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2011 AWARD WINNER

BEST MIXED USE PROJECT

HISTORIC MERCANTILE LOFTS HAMILTON, OHIO

In an attempt to honor the people, places, and projects that exemplify growth through preservation and revitalization, Heritage Ohio granted the 2011 Annual Award of Best Mixed Use Rehabilitation to Steve Coon, Historic Developers LLC for its renovation of the Historic Mercantile Lofts in the Davis-McCrory Building. This project resulted in office space in the first floor storefront and apartments and live-work units in the upper two floors.

The rehabilitation of the Davis-McCrory Building, the first phase of the Historic Mercantile Lofts Project, is a true testament to the value of perseverance. Built in the 1870s, this commercial block on High Street sat vacant for years until the owner threatened demolition in 2003. The City of Hamilton, realizing the buildings' potential value to its downtown's future, purchased the future Historic Mercantile Lofts. The first rehabilitation attempt failed. The City of Hamilton then turned to Steve Coon of Historic Developers, LLC. Proceeding without bank financing due to the economic recession, Historic Developers took on substantial risk. Belief in these buildings' vitality has been rewarded with success; the commercial space was already occupied and many apartments were leased even before the project's completion. The Historic Mercantile Lofts are helping to enhance the unique historic character of downtown Hamilton, while introducing new commercial and residential spaces.



CONTACT INFORMATION AND PROJECT DETAILS

ARCHITECT/BUILDER

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OWNER/DEVELOPER

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BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Historic Name

Address: 228, 232, 236 High Street, Hamilton Ohio 45011

Size first floor storefront space, 4 apartments and 5 live-work units on upper two floors

Architectural Style: Italianate

HISTORIC/RENOVATION RECORD

Date of Construction: 1870s

Previous Renovations/Additions: None

National Register: Listed in 2004

LOCATION

Historic District: The Historic District of Arlington

Position within Community: Jones is at the core of the historic district. It neighbors a community plaza and historic retail structures.

COST

Davis-McCrory Building Cost: \$1,884,428

Total Cost: \$5,182,036

State Tax Credit Equity: \$960,119

Federal Tax Credit Equity: \$809,052

RENOVATION DESCRIPTION

State of building prior to renovation: Since its 1924 construction, Jones had not been extensively renovated. The school had sinking floors, crumbling plaster, peeling paint, poor ventilation, leaking plumbing, cramped classrooms, asbestos filled walls and a consistently leaky roof. Furthermore, it held an inadequate heating system, no cooling system, and a dangerously outdated electric system characterized by a norm of one two-prong outlet per classroom.

Description of renovation process: A committee of parents and teachers worked with the architect and contractor to supervise renovation and assure preservation of the building's historic value. School remained in-session throughout construction as the architect completed the renovation in sections. As a learning experience, students toured sections with hard-hats.

RENOVATION SUCCESSSES

Mechanical/HVAC: The most expensive aspect of the renovation, \$4.4 million was used to install new heating and cooling systems.

Electrical: The school's outdated electrical system was totally replaced allowing teachers safe usage of modern technology and educational equipment.

Disabilities Act compliance: Classroom doors and lockers were fitted with ADA compliant hardware. An elevator was installed within an existing chimney shaft.

Technology integration: Every classroom has a minimum of one 25" television capable of projecting computer images and a minimum of three computers with Internet access. Additionally, the school provides four computer labs offering both Macintosh and Windows formatted technology with Internet access.

Adaptation to commercial and residential needs: Classroom size was increased substantially, which had been a frequent criticism of the building. Furthermore, to satisfy the innovative educational philosophy of the school, the architect created separate educational communities within the school, one informal and one traditional.

Safety compliance: As the school's plaster walls contained asbestos, all such walls were replaced. Of note however, efforts were made to reproduce archways throughout the building. New sprinkler and fire alarm systems were added, as well.

Other/unique renovation successes: The renovation architect created a new cafeteria and multipurpose room where previously there had been an open courtyard. The room is built 6' below ground level to allow for 20' ceilings. Also, previously separated third floor spaces were connected and upgraded to provide optimal areas for the school's music program.