

# Muncie's Façade Grant Program

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**Re-envisioning Downtown Muncie through Preserving Historic Commercial Buildings**

**Preserving Historic Places Conference**

**Muncie, Indiana**

**September 21, 2023**



# The Speakers and their roles

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*Program Design &  
Implementation, City of  
Muncie*

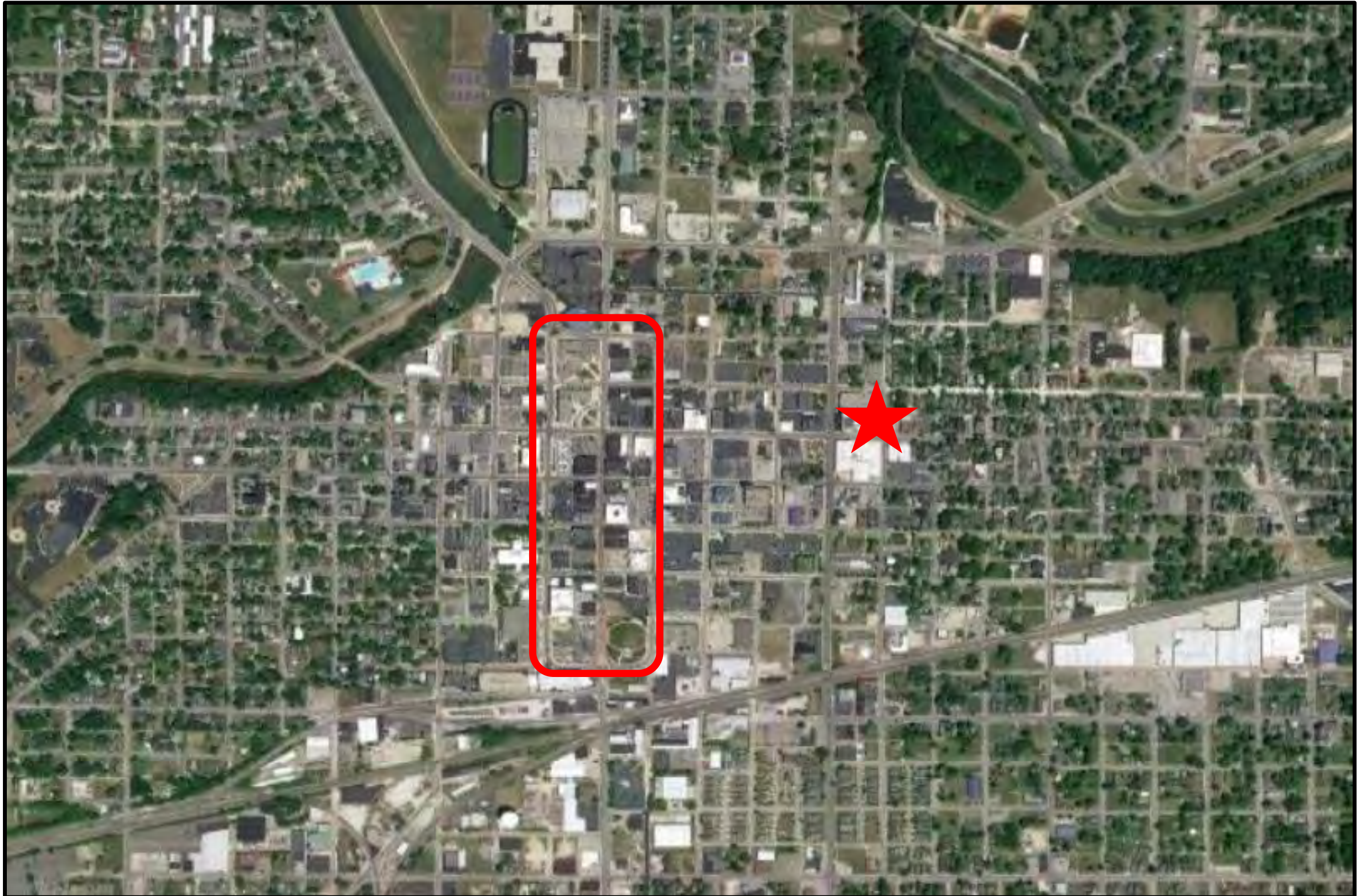
**Gretchen Cheesman**



*Design Consultant  
Morgan Roemmel Design, LLC*

**William (Bill) Morgan**

The red star is at Cornerstone Center for the Arts, the venue for the conference.  
The area in the red border is the target area for the façade program.





Muncie had a thriving downtown in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, centered on several blocks of south Walnut Street. Here Walnut Street is being paved with brick.

Walnut Street Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century



# Walnut Street Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Downtown had continued success through World War II with a large department store, several movie theaters, and numerous other shops and businesses.



1908



1926



1924

After WWII, suburbanization and the American love affair with the automobile took their toll on the downtown. The development of strip malls, drive-up restaurants, and the like began sucking the life out of Muncie's downtown. This scenario played out in cities and towns across the United States.

The ultimate stake through the heart was the introduction of the enclosed shopping mall. Now you could shop all day and get a meal or two, all in climate-controlled comfort.



### *The Mall's Still Coming*

Those who have passed this sign at Granville and McGalliard for nearly two years can take comfort in the fact that the Muncie Mall developers, Melvin Simon and Associates, Indianapolis, still plan to build their huge complex. They report that groundbreaking is set for sometime next spring and completion about 18 months after that. (Star Photo)

**1964:** Indianapolis developer Melvin Simon and Associates to build a shopping mall on 56 acres according to The Muncie Star. "Original plans called for a four-story office and medical building, plus three high-rise apartment units," in addition to retail, a 1967 article notes.

**1969:** Muncie Mall Groundbreaking

**1970:** Sears Officially opens new store at Muncie Mall leaving downtown



# Muncie Mall



An early postcard promoting the Muncie Mall



# Downtown Pre-Walnut Plaza

1972

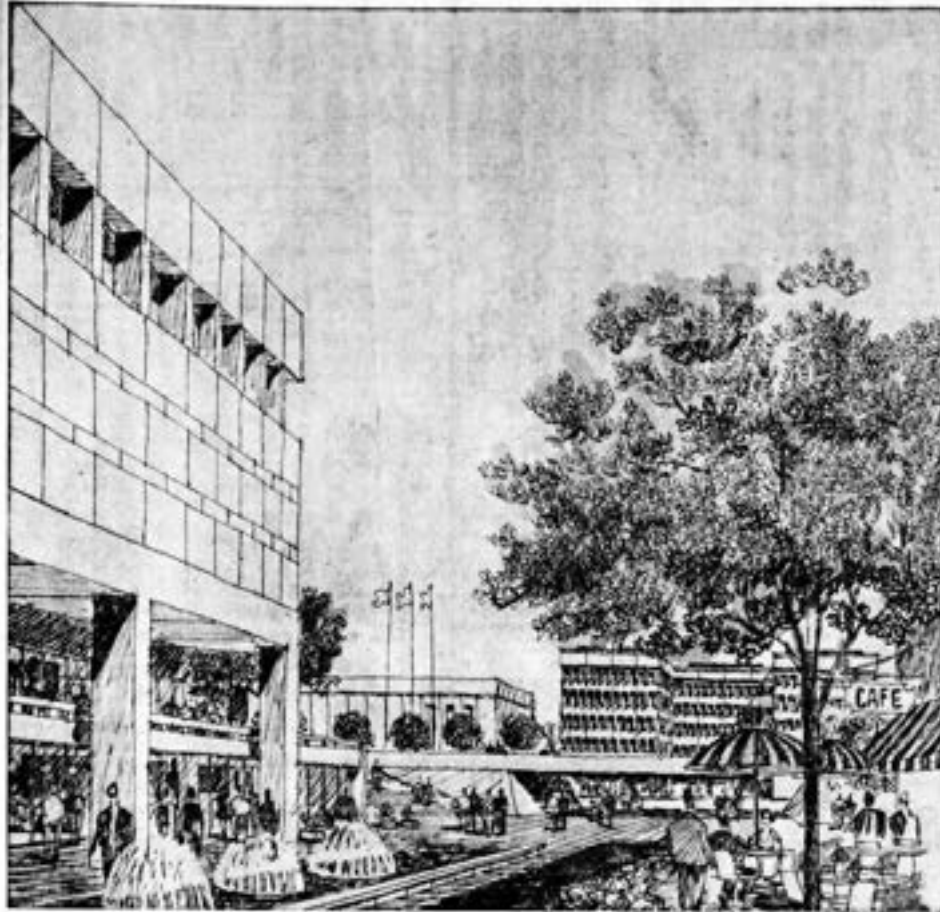
Downtown businesses tried to compete, often with modernization of their facades which we now see as ill-advised.



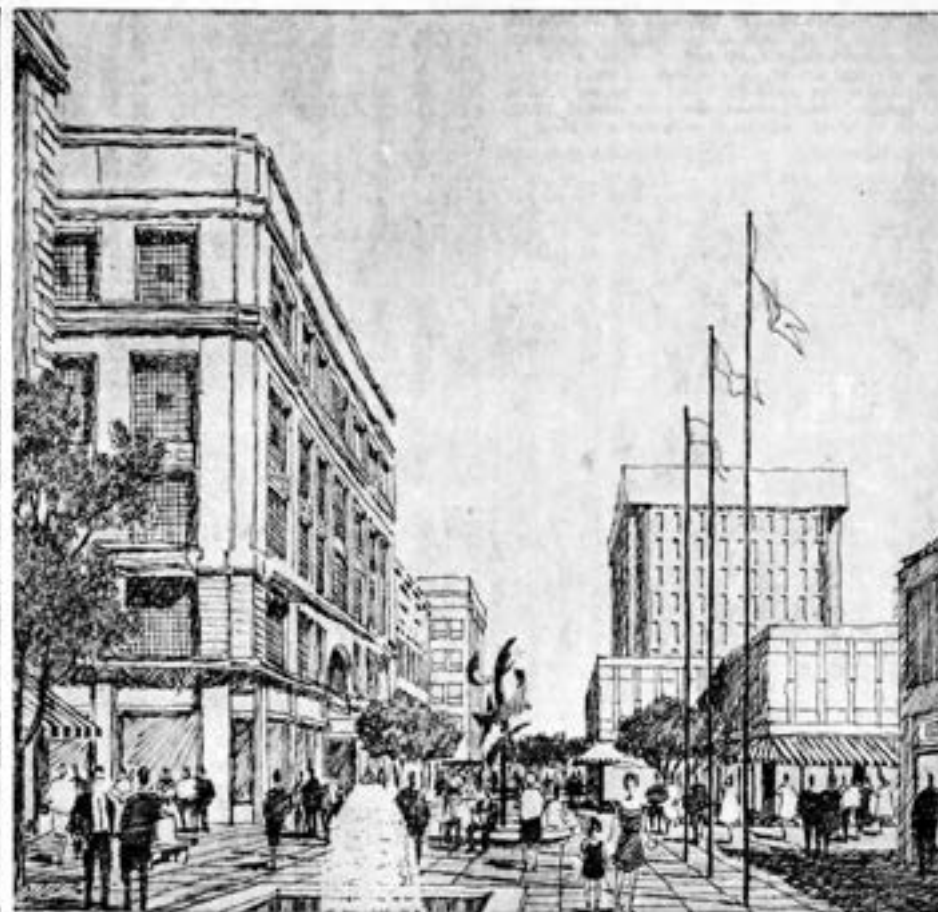
1962



MUNCIE, INDIANA, SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 1968



This sketch indicates how the northern retail anchor (left foreground) might relate to a Walnut Mall. Pedestrians would underpass Main Street in this view looking north on Walnut at Main. The new county building is seen in background at center and a new city hall could be added (right center) to complete a civic center approach to the northern leg of the mall.



This view looks south, down the proposed Walnut Street Mall. Ball Stores appears to the left, beyond what would be a Charles Street Cross Mall. The sketch is an expression of the open-air type mall in which store front remodeling is an important ingredient. This type mall can also include a children's play area, exhibit space, art objects, rest benches and a public meeting place.

## Walnut Street Mall Could Be Answer to Deterioration in Downtown Muncie

By LARRY SHORES

Malls come in all shapes, sizes and price packages.

Some are the basis of big, attractive shopping centers, which draw customers by the thousands and drain money and sales from traditional downtown retail centers.

Still others form the basis for the rebirth of American cities.

SUCH MAY BE the case with Muncie's proposed downtown mall.

Officials of Muncie Foresight, a private downtown renewal group, are currently studying how to go about revitalizing the heart of Muncie's downtown.

Even though the accompanying artist's sketches may seem grandiose, they may be the ultimate solution to cure advancing decay and retreating sales in downtown Muncie.

EDGAR SEWARD, president of Muncie Foresight, says his group is nearly ready to contract for a parking survey as another step toward what may some day be a Walnut Street mall.

The parking survey will tell Foresight and downtown merchants what is needed in the way of multi-tiered parking garages

to handle the increase of shoppers expected once a mall is built.

After the survey, the "gate" of financing renewal will begin. Seward hopes the city will cooperate by establishing a parking authority under terms of 1955 state legislation.

THE PARKING AUTHORITY will allow the city to issue revenue bonds to finance the parking garages.

Backed by fees from a proposed downtown assessment district and revenue from the garages once they are built, the city would be able to retire the bonds.

The assessment district, also provided by state statute, could be used to raise money from participating merchants or store owners within the assessment district's boundaries.

NEXT STEP would be obtaining federal urban renewal funds to finance construction of a Walnut Street mall. Chances of getting these funds are rated "excellent" once a city has an accredited planning program and proof that it is willing to finance part of the actual urban construction.

The first hurdle is being tackled here by a long-range transportation and development study underway by the Metropolitan

Plan Department staff. The second hurdle, proving that the city is capable of providing part of the cash outlay, would be scaled by building the parking garages.

The garages are always an integral part of downtown renewal programs since many parking spaces are lost in actual construction of a mall and reopening or closing of some streets.

ALONG THE WAY, the city administration must succeed in establishing a workable traffic pattern for the downtown project.

Also, Muncie Foresight must succeed in attracting a large, new retail store for the northern anchor of the mall. Once the project is off the ground and well underway, chances of attracting the northern retail anchor are expected to improve.

"The experts tell us this is the pattern in other cities," Seward said. "Once you can prove you are serious about downtown redevelopment, you begin gaining tenants instead of losing them."

Until that time, Muncie Foresight officials hope to retain what they have in the way of downtown tenants and keep their plans for a mall moving steadily ahead.



The back of the new northern retail anchor is seen in this sketch at left foreground. The view is taken from where High and Main streets intersect, and portrays what High Street might look like to the south. A four-level parking garage appears at the center where the fire-gutted Larph building now stands.

Even before the Muncie Mall opened, a proposal was introduced to convert downtown Walnut Street into a pedestrian-only outdoor mall. This concept was popular across the nation.

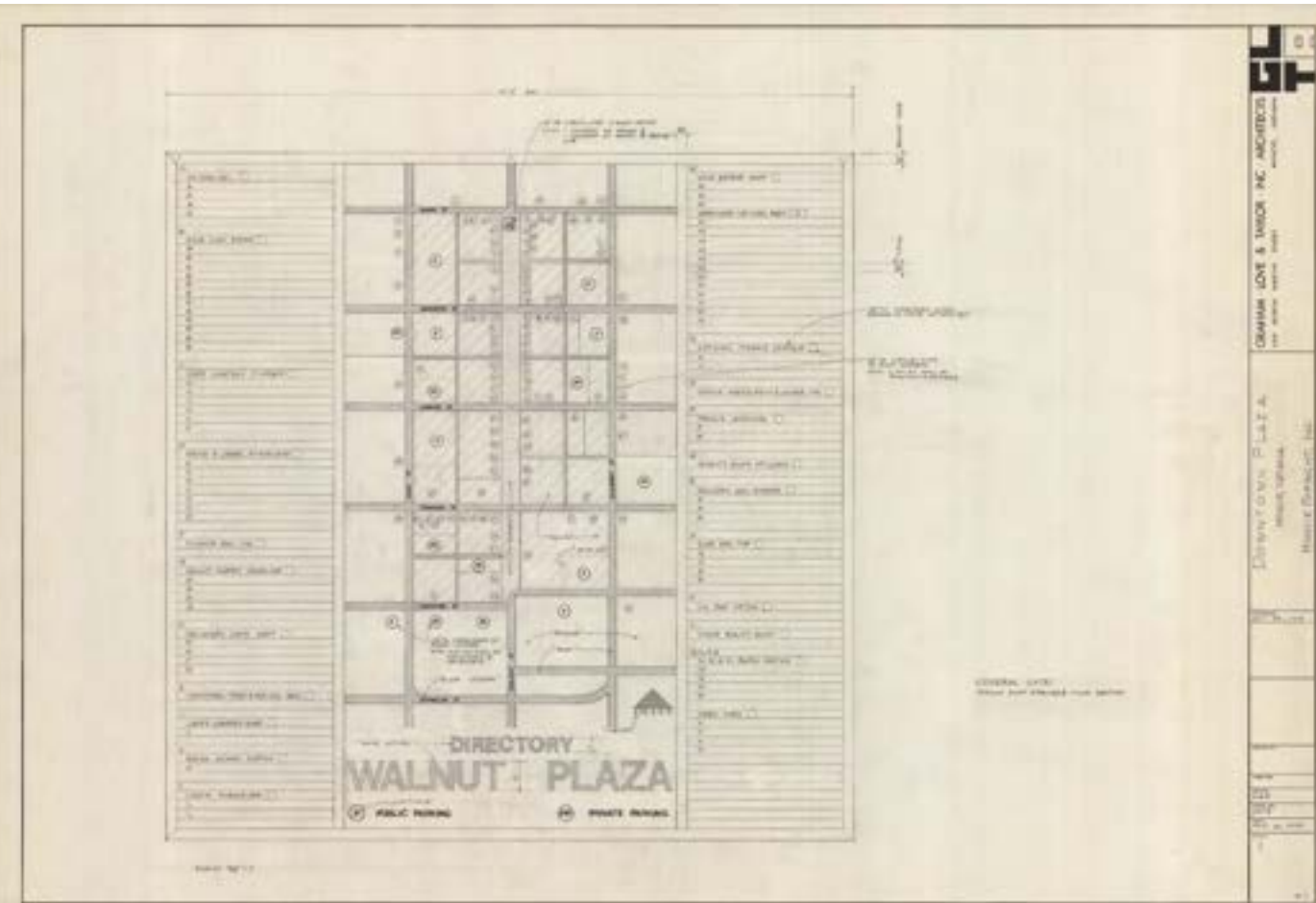
# MUNCIE FORESIGHT DOWNTOWN

CITY OF MUNCIE, INDIANA  
SENIOR  
BO. OF PUBLIC WORKS & SAFETY  
DATE: JULY 1973  
DESIGNER: G. TAYLOR  
ARCHITECT: GRAHAM, LOVE & TAYLOR, INC.

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ARCHITECTS: GRAHAM, LOVE & TAYLOR, INC.  
JOHN LANTZUS & JOHN RUSSELL  
100 N. WASHINGTON ST., MUNCIE, IND.  
1973

# PLAZA



Graham, Love & Taylor  
John Lantzius, John Russel

Plans were prepared by a local architectural firm in collaboration with 2 Ball State University professors.

Downtown Walnut Plaza Design & Construction 1973-1975



The grand opening of Walnut Plaza was greeted by a large crowd. Sadly, the novelty soon wore off and downtown was more deserted than ever. If downtown decayed because it was inconvenient to drive and park there, now it was impossible.

Walnut Plaza Grand Opening 1975



Walnut Plaza 1977



The decline continued. More and more businesses closed or moved out, buildings became vacant and deteriorated. Downtown needed life support.

Walnut Street by the late '80s into the '90s



In the early 1980's, a program began to encourage property owners to rehabilitate their buildings by offering grants to restore facades. As a HUD entitlement community, the city funded the program with Community Development Block Grant funds.

## Downtown Façade Grant Program

### 1983-1998

- Average Annual Spending - \$64,000
- Maximum Granted per year - \$100,000
- Average Grant - \$37,000
- Largest grant \$100,000 (Roberts Hotel)
- Smallest \$1,163 (Geiger Block)
- Funded by CDBG money
- 50-50 grant program



The early façade grant program had limited success.

## Downtown Façade Grant Program

### 1983-1998

- CDBG funded
- Began as a 50-50 matching program
- Initially, the maximum grant was \$5000
- Ended as a 70% (city) -30% (owner) match
- Largest grant \$130,000 (Senate Block)

Smaller grants were not enough money to complete a façade restoration and prevailing wage requirement made projects cost owners more money, thus the adjustment to 70-30 match.



In the early 2000's the city decided to invest in a major expansion of the façade grant program.

## Downtown Façade Grant Program

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### 2002-2005

- Total Grants Given - \$1.589 Million
- Private Match Investment – 2.54 Million
- 12 projects funded
- Concentration/Priority to Walnut Street Downtown Core
- Grants paid for front, rear and side elevations if visible from street, roofs when needed and architect fees

108 E Jackson St  
Commercial Office Space  
\$100,000 Grant Funded  
\$ 83,843 Owner Investment





# Downtown Façade Grant Program

## 2002-2005

- \$1.5 million total grants/forgivable loans made to 12 property owners
- Property owner required min 30% match
- Building required to be designated as a Local Landmark to receive funding
- Design Consultants required from a Pre-Qualified list of architects, 70% of fees were reimbursed as part of grant
- Design must follow the Secretary of the Interior Standards as approved by the City Historic Preservation and Rehabilitation Commission
- Contractors were required to demonstrate experience with historic structures

122-124 S Walnut  
Retail street level + market rate apartments  
\$227, 672 Grant Funded  
\$ 97,573 Owner Investment



# Downtown Façade Grant Program

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## 2002-2005

### Partners and Funding Strategies:

- Muncie Redevelopment Commission (MRC) borrowed (bonded) \$1.5 million.
- Bonds purchased by consortium of four local banks: Star, Old National, First Merchants & Mutual (now Northwest).
- Funds were granted by MRC to Urban Enterprise Assn dba Downtown Development Partnership, as a Community Development Corporation who managed the program and contracted for work.
- Bond payments made annually for 10 years by City of Muncie paid from Community Development Block Grant Funds (backed up by EDIT and TIFF)

116 S Walnut Street  
Street level retail + market rate apartments  
\$251,010 Grant Funded  
\$114,739 Owner Investment



# Downtown Façade Grant Program

## Design and Construction

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Bill's firm, Morgan Roemmel Design, in collaboration with Structural Engineering Solutions, Inc. was hired for 4 of the façade projects. He believes the success of Muncie's program is due, in large part, to the following goals.

- **Strive for Authenticity**
  - Study similar buildings
  - Find historic photos
  - Search for physical evidence
  - Reference historic documents
- Hire the most clever and skilled contractors you can



# AUTHENTICITY

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## Study Similar Buildings

One way to seek authenticity is to study well preserved or restored buildings whenever you can.



# AUTHENTICITY

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## Study Similar Buildings

Since documentary evidence is often lacking, sometimes one has to make educated guesses about a building's original appearance. Even though he is now retired, Bill still pauses to photograph historic buildings whenever he travels. Ice cream tends to lessen the impatience of his companions.



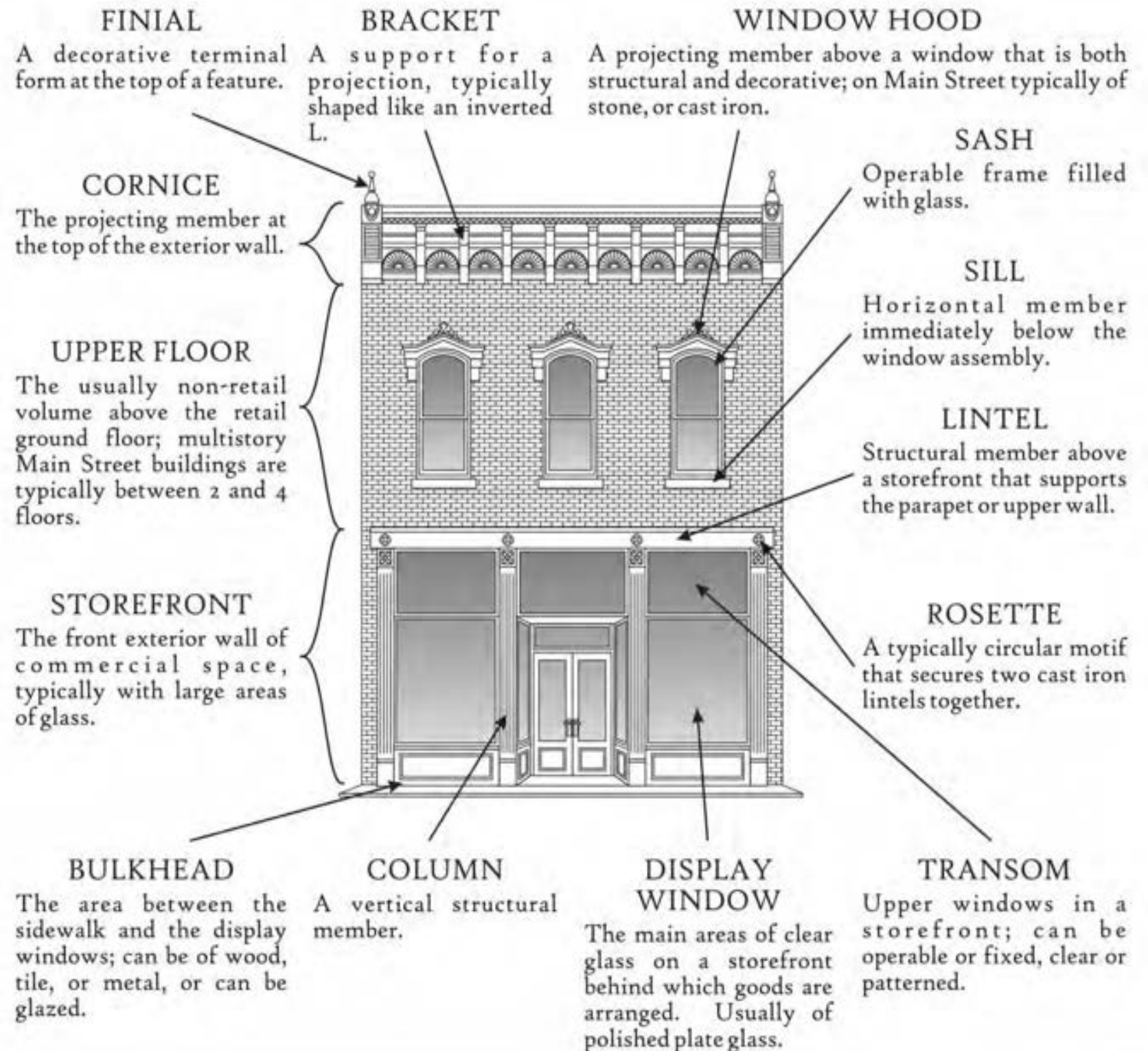
# AUTHENTICITY

## Study Similar Buildings

You can take advantage of study by others, like this example from Illinois Main Street. Victorian facades share a number of common features, with a myriad of permutations.



### ANATOMY OF A MAIN STREET BUILDING



# AUTHENTICITY

## Historic Photos

The first MRD project is the building on the right. This, surely, is an infill building from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



A historic photo shows that the building once had the elaborate brick and stonework of the building on the corner.

What a shame it was torn down.

Or was it?

# AUTHENTICITY

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## Physical Evidence

Peeling away some of the aluminum, we discovered an original cast-iron column and cast-iron pilasters. Sadly, they were all that remained of the original façade.

Unfortunately, the budget would not allow reconstruction of the original façade.







The budget was further constrained by the need to address a side façade. This was once a party wall to a building that had been torn down. Note the pockets where the joists used to be. As is often the case, this wall was built of soft brick not intended for exposure to the weather. A frame of steel studs and an EIFS system were used to stabilize this wall.





This is the completed project. It's the least authentic of our designs. In hindsight, some might say we should have preserved the mid-century façade. Others might say that we violated the Secretary's Standard on prohibition of creating a false sense of history. That said, we preserved all original fabric, people like the building, and it has been continuously occupied for 20 years.

# AUTHENTICITY

## Historic Photos



Our next project is the Heorot Pub and Draughthouse. It looked like the photo on the left when we began. The historic photo on the right was certainly no help.



# AUTHENTICITY

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## Historic Photos

We found these two early photos of the Heorot. Note the very different appearance of the second floor. We decided that the one on the right was later.



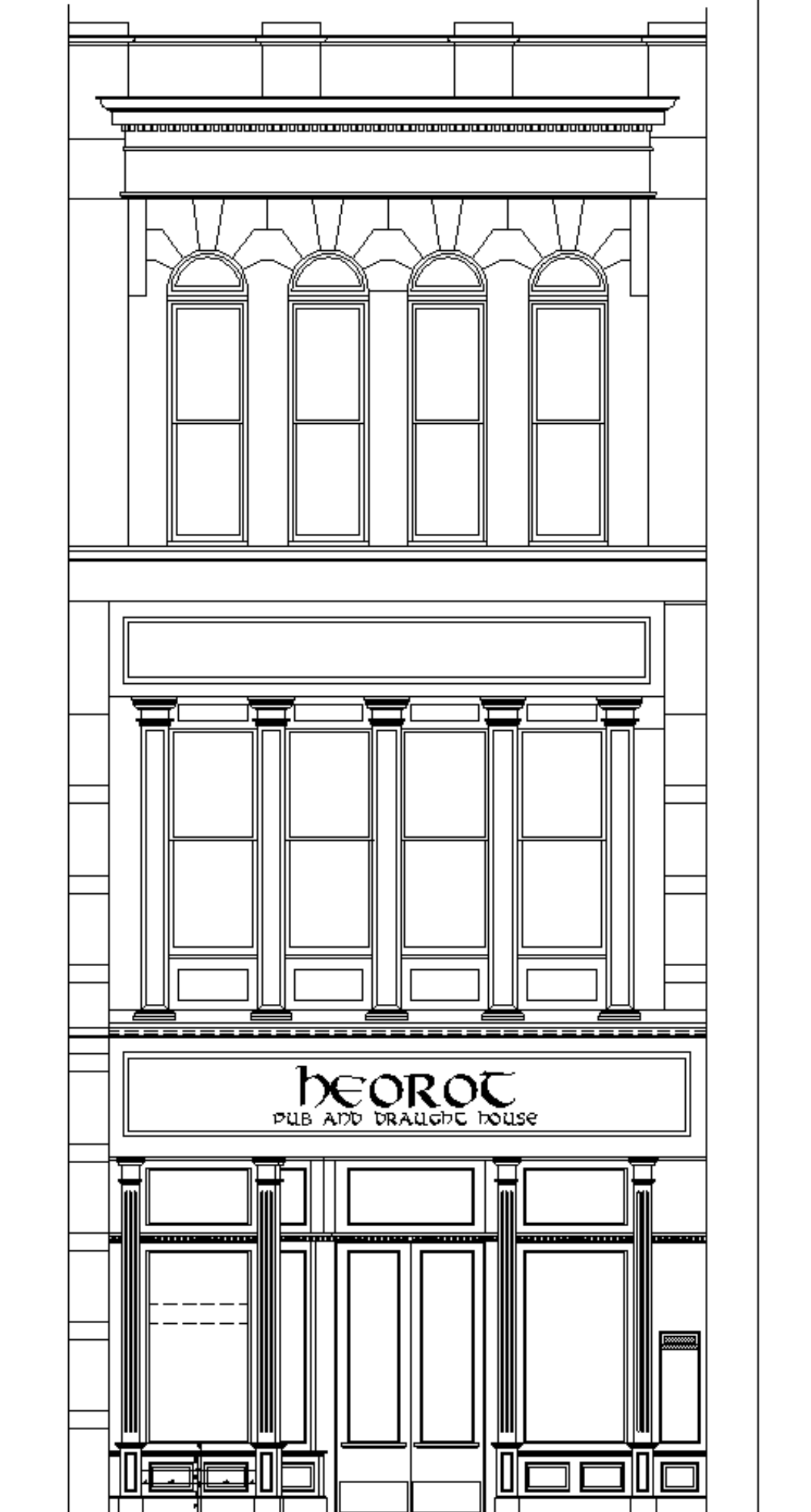
# AUTHENTICITY

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## Physical Evidence

Since some elements of the later historic façade remained, we opted to go with that design. It is interesting to note that the third floor façade is stone, while the second floor is sheet metal crafted to look like stone.

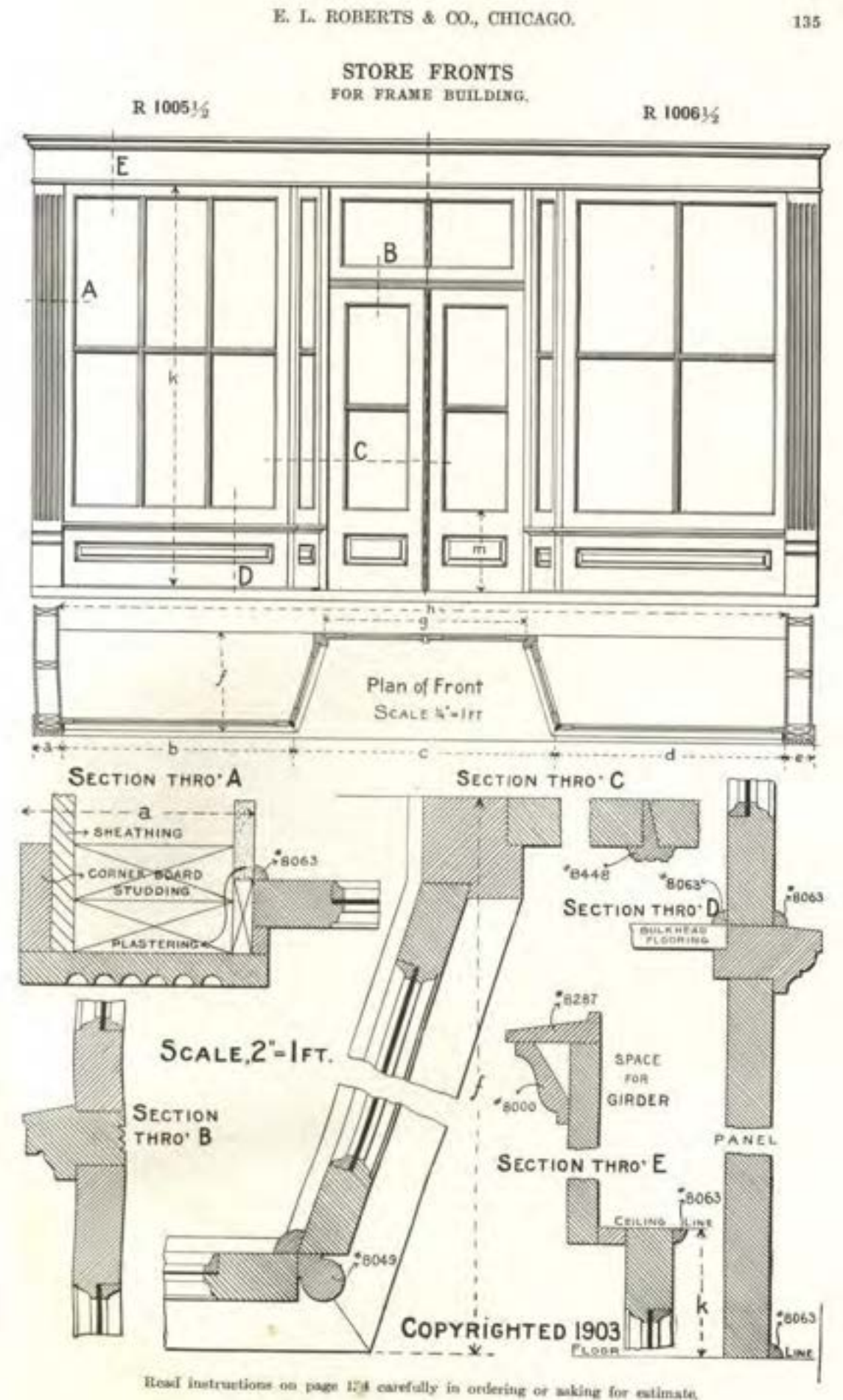
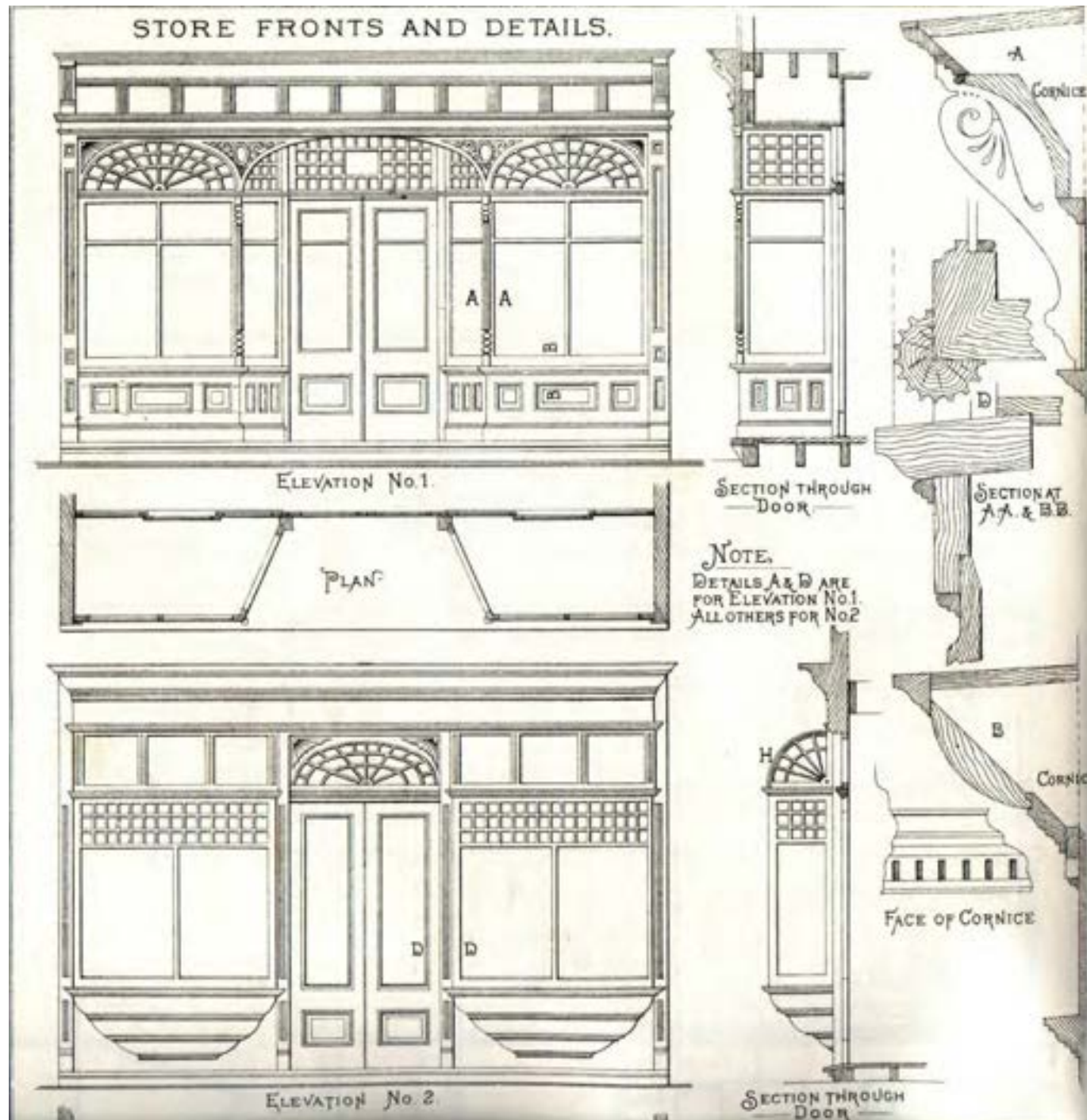
Paint shadows on some of the sheet metal guided us on molding profiles.



# AUTHENTICITY

## Reference Historic Documents

We never found photos of the early storefront, so turned to period catalogs for inspiration. Many of these such as E. L. Roberts, Musser Sash and Door, and Mesker Ironworks are available as reprints.



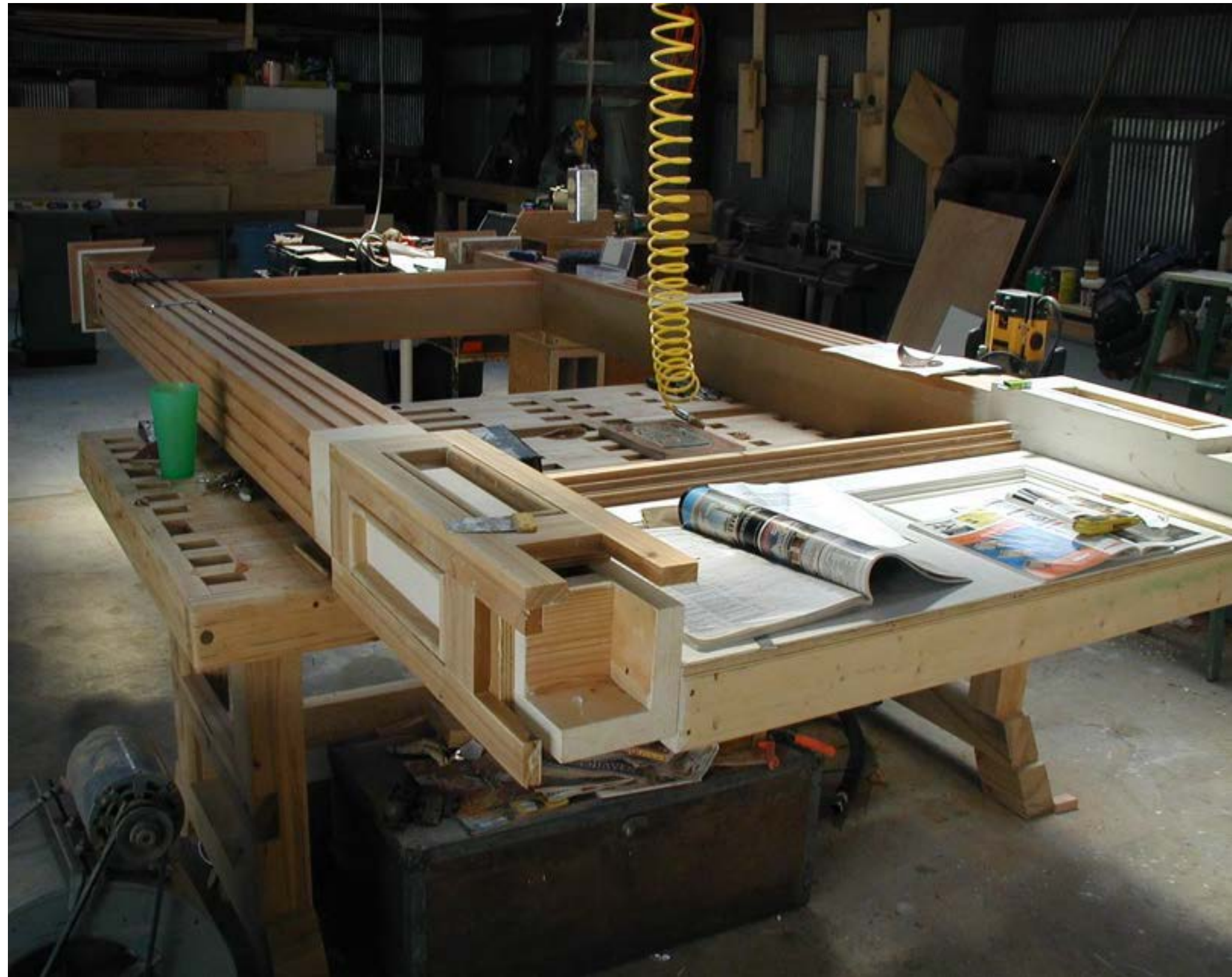
## CONTRACTORS: Use Skilled and Clever Craftspeople/Contractors

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This brings us to our tip about hiring clever contractors. Our builder for the Heorot was Matt Gossage of Griffin Restoration. We had observed storefront work happening on site. Those projects were at the mercy of the weather and took the main entrance out of commission for a long time.

There must be a better way. If you could mail order a storefront in 1900 and have it come in on the train, then surely we could build a storefront off site and plug it in.

So, after scrupulous field measurement, the Heorot storefront was built in the relative comfort of Matt's shop.



The storefront was moved to an adjacent vacant building where it got its first coat of paint.





On the appointed day, the storefront was carried down the sidewalk and wrangled into the Heorot. Hurray! It fit.



# CONTRACTORS: Use Skilled and Clever Craftspeople/Contractors

Within a few days, the doors were on, the glass was in, and the storefront was receiving final touches.



The completed project.





Our next project is Doc's Club. Again we have a very unhelpful historic photo. This building had received one of the earlier façade grants but was in need of some tlc.





We almost didn't recognize the building in the historic photo on the left. The third floor was removed after a fire in the 1930's.

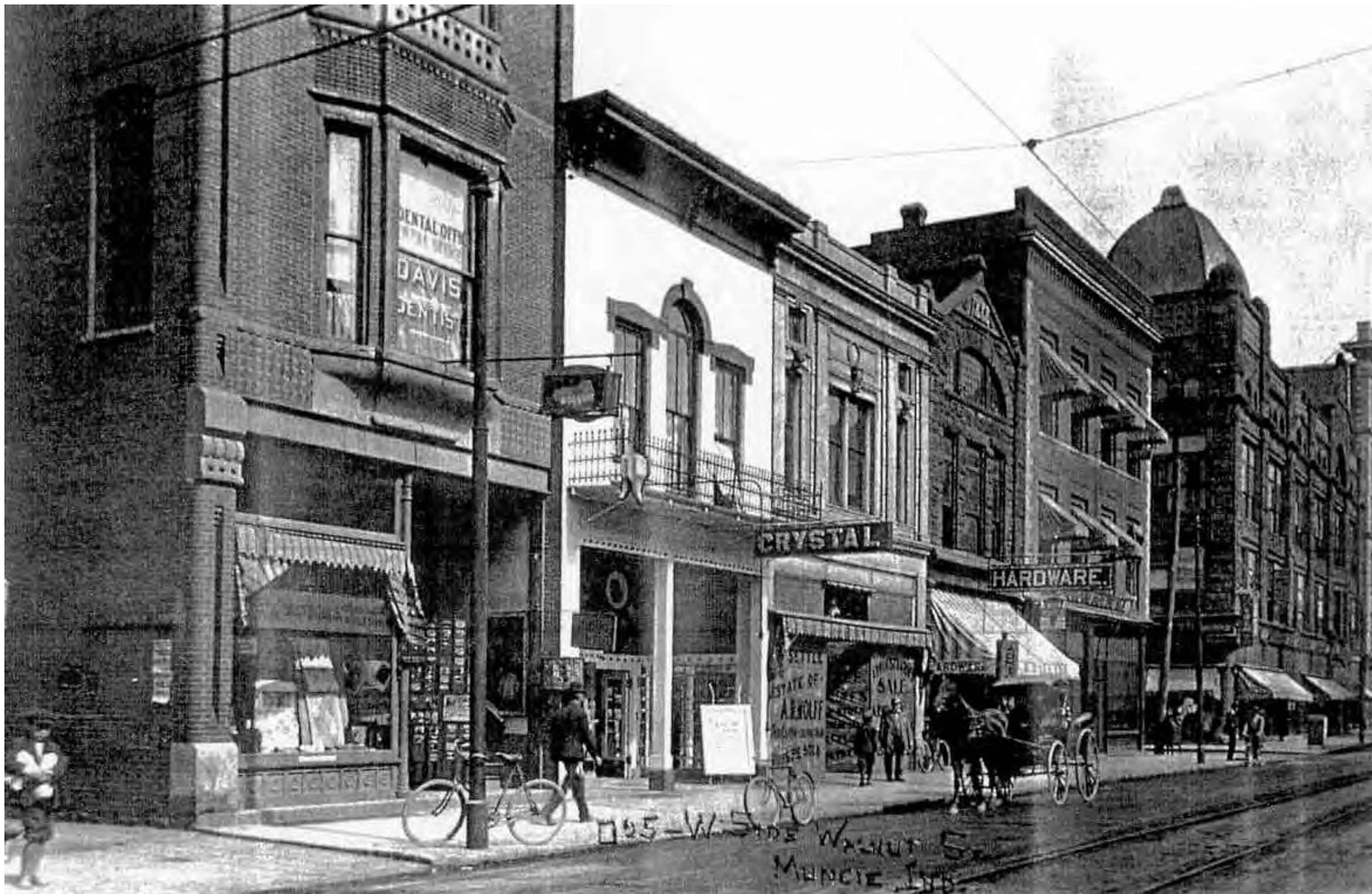
The façade work at Doc's was limited to rot repair, some trim and paint because much of the budget went to a badly needed new roof. We hated spending money on things with no visual impact, but preservation of the building's integrity had to come first.



The final MRD project is Ballaird Hall. Vera Mae's Bistro next door (an early grant recipient) had been so successful that they needed to expand. There's a long story about the name change from Ballard to Ballaird, but no time to tell it. We were blessed to find a historic close-up of the storefront.



This historic photo guided several façade restorations. Ballaird Hall is third from the left.





This was another Matt Gossage project. Again, the storefront was crafted in the shop and inserted into the building.



Ballaird Hall completed as an annex to Vera Mae's.





Ballaird Hall's rear façade was highly visible from a large parking lot and the street to the west, so it received some attention as a part of the grant-funded project.



The façade grant push had the desired effect. We like to think that those 12 projects achieved “critical mass” to turn downtown around.

## Downtown Façade Grant Program

2002-2005

### RIPPLE EFFECT

- Reduction in vacant buildings
- 20+ initial market rate apartments were developed in upper stories of participating buildings
- Return on investment for property owners (all local individuals)
- Efficacy of process (design, bid, build)
- Increase of tax revenues (both property taxes and TIFF)
- Quality of Life/Place returned to downtown
- Spurred additional private investment





In addition to the private investment required by the grant match, an untold amount of private dollars went into interior renovation.

Here, the interior of Ballaird Hall was transformed from an abandoned hardware store into luxurious dining space. The second floor was remodeled into an over-the-top apartment for the building owners.





Unused upper floors were developed into market-rate apartments, as here at the Heath Iron building. This is also an example of a rear façade renovation.





The rebirth of downtown made it less risky to invest in nearby buildings. The Judson Building got a complete rework, inside and out, with no public dollars involved.



These Walnut Street buildings were renovated with only private funds.







The Patterson Building received multiple façade grants through the years. Our poster child for downtown decay eventually became a useful structure.





In the wake of the façade program, downtown Muncie saw the first new construction in decades.

In the next several pages are the 2002-2005 façade projects that you haven't seen yet.



Historic Photo

### Muncie Façade Restoration Grant Program

Murray / Freund Building  
Owner: Murray Building Partnership  
Design: Underwood Architecture



Before



Before



After

# Muncie Façade Restoration Grant Program



Historic Photo

## Renaissance Place

Owner: Renaissance Place, LLC

Design: Gooden and Ellis Architects



Historic Photo (1960's)



Before



After

# Muncie Façade Restoration Grant Program



Historic Photo

205 S. Walnut St.  
Owner: Gary Riley  
Design: Rob Van Marter



Before



After

## Muncie Façade Restoration Grant Program



Before

American United Appraisal

Owners: Jay and Brian Allardt

Design: GEA Architects



Historic Photo



After

# Muncie Façade Restoration Grant Program

Downtown Development Council/Urban Enterprise Association

Owner: Muncie Urban Enterprise Association

Design: Gooden and Ellis Architects



Before photos



After

Downtown Muncie is once again a place where people want to be and businesses can thrive. Once a bit scary, it is now lively, even at night.

Below is a shot from Ribfest and at right is Jenny Devoe performing to a packed Walnut Street during Muncie Gras.



We hope this presentation may prove helpful to other downtowns.

Thank you.