

Harry Hepler, Turner+Callaway, and the Mannik & Smith Group, Inc., for the Prudden Motor Wheel Factory Building Rehabilitation; and Richard Karp, the Peabody Group, and Prater Development Ltd. for the Arbaugh Department Store Building Rehabilitation, Lansing

Timing is everything. Harry Hepler or Richard Karp might have each been “one guy” doing a project. Instead, their projects – completed around the same time – changed the way people in Lansing view historic rehabilitation.

Early in 2005 Harry Hepler began the process of reclaiming the 1918 Motor Wheel Factory, the last building on a 20-acre brownfield. This project took the hulking, 178,900-square-foot, former factory building from derelict to dynamic by creating market rate industrial loft apartments. Hepler removed a large number of inappropriate alterations, carefully repaired and reused limited remaining historic materials, and initiated ground-breaking cooperation with a national window manufacturer to design and utilize a new window system that has been incorporated into a new line of production windows. In addition, he made energy efficiency a major part of the rehabilitation. This building, which stood as a moldering relic, has become a symbol of revitalization in Lansing.

Fellow Lansing developer Richard Karp saw the potential in a completely different type of building. When it was constructed in 1905 and expanded in 1915 Arbaugh’s was the largest department store in the capital city. A late 1970s remodeling included entombing the building within a gold mirror glass and plastic “cube,” replacing all but one of the original windows with inexpensive aluminum units, and subdividing the open interior into a maze of offices and conference rooms. Karp removed the glass cladding, carefully recreated the missing windows based on the single remaining example from the façade, and reintroduced traditional storefront display windows and the missing building cornice. Today this 88,000-square-foot architectural gem is a hub of a vital and growing downtown. The project’s 48 market rate loft apartments, ground floor office/retail spaces and underground on site parking have worked together to demonstrate that urban living can be more than a dream. It is a reality in Lansing.

Together these projects represent \$47 million in investment and the creation of more than 500 jobs. Richard Karp and Harry Hepler and their teams demonstrated the power of federal and State Historic Preservation Tax Credits in encouraging investment in historic structures. They also showed that historic rehabilitation can transform not only a point of view, but also a city.

