

# Renovation decision soon

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A group of six business and community members are set to decide later this month which of three local builders will gain the rights to renovate three historic structures in downtown Battle Creek into housing and retail space.

**Battle Creek Unlimited** collected plans for the buildings at 115 and 119 W. Michigan Ave. and 15 Carlye St. in November and turned them over to a committee to decide their fate by the end of December.

The structures each have been vacant for several years and have housed retail businesses and a hotel in the past. They were built in the early 1900s.

BCU spent three years and \$730,000 to purchase all three of the buildings. The organization is selling them for \$400,000 com-

pared along with financing help, said Kathleen Eriksen, director of the **Downtown Partnership of Battle Creek**.

The development of the buildings is part of BCU's plan to boost the number of residential units in the city to more than 40 during the next year, she added. The plans call for first-floor retail and upper-floor condominiums.

"They are all local builders, Calhoun and Kalamazoo Counties. We anticipate quality developments," Eriksen said.

The organization in September sent informational fliers to more than 400 developers across the country and in Canada to promote the project.

Of that group, three developers responded.

"I was hoping for six. But the three we received are quality proposals, so we are happy," Eriksen



"We anticipate quality developments" in downtown Battle Creek, Kathleen Eriksen says.

Photo by Shawano Cleary

said.

The organization has guidelines for the renovation of the space including the development of at least 30 market-rate condominiums and first-floor retail.

Preservation of the historic character and facade of the buildings also is required, as well as meeting specific construction schedule deadlines or the buildings' ownership reverts back to BCU.

Criteria used to pick the final de-

veloper includes a commitment and capacity for the builder to do the work, experience with similar projects, financial and marketing plans and a timeline.

This is the first time BCU has invested in residential property to encourage development in the downtown area.

The condominiums would be owned and sold by the developer to encourage home ownership in the downtown area. The retail

space will be renovated by the chosen developer but owned and leased through BCU.

The organization anticipates the retail would include specialty and boutique shops, with some business owners already informally expressing interest, Eriksen said.

BCU also is considering moving its downtown office into the new space.

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