

Adaptive Use Project Utilizes Both Public and Private Funding Pittsfield, MA

Known as the Kinnell-Kresge Block when it was constructed in 1918, the Beacon Cinema building originally housed an S.S. Kresge 5-10 cent store, other retail businesses, and offices on the upper floor. Located on North Street in the heart of Pittsfield's business district, the building deteriorated and was finally abandoned in recent years. In a bold and far-sighted move, the City of Pittsfield and Richard Stanley, managing partner of North Street Cinema LLC, developed a unique funding strategy utilizing government grants, federal and state tax incentives, and private funding to restore the building so that it once more could serve as the economic catalyst for downtown Pittsfield.

A design for incorporating a six screen cinema complex in the shell of the building was submitted to Massachusetts Historical Commission (SHPO) and National Park Service for approval. To everyone's chagrin, the design was rejected by the National Park Service and the project appeared to be dead. Instead of giving up the project, the City and developer turned to John G. Waite Associates, Architects (JGWA) to aid in the redesign of the project and develop a new strategy to secure the badly needed federal and state tax credits.

Working with Clark & Green Architecture Design of Great Barrington, MA, JGWA developed a comprehensive restoration program for the building. The historic white terra cotta and brick façade was painstakingly restored and the original storefront was replicated. The former Kresge store space was restored as the lobby for the new cinema complex which was located to the rear in a former warehouse building. This approach allowed for the original historic interior of the main building to be restored for office space, providing over 20,000 square feet of additional rental space. The total cost of the project was \$21 million.

The project was an unusual example of successful collaboration between government agencies and private investors. Participants included Mayor James M. Ruberto of Pittsfield, the Pittsfield Department of Community Development, Downtown Pittsfield Inc., Richard Stanley of North Street Cinema LLC, a consortium of local banks, National Park Service, Massachusetts Historical Commission, and the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation (MHIC).

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Beacon Cinema (Located in Pittsfield, MA)

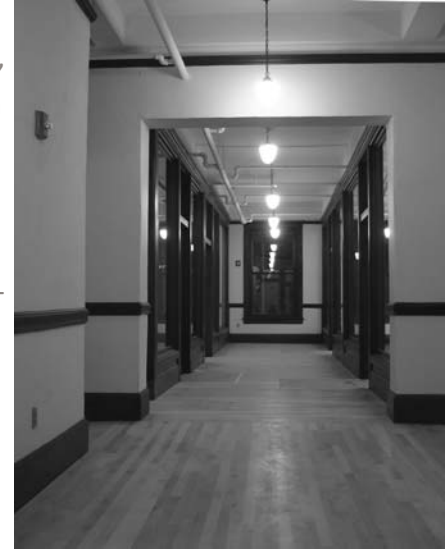
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Without government assistance and the historic preservation tax credits, the project would never have reached fruition. Historic preservation tax credits were an invaluable component of financing for the project, providing a necessary infusion of capital toward the cost of construction. In addition to these credits, the city's easement of the building façade allowed for the exterior restoration to be completed as a separate municipal project.



Lobby of Cinema

Calling the project the *crown jewel* of the revitalization of downtown Pittsfield, Mayor Ruberto stated, "This façade is an important part of the historic fabric of downtown Pittsfield. It is exciting to see this building restored to its original glory and reemerging as an important destination for hundreds of thousands of people in downtown Pittsfield."



Main Hallway

Stanley said, "As I watched this painstaking restoration process I was impressed and overwhelmed by the beauty of the result. I cannot say enough positive things about how the City has supported this project."

To learn more about John G. Waite Associates, Architects, please contact Elizabeth Nguyen at 518.449.5440 or go to www.jgwaarchitects.com.

Owners: Richard Stanley, North Street Cinema LLC; City of Pittsfield (façade only)

Architects: John G. Waite Associates, Architects PLLC, Albany, NY (restoration); Clark & Green Inc. Architectural Design, Great Barrington, MA (theatre architects); SD Architects, East Granby, CT (architectural consultant)

Engineers: Odeh Engineers, North Providence, RI (structural); Architectural Engineers, Boston, MA (mechanical); Lewis Engineering, Albany, NY (electrical);

Contractors: Allegrone Construction (construction manager); Lewis C. Allegrone Inc. (façade mason)

Photography Credit: Photo courtesy of Lewis C. Allegrone Inc.

John G. Waite Associates **Architects** PLLC