

2022 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Thompson Block

Original and Only Thompson Block LLC; Mitchell and Mouat Architects; and Kincaid Building Group

Rehabilitation of the Thompson Block, Ypsilanti

The Thompson Block building was completed in 1861, just across from the busy railroad depot. Over the decades, the storefronts sold paint, bicycles, farm implements and automobiles, among other products. The Thompson Block's fortune followed that of the neighborhood, and it was completely vacant before a devastating fire roared through most of the structure in 2009. With collapsed floors and roof, the remaining brick walls were unstable and dangerous. Demolition was planned.

A development team led by Original and Only Thompson Block LLC signed on in 2017 to rehabilitate this neighborhood landmark. Stabilizing the masonry walls was a substantial challenge. The entire structure had to be repointed, with selective reconstruction to match the pre-fire profile of the

building. The use of many historical photographs guided the work. The \$13 million rehabilitation project employed both Federal and State Historic Preservation Tax Credits, a pre-development loan from the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, and received a \$3.2 million award from the Michigan Community Revitalization Program.

The Thompson Block reopened in 2021. Upper floors have returned to their original use as dwellings, with 20 loft-style apartments, and two new restaurants occupy the ground floor. What was once seen as a dangerous eyesore is now a new destination, further reinvigorating the Ypsilanti Depot Town neighborhood.

