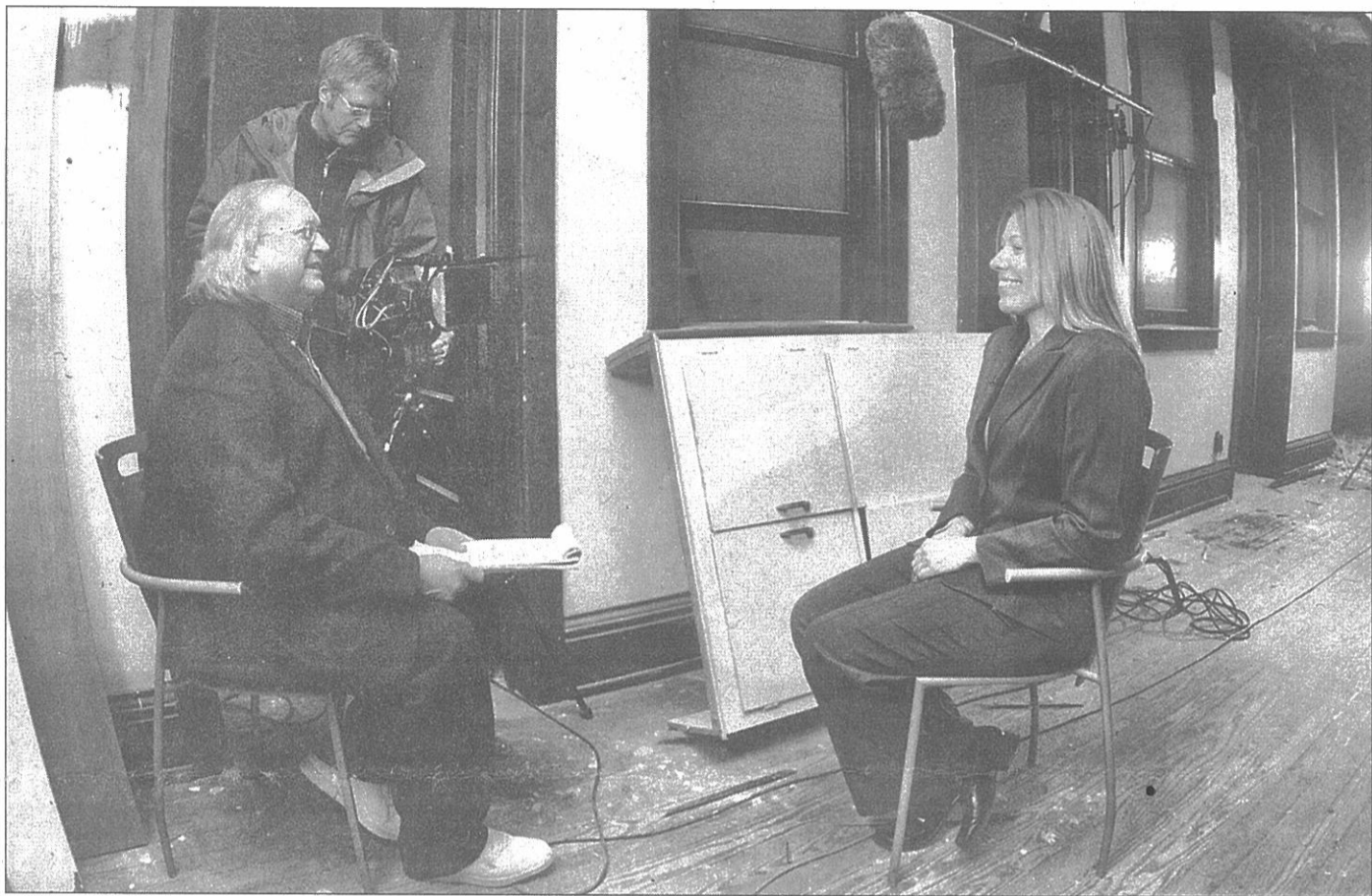


"It's always remarkable to me, the kind of vision it takes and the kind of courage it takes to launch into a project to bring something back or make it into something that's beautiful again, 'cause there's so many challenges — whether it's structural or financial. I always just have a great admiration for local groups that will take things on like this."

GARY BEATON
HGTV Senior Producer



KEVIN HARE/THE ENQUIRER

Gary Beaton, a senior producer for HGTV, interviews Kathleen Eriksen, Battle Creek downtown development director, in the condominiums.

Lights, cameras of HGTV come to check out B.C. condos

30-second spot to air on network in May for Restore America segments

ROBERT WARNER
The Enquirer

The three old buildings being redeveloped as Battle Creek's Riverfront Condominiums really weren't ready for their closeup Thursday, but it didn't much matter.

A crew from the HGTV cable network was in town to shoot hours of video footage that will be boiled down to a 30-second spot to air in May.

The condo project was selected as one of 12 sites nationally to be featured in Restore America vignettes on the home-improvement network 2007. The honor comes with a \$25,000 grant that will go toward construction costs.

"It's been fun, it's been exciting, it's been educational, it's been really cool," said Kathleen Eriksen, downtown development director for Battle Creek Unlimited, the city's economic development component.

"Sometimes in a community, people lose sight of their uniqueness, or what makes that community special, and sometimes it takes someone from the outside to come in and say 'What you have here is unique and special,' and it was nice to have someone appreciate that," she said.

Sitting amid the droop-



JOHN GRAP/THE ENQUIRER

A film crew working for HGTV catches some rehabilitation at the Riverfront Condominiums on West Michigan.

ing plaster and exposed lath boards of the still-in-demolition second-floor condo units at 115 W. Michigan, HGTV Senior Producer Gary Beaton said:

"It's always remarkable to me, the kind of vision it takes and the kind of courage it takes to launch into a project to bring something back or make it into something that's beautiful again, 'cause there's so many challenges — whether it's structural or financial.

"I always just have a great admiration for local groups that will take things on like this," Beaton said.

Most of the morning, Beaton was asking the questions of Eriksen, Mayor John Godfrey, architect Randy Case,

Realtor Talia Champlin and Genell Scheurell of the Midwest regional office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Chicago.

Each of his subjects sat in front of a video crew for up to a half-hour of inquiries. Occasionally, one of them would freeze up mid-answer and have to start over; mostly they bantered easily with Beaton despite the lights and camera and onlookers.

Case, the architect who drew up the transformation of the space from dilapidated transient hotel rooms to luxury and mid-range condos, said he was quizzed about the buildings' history, and some of the design obstacles he faced.

For example, he said, in the Ratti Building, "It was basically an old hotel, more like a rooming house, so people would rent just a room for the night, and so there wasn't a room big enough for a living room. So we have to remove some walls to get large spaces to make it flow better."

Scheurell said she was impressed with the condo plan from the start.

"We just thought it was a fabulous project for Battle Creek," she said.

As for Eriksen and the downtown development partnership, Scheurell said, "They're definitely driven and they're focused and they really get it. They get what needs to be done, both from the revitalization perspective and the community development perspective."

Once the 30-second video clip is completed, it also will be available on the network's Web site, www.hgtv.com.

Eriksen said the Downtown Development Partnership will have access to more of the footage shot in Battle Creek this week for use in promoting the condo project and downtown living in general.

Robert Warner is senior writer for the *Enquirer*. Contact him at rwarner@battlecr.gannett.com or 966-0674.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Battle Creek's Riverfront Condominiums are to be featured in Restore America vignettes to appear on the HGTV cable network in May. The 30-second video also will be viewable on the network's Web site, www.hgtv.com.