

Ratti building receives prestigious state historic preservation award

The Battle Creek Downtown Partnership, an initiative of Battle Creek Unlimited, has been selected to receive the Michigan Historic Preservation Network 2008 Building Award for the Rehabilitation of the Ratti Building, Phase I of the Riverfront Condominium Development. This award is presented once a year to an outstanding rehabilitation project that has made a significant contribution to the preservation of Michigan's heritage.

The award will be presented at the Annual Preservation Awards Ceremony and Reception which takes place on Friday, May 9 at the Henry and Clara Ford Estate—Fair Lane.

Allesandro Ratti immigrated to America from Italy in 1871. He was 16 years old when he began his new life by working in a carnival. Thirty one years later, after laying terrazzo at the new Battle Creek Sanitarium, he opened his first downtown business, a candy store.

After the store burned in 1923, Allesandro moved the family business down Michigan Avenue and opened a men's clothing store in what became known as The Ratti Building, built around 1903. Above the store the family ran the 15-room Victoria Hotel, which housed Italian immigrants who came to Battle Creek to start new lives.

Like many historic buildings in downtown Battle Creek, the 5,000 square feet Ratti Building became vacant and had fallen into disrepair and where it remained for more than 20 years.

The Battle Creek Downtown Partnership envisioned their offices in the Ratti Building a space that would reflect the future of the downtown by not only setting the standard for rehabilitation and restoration, but also showing the public the possibilities a historic building can provide. The space ideally situates staff with main street accessibility at the ground level of the Riverfront Condominium Development.

The 100-year-old historic hotel located above the Downtown Partnership office is now a blend of contemporary and historical design with large windows, hardwood floors, exposed brick, skylights, a double-sided fireplace, a waterwall, and great city views. There are also two downtown residential units offer cool environs that have been fully renovated.

The development/construction

team consisting of Architecture + Design, Southwest Builders, the Riverfront Condominium Development Company LLC, and the Downtown Partnership shared a vision and philosophy for respecting the history of the building and creating an exciting work environment for the Downtown Partnership and condo sales office.

Research was gathered from many sources: the public library, the City tax records, and the Ratti family. Alex Ratti, previous owner of the building shared stories and photos that were critical to the design philosophy. The Ratti Family is proud to see their heritage honored and grow.

For more information about the Riverfront Condominium project or urban living, contact Kathleen Eriksen at 968-1622 or by email at kathleen@downtownbattlecreek.com.

CityLinC holds annual Stuff-A-Bus Campaign

CityLinC is conducting its annual Summer Stuff-A-Bus Campaign through August 15. The program places school supplies in the hands of high-risk children when school starts in the fall.

Area businesses, organizations, and churches are participating in this community-wide campaign by hosting collection boxes and financially supporting the effort.

Individuals may volunteer with CityLinC to stuff backpacks with school supplies in preparation for distribution to area schools. CityLinC is also accepting cash donations for the Stuff-A-Bus Campaign, which can be sent to CityLinC, 70 Calhoun Street, Battle Creek, Michigan, 49017. Benevolent giving receipts will be issued.

As a thank you to the Battle Creek community, CityLinC will host a "Back-2-School Bash" at [\[location\]](#) Saturday, Au-