry. With the assistance of Hooker | DeJong Architects and Engineers and the Muskegon Construction Company the building was converted into twenty-six affordable loft style apartments. Located within walking distance of downtown, Muskegon Lake, and the entertainment district, Art Works of Muskegon, as it is now known, offers a unique live/work environment. The project included the creation of more than 3,000 square feet of community space available to residents and local artists for the creation, demonstration, exhibition, and performance of art. The rehabilitation of this modest factory is key to attracting reinvestment in Muskegon's downtown area.

Before



After

Historic Preservation in Michigan

Michigan Historical Center
State Historic Preservation Office

Joe Van Esley for the Rehabilitation of the Penney House, Canton

An incredible transformation has occurred at the historic resource known as the Penney House at 44675 Joy Road in Canton. Current owner Joe Van Esley undertook a complete interior and exterior rehabilitation of the Penney House, part of a family farm owned by the Penney family from 1856 until the early 1970s. Over the time span of the Penney family ownership, many changes occurred to the resource and many layers of building materials were added. One of the most recent layers included a light brown, brick patterned, asphalt shingle siding on the entire exterior.

Upon completion of demolition of certain features and the removal of many of the inappropriate layers of materials, Mr. Van Esley and his team commenced the rehabilitation. Assisted throughout the project by Canton Township historic district commissioners Melissa McLaughlin and Terry Bennett, Van Esley installed a new roof, rebuilt porches, updated all the building systems, replaced the windows, and repaired/replaced and painted the exterior siding. The rehabilitation was extensive, but when it was completed, Mr. Van Esley said that he was glad he had done it. "Why? Because along the way I found a new appreciation of history, met people who cared, received a lot of insight on the process, and shared a sense of accomplishment."

The house is now used for commercial purposes rather than residential, but it accurately reflects its historic appearance of a well-maintained farmhouse. As with many rehabilitation projects taken on by historic resource owners, Mr. Van Esley says that the process took a long time and the learning curve was steep. He adds, however, "The rewards are hopefully timeless."

Before

After

Historic Preservation in Michigan

Michigan Historical Center
State Historic Preservation Office

Bill Swanson for the Rehabilitation of 1754 Parker, West Village Historic District, Detroit

Bill Swanson purchased the house at 1754 Parker in Detroit's West Village Historic District in 2002 after several years of deferred maintenance by the previous owner. According to Mr. Swanson, "the interior, though in grave disrepair, was virtually unaltered from its original 1907 design." As part of the project, all major building systems were updated including the electrical, plumbing, and HVAC. The original wood windows were carefully repaired and painted to become fully functional. The exterior siding and trim was repaired or replaced where needed, and painted with an appropriate three-color paint scheme that helps to highlight the architectural details. Perhaps most importantly, after years of damage from water infiltration, a new asphalt shingle roof was installed to keep the interior dry. The finishing touches to the project were plaster repair and interior painting, and refinishing of the hardwood floors.

Mr. Swanson states "the restoration of 1754 Parker made a significant impact on the neighborhood. I was able to resurrect the worst house on the block. It was the house that many thought needed to be torn down, and it became an inspiration for others to begin home repairs. It is now one of the best on the street." Bill Swanson's rehabilitation is a testament to the results that can be achieved through the perseverance, dedication and hard work of owners of historic homes.

Before

After

Floyd and Todd Wright Builders, Main Street Properties of East Jordan LLC, the City of East Jordan, and Presley Architecture for the Rehabilitation of the Votruba Grocery and Porter Lumber Company Buildings

Constructed at the turn of the twentieth century, the Votruba Grocery and Porter Lumber Company Buildings constitute a unified, highly visible and historically significant portion of East Jordan's business district. Originally built as a grocery and a company dry good store/office respectively, these buildings were in many ways the heart of the then-booming lumbering town. J. Votruba, a local merchant, constructed his grocery on the street level and included a large second floor recreation space that he made available to family and friends. The space also served as the meeting room for the local Knights of Pythias. The Porter Building, constructed for local lumberman W. P. Porter, originally served as the company store and business offices for the East Jordan Lumber Company. It later housed the local 5 and 10 store and a collection of medical and dental offices. The Masonic and Eastern Star lodges also met in the rear of the second floor. The Porter Lumber Company building served the community into the 1970s when its last retail tenant closed. The Votruba Building was occupied through the late 1990s by a variety of commercial and retail businesses including a hardware store, furniture store, and eatery.

Concerned about the future of these critical downtown buildings, the city of East Jordan began investigating redevelopment tools and incentives that would help market the buildings as investment opportunities. By discovering a variety of funding sources that would be available, including the federal historic preservation tax credits, and identifying a forward thinking developer, the city created a situation capable of producing great change.

The city of East Jordan and Main Street Properties of East Jordan LLC, led by Floyd Wright, supported by the Charlevoix State Bank, and assisted by architect Greg Presley of Northville, planned and carried out the rehabilitation, thus creating new downtown commercial opportunities. The buildings now house six commercial operations, the Chamber of Commerce, and a branch bank. Since it reopened the structure has had a 90 percent occupancy rate. This project clearly demonstrates that rehabilitation is a highly viable redevelopment tool in any size community that recognizes the potential and value of its historic resources.

Before

After

Historic Preservation in Michigan

Michigan Historical Center
State Historic Preservation Office