

2025 Governor's Awards for Historic Preservation



Historic resources and archaeological sites tell us about the past and help us celebrate Michigan's unique identity.

Their preservation is vital to Michigan's present and future as they contribute to vibrant communities and our understanding of the past.

Each year the State Historic Preservation Office and the State Historic Preservation Review Board identify worthy recipients to receive the Governor's Awards for Historic Preservation, which are presented during

National Historic Preservation Month in May. The awards recognize homeowners who rehabilitate their homes; developers who transform underutilized historic structures into vital economic assets; and academic institutions, archaeologists, nonprofits, and units of government—among other partners—who strive to preserve Michigan's important historic and cultural resources.

2025 Recipients of the Governor's Awards for Historic Preservation

- Book Tower, Detroit
- Chapin Mansion, Niles
- Charlevoix Historic Sites, Charlevoix
- Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project, Niles
- Gordon House, Detroit
- Michigan Central Station, Detroit
- Rogers Theater, Rogers City



2025 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Awardees: Bedrock; ODA; Kraemer Design Group; and Brinker-Christman Joint Venture

Rehabilitation of the Book Building and Tower, Detroit

The Book Tower rose in 1926 beside the earlier Book Building, along a booming stretch of Washington Boulevard in Detroit. Rising to 460 feet above the city, the tower was the tallest building on the skyline until it was eclipsed two years later. Long a prestigious address, the luster of the property eventually declined. When the final ground floor tenant moved out in 2009, it became one of the tallest abandoned skyscrapers on the continent.

Starting in 2015, Bedrock gathered a team of partners to jump start a large-scale adaptive reuse project. Exterior statues, masonry, and over 2,400 windows were cleaned, repaired, or replaced. On the interior, the most challenging rehabilitation work involved reconstructing an illuminated glass and steel atrium dome, which had been covered with modern

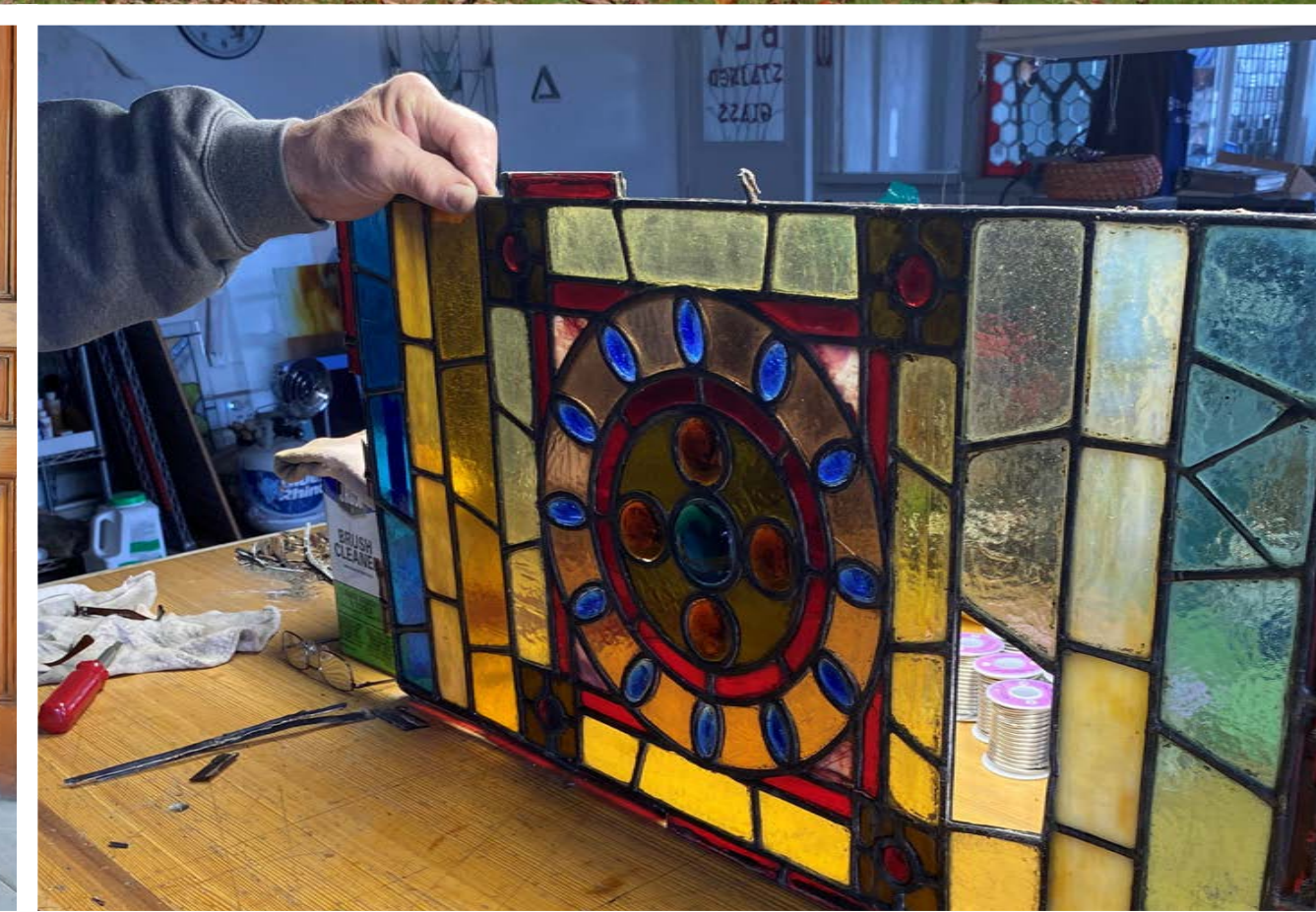
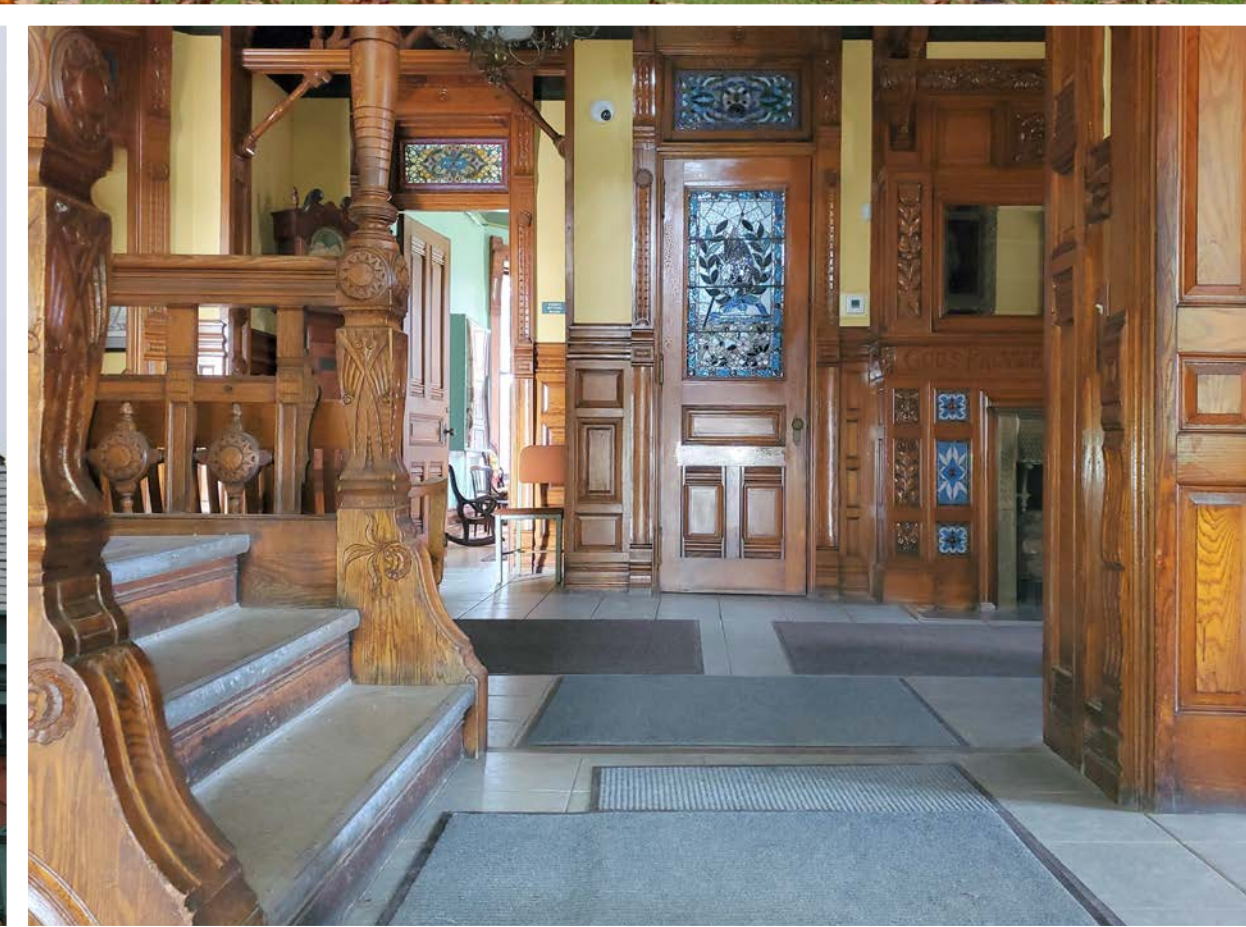
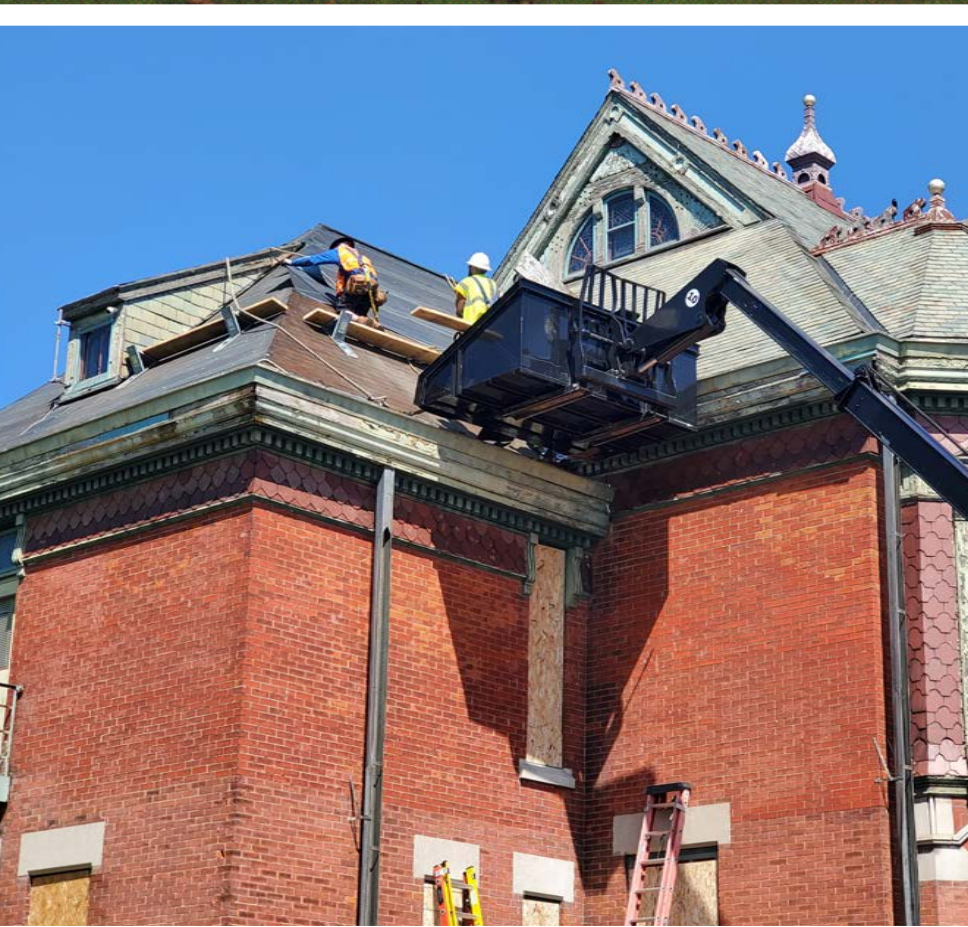
materials. Marble balustrades were recreated with handmade replicas and extensive plaster restoration restored original decorative elements throughout. A variety of financing tools supported the \$300 million rehabilitation effort, including Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and the first-ever use of a Transformational Brownfield Plan in Michigan.

The renovated Book Building and Tower reopened in 2023 with 36 stories of restaurant, retail, office, hotel, and residential occupancies. The restored atrium, meant to be a public space now known as The Rotunda, features glass illuminated from overhead. The project has brought new residents and round-the-clock activity to a once-desolate corner. This signature building on the Detroit skyline is vibrant once again.

Book Tower



2025 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Awardees: City of Niles; Niles History Center; and Mihm Enterprises, Inc.

Rehabilitation of the Chapin Mansion, Niles

Henry and Ruby Chapin built this highly decorative mansion in downtown Niles in 1884. Family heirs gifted the mansion to the city in 1932 to be used for civic purposes, and it became Niles' City Hall. When city offices moved out in 2012, it was time for the mansion's next chapter as part of the Niles History Center, the city's municipally operated museum.

In consultation with community and city leaders, the History Center developed a plan to preserve the historical elements of the mansion while interpreting the civic history which took place there during its era as City Hall. Several local artists and craftspeople restored interior murals, repaired stained glass windows and repaired or replaced damaged wood details. New storm windows have added protection and a sensitively designed accessibility ramp now allows improved

access for all. Starting in 2022, a project took shape to repair the mansion's complex slate tile roof and ridge caps, replace failing gutters and downspouts, and repair wood windows throughout. A SHPO Certified Local Government grant funded part of this work, but the city made a substantial investment to ensure it was done to the highest standards.

Since 2012, more than \$1.5 million has been invested into the mansion property from a combination of state, local, and private sources. The Chapin Mansion today hosts annual events, programming, and school and adult tours showcasing regional history. Niles has demonstrated a commitment to the mansion and gone above and beyond in its care, making it a true gem in southwest Michigan.

Chapin Mansion



2025 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Awardees: Charlevoix Historical Society; Freshwater Charch: a Design Build Firm; Smay Trombley Architecture; Richard Neumann Architect; Steven C. Seebohm Historic Paint Consultation; and the City of Charlevoix

Long-term stewardship of Charlevoix Historical Society Resources

In northwest Michigan, the Charlevoix Historical Society's care for three historic resources connects both residents and visitors with the city's history. Built in 1892, the Queen Anne-style Harsha House has been the home of the society and its museum for more than 45 years. Starting in 2016, a master plan for the property prioritized needed work, leading to a new roof, wood siding and masonry repairs, and a fresh repaint. On the interior, the foyer was restored, and other renovation work improved the society's exhibit and artifact storage space.

Across town, the unused Chicago & West Michigan Railroad depot was gifted to the society in 1992 and immediately stabilized. A phased rehabilitation effort began in 2018 to restore the original look of the building, including exterior restoration and a detailed paint analysis, which informed a complete repaint into

historically appropriate colors. In 2023, a Certified Local Government program grant helped to fund a new roof for the depot building, which is now used as an event venue.

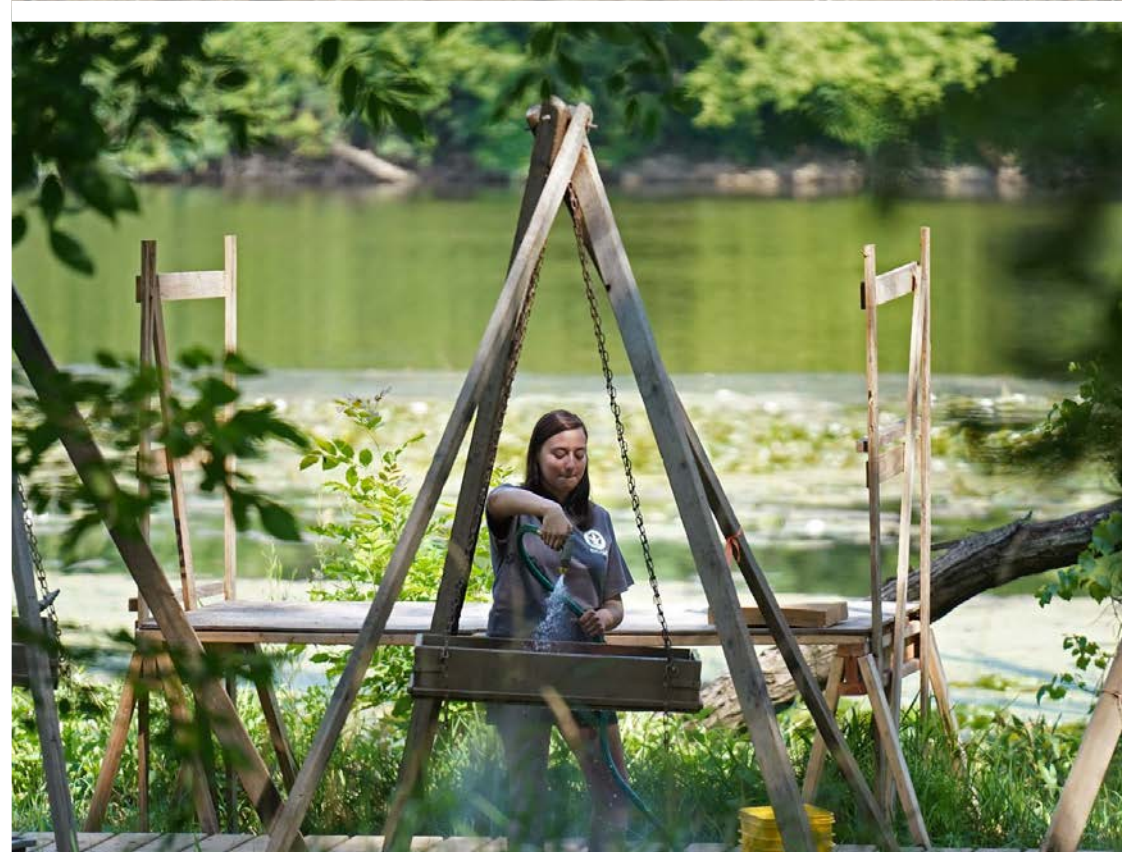
The South Pier Lighthouse came under local ownership in 2006, requiring a long-term plan for restoration. Local fundraising was paired with several successive Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program grants to replace corroded steel and concrete, repair ventilation equipment, repaint the lighthouse interior, and restore the exterior's fire engine red color. The lighthouse remains the city's most photographed landmark and celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2023.

With the Charlevoix Historical Society's leadership and support from the city, the history of this lakefront town will be in good hands for years to come.

Charlevoix Historic Sites



2025 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Awardees: Western Michigan University; the City of Niles; Niles History Center; and Support the Fort, Inc.

The collaborative Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project, Niles

Fort St. Joseph was established by the French in 1691. The fort became a vibrant hub of colonial and Native American activity that brought together settlers, soldiers, and fur trappers, who interacted and traded with nearby Potawatomi and Miami settlements. The fort was abandoned after the United States claimed the territory in 1781.

Nature slowly obscured all evidence of the once-lively trading post, and its exact location was lost to time. In 1998, Western Michigan University archaeologists were invited to conduct a survey in search of the fort. Initial shovel test pits yielded a trove of artifacts including glass trade beads, hand-wrought nails, pottery made in France, numerous animal bones, and knives stamped with the names of French cutlers. The fort location was found!

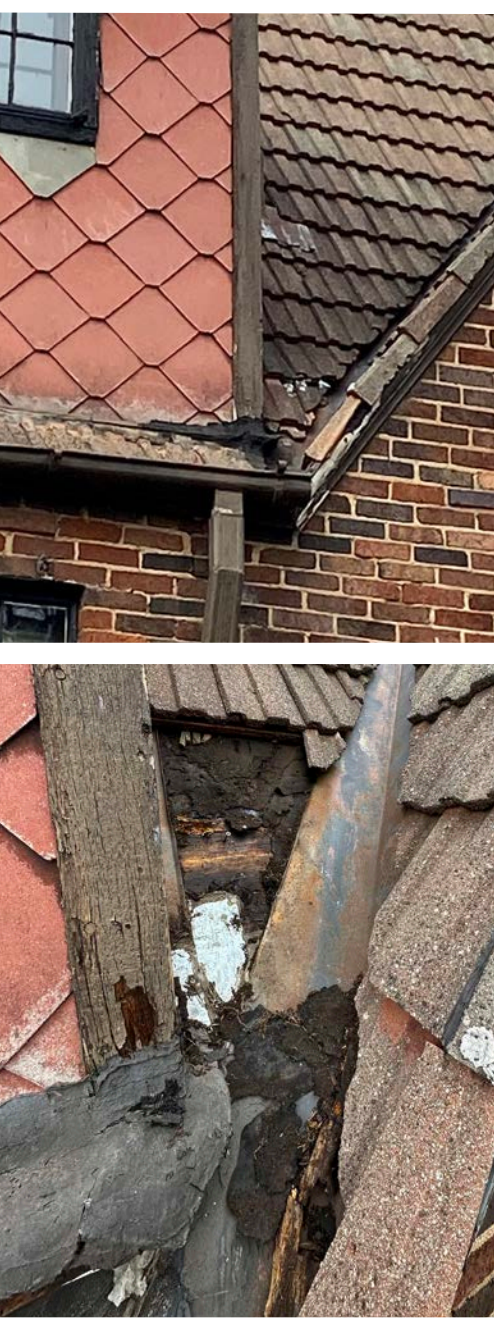
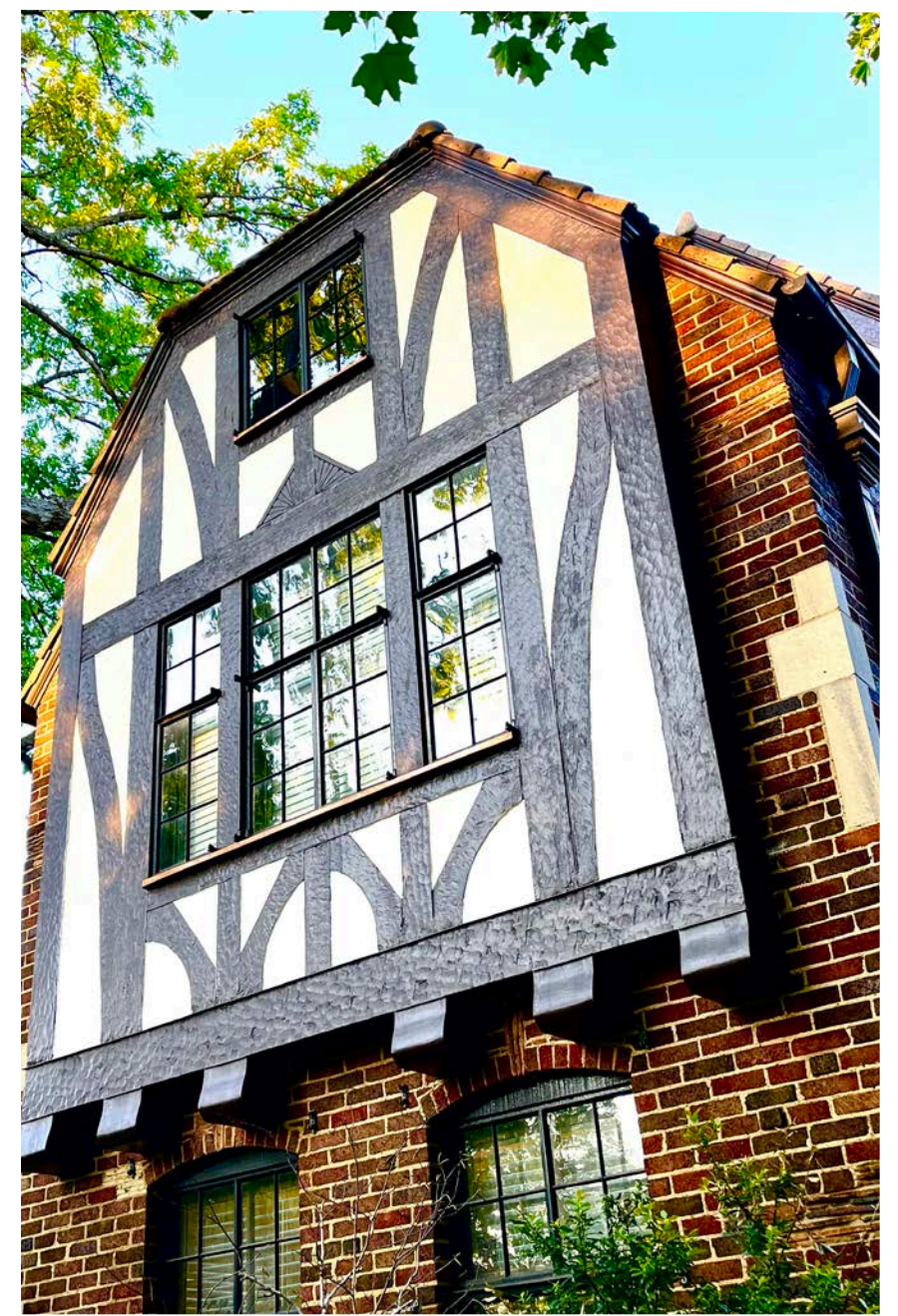
The Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project is a community-based participatory research collaboration between the university and local partners. Annual project work educates and engages in numerous ways. As a structured part of the university's curriculum, the field school provides aspiring archaeology students with hands-on opportunities to learn surveying and excavation techniques, artifact processing, analysis, and interpretation. Since no detailed diagram of the fort exists, these students are creating a map of Fort St. Joseph with each discovery.

The project also has an extensive public outreach program, including summer camps for children from 6th grade through high school, an annual community open house weekend, and an engaging and dynamic social media presence. In 2025, this enduring educational partnership has worked together for more than 25 years to bring this history to life.

Fort St. Joseph



2025 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Harry and Lucy Gordon House

Awardees: John and Victoria Lange; Terry Swafford, Inc.; McCarver Mechanical Heating and Cooling; and Koala Insulation of East Metro Detroit

Rehabilitation of the Harry and Lucy Gordon House, Detroit

Harry and Lucy Gordon were the first occupants of this 1926 Tudor Revival home in Detroit's fashionable Sherwood Forest neighborhood. The Gordons' original house design featured decorative half timbering, dormers with diamond shingle cladding, and roofing tiles made from concrete.

After nearly 100 years in service, the roof of the home required repairs to address water damage and runoff. Owners John and Victoria Lange addressed this and other rehabilitation concerns by utilizing the new State Historic Preservation Tax Credit.

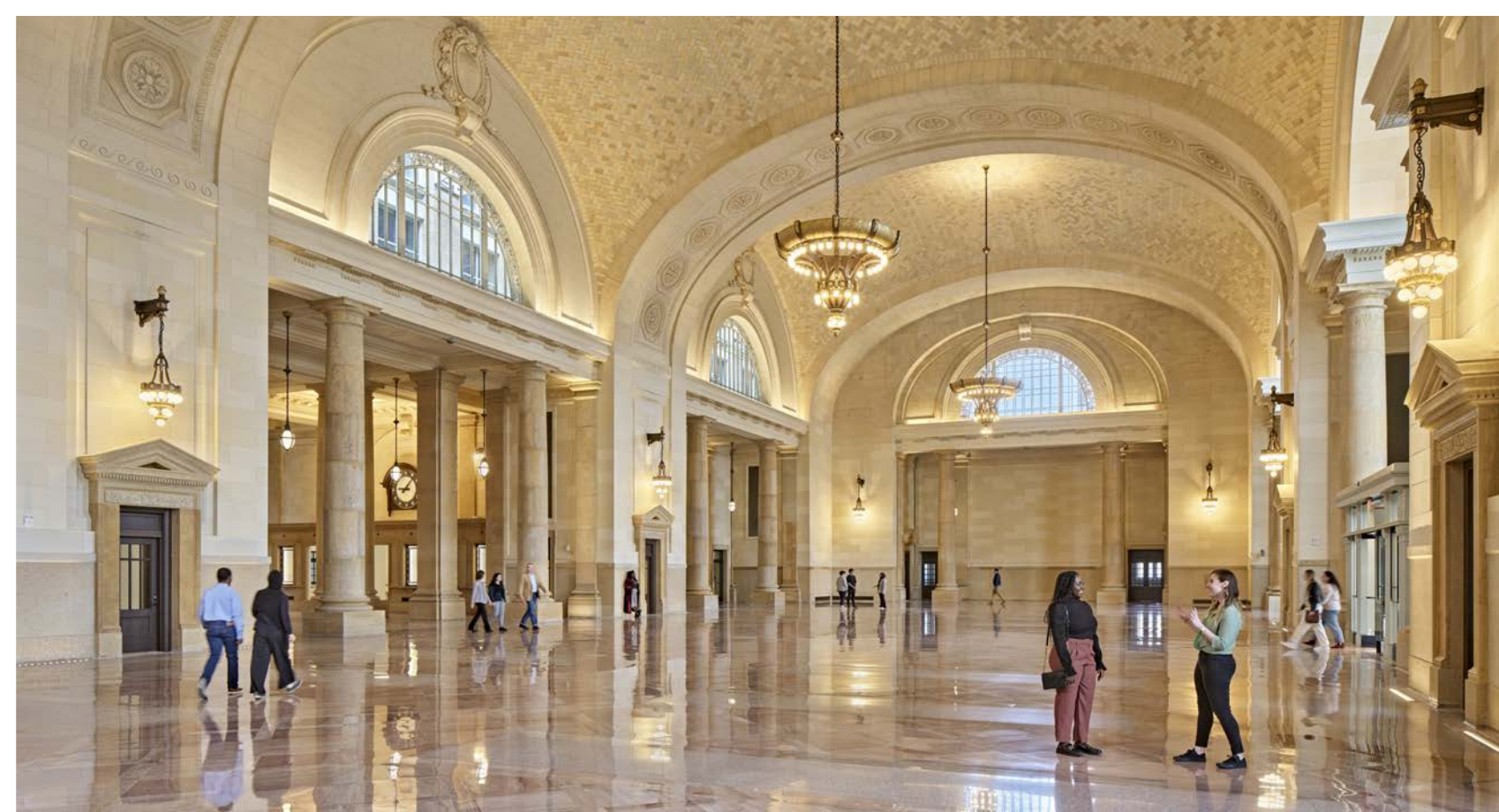
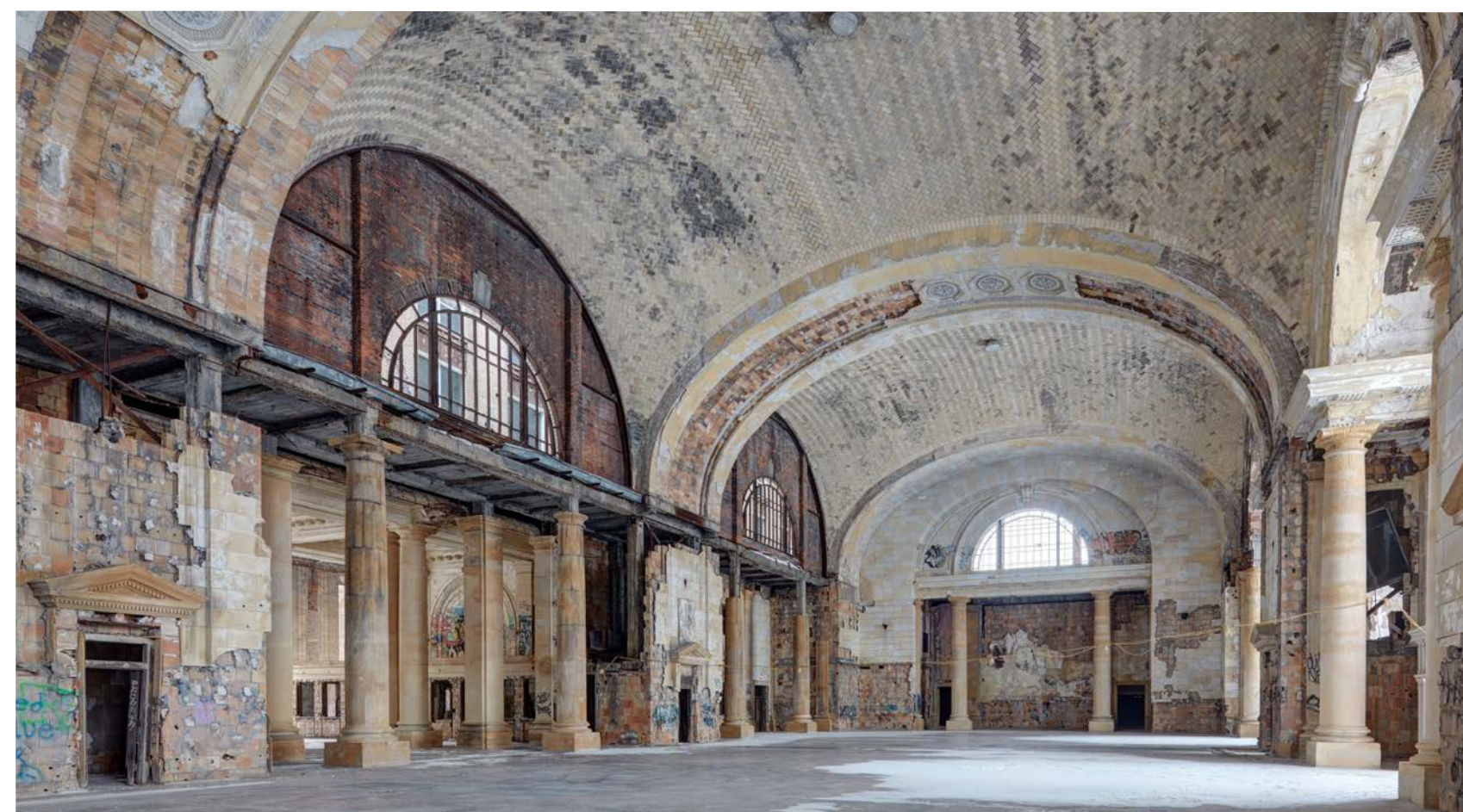
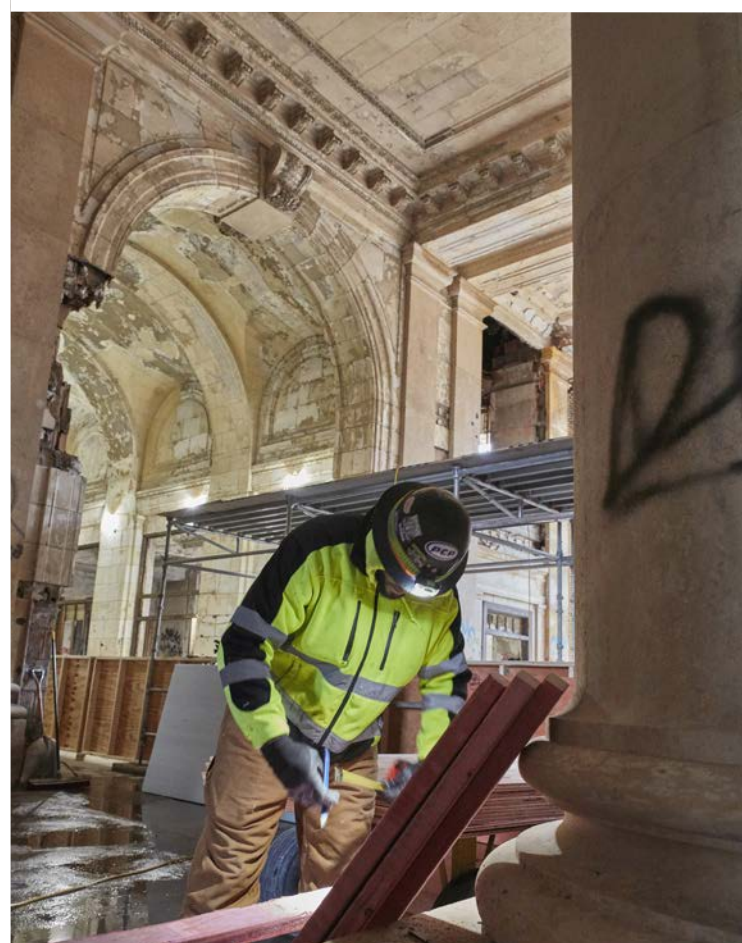
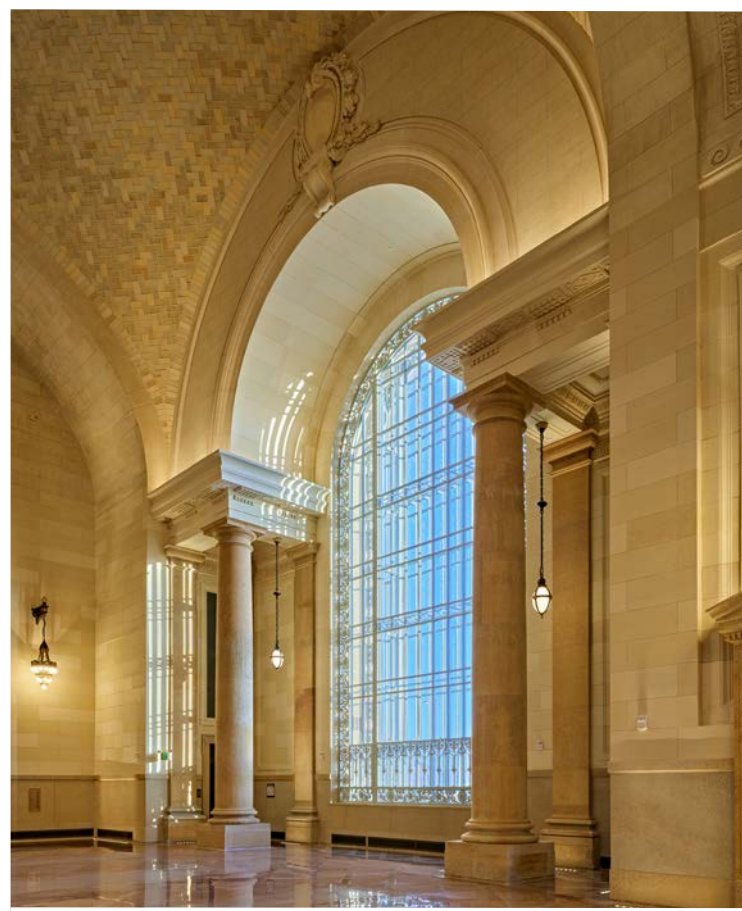
Exterior half timbering repairs took care to replicate the texture of the tooling marks on the historic components, maintaining the visual qualities of the original. Stucco between the timbers was patched in-kind. Some of the concrete tile ridge caps and

raking eave trim pieces were either missing or too deteriorated to reinstall. After an extensive search to locate salvaged components that would match the remaining roofing tiles, the homeowners traveled out of state to procure enough materials not only for the current project, but also in case future repairs are needed. On the interior, compatible insulation was installed in the attic and a sensitively placed air conditioning system was added to the upper floors.

Historic materials and details contribute to the authenticity of a place. Homeowners such as the Langes exemplify the efforts of property owners across the state who live in historic districts, believe in their community, and are willing to go the extra mile, or in this case miles, to preserve the distinctive character of their home.



2025 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Awardees: Ford Motor Company – Michigan Central; Quinn Evans; and Christman-Brinker Corktown Transformation Joint Venture

Rehabilitation of the Michigan Central Station, Detroit

For much of the 20th century, millions of passengers from faraway places were welcomed to Michigan beneath the columns and archways of Michigan Central Station. But as modes of travel changed, the station languished. When the last train left in 1988, the building quickly spiraled into disrepair, left open to the elements and damaged by scrappers and vandals.

The visionary leadership of Ford Motor Company saved the landmark and gave it new life. Ford acquired the property in 2018 to become the mixed-use centerpiece of a larger, 30-acre innovation and mobility hub. Three million gallons of standing water were pumped from the building's basement. Ford put out a call for anyone with an artifact from the station to return it to aid in the project.

Original building plans found in the Archives of Michigan and extensive historical photography aided the restoration work. Plaster and wood elements were salvaged and 3D scanned to enable recreations where authentic details were lost. More than 600 tons of unique limestone was replaced from the same quarry where the original stone was first harvested. The restoration effort was funded in part by Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits among other sources.

At the conclusion of the project, the Grand Hall, Ticket Lobby, Concourse, and other public spaces were thought to look as good as the day the building opened in 1913, if not better. Michigan Central is about more than the careful restoration of a building; it has become a catalytic nexus for new development and source of newfound civic pride.

Michigan Central



2025 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Awardees: Presque Isle District Library; Mr. Neon Lighting; Karl W. and Mary Ann Heidemann; Rachel Goodstein; and Richard and Janet Vogelheim

Long-term stewardship of the Rogers Theater, Rogers City

The Rogers Theater opened in 1937, providing a new entertainment venue and a touch of Art Moderne design to this northeast Michigan town. The theater offered first-run movies on its single screen. Later, in an era when small town theaters were selling out to regional chains, stable ownership ensured the Rogers would remain locally managed.

In an effort to broaden the types of entertainment which could be offered here, a theatrical stage was added beneath the movie screen in the early 2000s. The building offered wonderful acoustics for live shows, becoming a beloved landmark for live theater beyond just screened shows. Investments in building mechanicals, exterior repairs, and a community Kickstarter campaign funding the conversion to digital projection underscored the local passion and amount of work needed to keep it going.

In 2016, the owners announced their plan to donate the theater to the Presque Isle District Library, where it would become another branch among the district's five existing libraries, exclusively focused on arts, culture, and community programming. The library received a SHPO Resilient Lakeshore Heritage Grant in 2022 to restore the theater's signature marquee. On a September 2023 evening, "Lights On" illuminated the restored marquee for a community celebration.

Today the theater offers a mix of community theater shows, first-run and classic movies, educational arts programming, and event rentals. The Rogers Theater is a blueprint which illustrates how thoughtful property owners can partner with existing community assets to grow opportunities which benefit everyone.

Rogers Theater

