

The LOFTS: Transformation of an iconic industrial plant into a chic urban dwelling

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ABSTRACT

Opening his famous essay “On Restoration”, Eugene Froment Viollet-le-Duc wrote, “The term restoration and the thing itself are both modern. To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which could never have existed at any given time.”

Reining counter to the tenets of contemporary historic preservation—which often seeks to freeze buildings in time, returning them to some past condition—Viollet-le-Duc argued that the best way to preserve a building is to “restore” it in such a way that it stays vibrant.

In 2006, a former Borden Condensed Milk Plant was purchased by a developer with the vision of creating a hub for downtown activity at a major intersection through this college town. Thus began the renewal of what is now Central Station. Originally built in 1926, the Borden Plant was the centerpiece of the city's commerce. Its opening brought local collaboration and prosperity for the rural communities nearby. In 1998, Eagle Family Foods was formed and became the umbrella for all future productions. Shortly after this shift, the plant saw a decline in production capabilities and quickly began to decay. Fifty years of this thriving industry was impacted by modern manufacturing forcing the plant to close in 2005. While a portion of the building was used for climate-controlled storage, more than half of the building remained unoccupied, leading to rapid deterioration and vandalism.

The aforementioned developer recognized potential in this unique building and assembled an integrated design team that played an integral role in the building of each of the multi-use

tenant spaces, including a restaurant, two retail outlets, an incubator office environment, and the LOFTS luxury condominiums. The developer established the basic aesthetic framework for all of the build-outs—traditional exterior modifications paired with modern interior spaces. All the while, he requested that the team carefully consider the existing, distinctive features in order to preserve the integrity of the building's authentic character.

The LOFTS Condominiums, located on the second level and accessed by way of the updated freight elevators, are a series of 6 condominium units within the expansive creamery room. The client's target market for these condos is alumni and young professionals. There has recently been a surge of interest in "giant city" homes and these condos were developed to satisfy this growing real estate sector. For the LOFTS, the interior designer chose to highlight inventive examples of the space's handsome proportions, robust materials, and the character of age, while introducing modern features concurrent with metropolitan living.

The recent renovation has brought the building back to life. It has rehabilitated an area of town that experienced deterioration and scarcity. The development initiated further growth in the four adjacent corners at a main intersection through the town. The celebration, success, and economic progress that the initial opening of the plant facilitated have been reinstated. The goal, following Vollerle-Duc, was "scoring" the LOFTS and its counterparts to its highest and best use.



BEFORE



AFTER



THE LOFTS-AFTER

MAIN IMAGE: The building in its current state

TOP LEFT IMAGE: The building at the time of purchase

TOP RIGHT IMAGE: The second level exterior post-renovation; this is the area where the LOFTS are located.



BEFORE

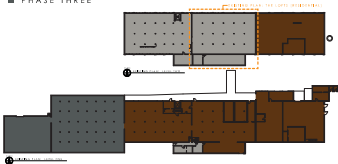


MAIN IMAGE: The creaming room prior to renovations

RIGHT IMAGES: alternate views of existing conditions

BUILDING CONTEXT

- PHASE ONE
- PHASE TWO
- PHASE THREE



The plans represent the full building in which the LOFTS condominiums are located. They depict the special divisions prior to renovation.

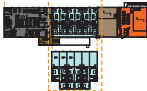
LEVEL 1

- CENTRAL STATION GRILL (RESTAURANT)
- SOMETHING SOUTHERN DESIGN & FURNISHINGS (RETAIL)
- BOARDSTOWN BIKES (RETAIL)
- PHASE TWO (CIRCULATION)
- PHASE THREE



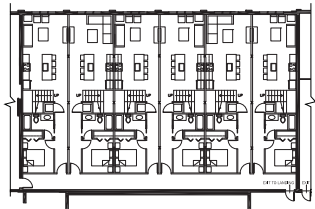
LEVEL 2

- CENTRAL STATION GRILL (RESTAURANT)
- SOMETHING SOUTHERN DESIGN & FURNISHINGS (RETAIL)
- THE LOFTS (COMMERCIAL OFFICE SPACE)
- THE LOFTS VESTIBULE



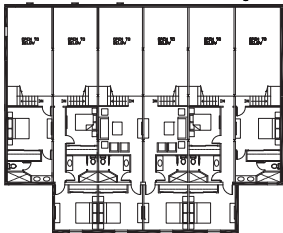
MAIN LEVEL

11



The plan above represents the main living space of the six condominium units. Challenges in the plan development included: a variety of floor transitions within the bedroom room. There were not only 8 changes in elevation but also large openings to the floor below. The existing structural columns quickly dictated division of space. The existing height of the space traveled to a series of clerestory windows. This space proved to be a conditioning challenge

LOFT LEVEL



The original creaming space was connected to a rear addition with the access location eight feet above finished floor. This added space would become the 3rd bedroom for 4 of the units.



LEFT IMAGE: Main living space of a single condominium unit; original brick was stripped of layers of paint, revealing the natural brick texture and color. Still, brick is also featured around the new windows.

RIGHT IMAGE: Main living space of a single condominium unit. Highlight the piling space and island.





THE LOFTS AT CENTRAL STATION
LUXURY CONDOMINIUMS