The iconic Bangor Grain Elevator is the tallest and largest building in the business district. When the city sought bids in 2004 to tear down the 130-year-old grain elevator dominating the main street, local historian Bob Emmert and George Fritz of Michigan Summer Blueberries, Inc. came to the rescue.

Emmert, a lifelong Bangor resident, threw himself into the project and applied for the State and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits and listing in the National Register of Historic Places. He cut forty trees from his own property and set up a portable sawmill at the grain elevator to cut lumber for the roof deck, the outer walls of the grain bins, and the vertical board and batten siding.

The Bangor Grain Elevator rehabilitation represents a high quality of workmanship and embodies a project where the participants went “the extra mile.” It reflects more than $300,000 in investment in the community and it demonstrates that a very utilitarian building can be rehabilitated for a new use and uplift the face of a town.

A landmark and a focal point in town, no one in Bangor can imagine their community without the grain elevator.
The Ferchill Group, Marous Brothers Construction and Jenkins Construction, Kaczmar Architects and Sandvick Architects for the Rehabilitation of the Book Cadillac Hotel, Detroit

The elegant Book Cadillac Hotel, opened in 1915, moldered for decades after it closed in 1986. Its fate became a source of tension between preservationists and those who considered it blight. After several rehabilitation attempts failed, the city of Detroit took ownership of the building. Recognizing that preservation of the building was key to economic development, city officials identified the Ferchill Group of Cleveland as developer and allocated nearly $30 million in loans to the project.

The Ferchill Group assembled a team of experienced historic rehabilitation architects and contractors and put together financing that included State and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits to return the hotel to its place as one of the most elegant hotels in the city. The project represents $160 million in direct investment and a total economic impact of $342.4 million. A workforce of more than one thousand construction and trades people labored more than two years to bring the structure back from a near ruin. More than forty companies were involved in the project. The Ferchill Group recreated some of the major interior spaces, and the construction team worked with experts to replicate and repair interior and exterior flourishes, including decorative plasterwork in former ballrooms and the recreation of the four copper ziggurats at the top of the hotel.

Few people believed that the Book Cadillac Hotel would ever be rehabilitated. Fortunately the Ferchill Group saw the building’s potential and created what is now the focal point of the Washington Boulevard Historic District and a jewel in the city of Detroit.
Central Michigan Developers LLC, Lance R. Bickel, and James E. Tischler for the Rehabilitation of the Borden Creamery, Mount Pleasant

Built in 1908, the Borden Creamery Building in Mount Pleasant sat vacant for forty years. In 2003 Central Michigan Developers LLC of Midland saw potential in the decaying building and its site and negotiated an option to purchase agreement with the Mount Pleasant Economic Development Corporation. When the city of Mount Pleasant agreed to move city offices into a portion of the building upon completion, the project’s success was insured.

The rehabilitation of the 40,000-square foot building required substantial environmental cleanup, including the removal of significant amounts of lead and asbestos. The cleanup and the historic rehabilitation transformed the west end of downtown. Citizens strongly supported the project and residents of the adjacent senior hi-rise even took the workers cookies throughout the project.

Central Michigan Developers (CMD) and its team demonstrated the possibilities and potential for historic rehabilitation and economic development. The project represents $5.2 million in direct investment leading to the creation of some 130 jobs. By using an array of economic development tools and incentives, CMD not only insured a long-term use for the historic Borden Creamery Building, but also revitalized the city’s downtown district by drawing people to the area where they frequent other businesses and services.
The Christman Company and SmithGroup for the Rehabilitation of the Mutual Building, Lansing

Lansing mayor Virg Bernero stated that the rehabilitation of the Mutual Building “has helped to promote an increased appreciation of our city’s past at the same time that it is contributing to the future economic health of our city.”

Built in 1928 as the home of the Michigan Millers Mutual Fire Insurance Company, the Mutual Building had lost much of its luster by 2006 when it was purchased by the Christman Company of Lansing. For years the building housed state offices on a leased basis and it suffered from a lack of everyday care and maintenance.

Christman used the State and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits as well as Brownfield Tax Credits in its financing. The project represents $12 million in direct investment leading to the creation of 296 jobs.

Together, Christman and its architect, SmithGroup, undertook a rehabilitation that was innovative for many reasons, most notably the fact that it combined meticulous preservation of historic features with high quality contemporary interior design and sustainable “green” practices. The Mutual Building is the world’s first and only Double Platinum LEED Certified green building, meaning that both the exterior and the interior meet the U.S. Building Council’s highest standards for sustainable design.

To further quote Mayor Bernero, the Mutual Building rehabilitation has been “a catalyst for further downtown economic development and a model for other local historic preservation projects.”
Great Lakes Center Foundation, Quinn Evans Architects, and Gregory Construction for the Rehabilitation of the Pere Marquette Depot, Bay City

The Pere Marquette Depot, located within two blocks of the center of Bay City’s central business district, was vacant for more than 30 years. Attempts to use the building as a restaurant, a library, and a depot for the local transportation authority failed, and with each failure the community’s disappointment rose.

The tide turned when the Great Lakes Center Foundation, a real estate holding organization for the Bay Area Community Foundation, began rehabilitating the structure in 2003 with funding from a variety of sources including the city, the county, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, and private and corporate foundations. The project represents $4.8 million in direct investment leading to the creation of some 120 jobs. The residents of Bay City are proud of the completed building, which serves as the central source for tourism and community information. In addition it provides gathering space for meetings, concerts, family days, weddings, and other events.

The transformation of the Pere Marquette Depot has inspired owners of commercial buildings in the area to improve their properties, and homes are being rehabilitated as the area undergoes revitalization.
Rehabilitation projects are never easy, but can you imagine rehabilitating a remote lighthouse? Without a dock? In the middle of the lake? Well, the people dedicated to preserving the South Channel Range Lights did just that.

Save Our South Channel Lights organized in 1989. This all-volunteer nonprofit organization quickly realized that it would take monumental cooperation to preserve the deteriorating South Channel Range Lights. Work on these lights has occurred over many years. In 2003-2004 Save Our South Channel Lights raised the money needed to stabilize the front light and build a seawall around the island on which it stands. The Department of History, Arts and Libraries awarded a Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Grant toward the development of plans and specifications for rehabilitation of the lights in 2002. From 2004 to 2008, the rear range light was rehabilitated with the assistance of a Clean Michigan Initiative grant from the Department of Environmental Quality. Rehabilitation included masonry work, replacement of the lantern, and the creation of a replica of the outer railing around the lantern.

This project represents the efforts of skilled professionals, like the contractors from Mihm Enterprises, as well as many volunteers who did manual labor as well as fund-raising. In addition to the high quality workmanship, the spirit of collaboration that imbued this project is noteworthy.
Wayne State University Department of Anthropology and the Greater Corktown Development Corporation for the Worker’s Row House Archaeological Project

Archaeology in the Detroit neighborhood known as Corktown was initiated in support of the development of a house museum in the oldest existing residential structure in Corktown. The project represents collaboration between the Museum of Anthropology at Wayne State University and the Greater Corktown Development Corporation (GCDC). Archaeology students at Wayne State have conducted three field seasons and have undertaken historic document research and exhibit development.

The Corktown archaeological project is reinvigorating Wayne State’s tradition of urban archaeological investigation. This project is important in Detroit archaeology because it focuses on a working class ethnic community. Excavations have revealed information about how Irish working class people lived in the city as early as the mid-nineteenth century—people who worked at the shipyards, lumber mills, factories, and foundries of Detroit. The project has received positive media attention in print, radio and television, and Wayne State and the GCDC have involved school children in the project. Corktown residents and local primary, secondary, and high school students have participated in fieldwork, and local school children have come to watch the excavations and visit the museum. The knowledge gained through this project enhances our understanding of Detroit’s ethnic diversity and will support future interpretation of the row house structure.