



# 2022 People's Preservation Choice Award



Nominee  
Descriptions

2022 Preservation Awards

# Mausert Block, Adams



The Mausert Block in Adams, was a condemned 28,000 square foot apartment building with retail that had laid vacant, foreclosed and languishing on the market for years in a town with no major development in 30 years.

After being laid off as a result of the great recession, Stephen Stenson and Holly Stenson, were looking to change careers. With five gut renovations of two -family houses under their belt, they sought a challenging project they called their 'big kahuna'. With their skills developed in the field of architecture and the Mausert Block for sale, what could possibly go wrong?

The building had been condemned and vacant since 2009 and the couple had watched the sale price over the years drop from \$600,000, in \$100,000 increments until it reached \$199,000. Seeing an opportunity, they lowballed an offer of \$60,000. After receiving an immediate acceptance, they realized – "Oh no, what have we done".

So at the end of 2012 they decamped from Boston to Berkshire County with their two boys, aged four and ten months, on a Historical Rehabilitation adventure. The building was in reasonable condition, and to drastically to reduce costs, the Stensons worked as developers, designers, contractors and even some sub-contractor work. The philosophy was – 'if it potentially catches fire, leaks or falls down, we get professionals to do the work'.

They came up with an innovative design to demolish a third of the inner building, preserving the historic outer rooms. This meant the requirement to install sprinklers was not triggered and the project still comply with the building code. It was a clever design, but the local authority insisted on a sprinkler system resulting in a year delay until the issue was resolved by the State Appeal Board. Worked commenced on the new storefronts and interior demolition to determine the structural condition of the building. The first floor required stabilization of previously incorrect historical repairs.

As there had been no redevelopment in the town in thirty years, no local banks were willing to finance the project. MassDevelopment came to the rescue, providing a construction loan to allow the interior rehabilitation work to commence three years after the start of the project. After three months of construction work, the first of three new Building Commissioners stopped the project as they questioned that innovative design. This resulted in three visits to the State appeal boards for resolution and a three-year delay.

In 2017 work finally re-commenced and the first retail space was opened in late 2018 while work continued on the upper floors. The third floor was nearing completion in March 2020. And then came Covid. This put the project on a slow until it's eventual substantial completion at the end of 2021.

So, after ten years they finally completed their 'Big Kahuna', a project described in the press as an "Epic redevelopment saga. And the ten month and four year-old? They were now ten and fourteen year-olds and part of the construction team, cleaning windows, repairing wood floors and maintaining landscape.

Nominated by: Stephen Stenson, Owner/Developer



# College of Fine Arts (H.K. Noyes & Sons Buick), Boston



The renovation of the College of Fine Arts building at 855 Commonwealth Avenue has been a transformative project on many levels. Boston University recognized the importance in renovating the Noyes Buick building, an important local landmark tied to innovations in transportation. This project has been a worthy endeavor because it not only preserves a part of Boston's history, but a part of our nation's history. It would be easy to focus on this fact alone but the renovation of 855 Commonwealth did more than just repair the skin of the building, it restored its physical connection to the City of Boston. For the first time in more 50 years, the building has a visual connection with the public realm and vice versa. It invites engagement with the public and the importance of this is immeasurable.

Nominated by: Wilson Butler Architects

# Charles River Speedway, Boston



The Charles River Speedway connects the public to historic preservation in a truly impactful and tangible way. Anchored by a biergarten and taproom (Notch Brewing) and a host of incredibly creative and talented vendors and retailers, including Boston's first sake bar (The Koji Club) and a new location for mixologist Ran Duan of Blossom Bar (Birds of Paradise), the Speedway welcomes all to eat, drink, shop, and connect with neighbors every day. It is a place that invites you to practice yoga in the courtyard, buy local art, catch a concert in the flexible events space in Garage B (or perhaps hold your teen's bar mitzvah?!), get the perfect haircut, and to grab a beer with your co-worker after work - all in the midst of a redeveloped historic complex that was once home to park administration offices, horse stables, snow removal equipment, and a police station.

Built in 1899 as the headquarters for a mile-long racetrack along the Charles River, the Speedway complex is a fascinating mix of building types across a 2-acre campus in Boston's Brighton neighborhood. Designed by William D. Austin in the Shingle Style with Colonial Revival influences, the architecture mimics the styles often found in luxurious seaside escapes like Newport, used here to reinforce the premise that outdoor recreation and the enjoyment of leisure time is meant for all. Over time, the rise of the popularity of automobiles affected the complex in various ways, ultimately the racetrack was razed mid-century to make way for Soldiers Field Road. The Speedway Headquarters buildings were used for different purposes until the 1990s, slowly falling into disuse.

Owned by the Commonwealth and part of DCR's Historic Curatorship Program, the redevelopment of the Speedway was made possible through a public and private partnership between DCR and the nonprofit Architectural Heritage Foundation. But the successful redevelopment of the Speedway was not accomplished by AHF and DCR alone.

The Speedway's rehabilitation is a testament to the power and perseverance of the neighborhood, preservation community, and local and state officials coming together to re-position and save a resource that was at risk of slipping away. This took a lot of time and perseverance: In 2002, the Speedway was nominated as a Boston Landmark; a few years later, MHC nominated the complex for listing on the National Register. The same year, Preservation Massachusetts added the site to their 2010 Most Endangered list. The increased attention led to DCR, the Boston Preservation Alliance, Historic Boston, Inc, and the Brighton-Allston Historical Association to organize a public charette the following year, generating ideas and community feedback about the site's future. State Representative Michael Moran's office continued to advocate for the rehabilitation of the site as a resource for the community. In 2014, DCR named AHF as the curator partner for the project. After years of work - and despite a fire AND a global pandemic - the Charles River Speedway has opened their doors to the public. With the thoughtful architectural and environmental designs of Bruner/Cott & Associates and Klopfer Martin Design Group, along with the efficiency and diligence of contractor D.F. Pray, the results exceed all expectations of what this complicated site could become. The historic buildings and their central courtyard have been transformed into a space for community and a source of year-round activities, attracting a new generation of Bostonians in pursuit of good, old-fashioned fun.

Nominated by: Architectural Heritage Foundation



# Houghton Library, Cambridge



The renovation of Houghton Library demonstrates the possibilities of providing support for contemporary needs and creating a universally accessible environment while celebrating the original fabric and design of a historic building. Interior changes introduced during the project improve the arrival experience, clarify circulation, and diversify opportunities for patron use while remaining sympathetic to the library's original design, aesthetic, and materials. The redesign of the exterior entrance forecourt enhances the library's presence in historic Harvard Yard and offers a transparent, accessible entry to this important local landmark.

Houghton Library is one of the few buildings in Harvard Yard with exhibitions that are free and open to the public. However, the existing façade and building entrance cloaked this invitation that Harvard Libraries was extending to the public. The design team focused on expressing more of the intended purpose of the building as seen from the Yard.

The original entrance, facing the Yard, was reached via a double stair with nine steps, a landing, and an additional threshold step at the door. This entrance was not ADA-compliant, and it was partially hidden behind shrubbery. The renovation introduced universally accessible graded walkways in addition to a new entry stair.

Drawing inspiration from original architectural drawings, the team modified the library's oval lobby, adding two openings, aligned with exterior windows. In this brightened and visually activated area, library ambassadors welcome and assist visitors. Modernized exhibition cases around the lobby perimeter display rotating exhibits drawn from the library's holdings. A relocated and expanded cloakroom provides secure storage for patrons' belongings, and a new visitor elevator now enables direct access to public spaces on all levels of the building, including new ground-floor ADA-compliant restrooms and second-floor exhibition space and classrooms.

A reconfigured, modernized reading room on the first floor supports both individual and collaborative research. Changes include a consultation room for reader check-in and materials requests and an adjacent group study room. These spaces are visually connected to each other and to the main reading room by full-height glazed partitions, which also provide acoustic separation between the three spaces. The original proportions of the room were preserved, as was the room's ceiling air delivery system, a unique feature in 1942 when the building opened. A new cork floor and acoustically treated ceiling contribute to the quieting of the rooms. Improved lighting, new adjustable-height chairs, and custom-designed tables make research comfortable and accessible for all.

The renovation of Houghton Library places preservation at the center of the daily experience of Harvard Yard, simultaneously preserving an historically important building while also addressing the needs of contemporary visitors and patrons.

Nominated by: Consigli Construction Co., Inc.

# Swartz Hall, Cambridge



This preservation project shows that heritage buildings can be adapted to support contemporary mission and use while respecting historically distinctive spaces and architectural detailing. The transformation of Swartz Hall illustrates that creative and thoughtful preservation can support development, innovation, and sustainability without sacrificing the integrity of historical and architectural fabric. This project supports students, faculty, staff, and visitors through thoughtful and inclusive interventions. Historic buildings need not be static — they can adapt and change to facilitate new uses, expand access and welcome to a broadened constituency, and build relationships with the surrounding neighborhood.

Harvard Divinity School's mission is to educate students of religion for intellectual leadership, professional service, and ministry. Housed in a building designed in 1911 for a theological seminary steeped in Western thought and religion, the Divinity School found the built environment was not fully expressing its non-sectarian identity. In the 100 years since taking over Swartz (former Andover) Hall, the building had never gone through a major renovation. The Divinity School, however, had evolved to encompass more than 45 faith traditions and welcome an international, diverse student population. Along with this evolution came a desire for expanded programming, ensuring an inclusive and fully accessible educational environment, and a more welcoming presence in its Cambridge neighborhood. Swartz Hall's functionality did not meet the Divinity School's present or future needs.

The vision for changing this situation emerged with a master plan, which aimed to address immediate and long-term program needs and unify the Divinity School with a plan that fostered a diverse community — all while re-investing in the historic building. The final design concept provided a new "front door" for the building, created education and social spaces that supported the entire community, and connected Swartz Hall with the surrounding campus and the neighborhood. The interior of the building was reorganized to maximize community space and daylight, and new systems and healthy building materials contribute to occupant comfort and wellness. The building envelope was insulated and restored. The design team and Divinity School had high goals for environmental stewardship and sustainability as well, and all embraced the challenge of improving the energy efficiency of the historic building.

Nominated by: Ann Beha Architects



# Boston Public Library, Roslindale Branch



The recently completed renovation of the Boston Public Library - Roslindale Branch preserves the essence of a historic 1960s community library while transforming it to embrace the needs of the 21st century. As both a “community living room” and an “information hub”, this restoration serves as a vibrant piece of the city, restoring the old structure and celebrating the new.

The renovated library represents one of its most important community space at the heart of Roslindale Center. As one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Boston, the library is expected to increase investment and revenue in local businesses, many that are minority owned.

The completely renovated and reconfigured interior will revive this vital place of community learning and gathering. Its design takes advantage of historical features such as the central dome with clearstory lighting, under which a new central point circulation desk will provide ease of access between library staff and patrons. The library is a semi-circular, open reading space will provide greater overall visibility while maintaining separate areas for adults, teens, and children. A community room, reading room, conference room and many computer stations with high speed internet access will complete the interior spaces. An urban garden transforms a former slice of sidewalk into a quiet place of reading with landscape in a busy urban intersection. The renovation also includes new roofing and new energy efficient mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.

An important aspect to this project was inclusivity. All aspects of the library were made accessible. A new canopy covered entry eliminates outside steps and ramps and provides universal access at grade level, leading to a gently sloped interior walkway connected to the main spaces. A new elevator will provide library staff and community access to the basement space, which contains storage spaces for local organizations including the Friends of Roslindale Branch Library and the Roslindale Historical Society among other elements.

The planning, design and construction process involved partnerships with the local community and 25% of the construction labor by Boston residents. The result has been overwhelmingly well received by the Roslindale community. In many ways it exemplifies the Boston Public Library’s motto “Free To All” by transforming the “much loved but in need of a major upgrade” library that welcomes all, with a universally accessible entry and interior that immerses the spaces within with warm natural day light along with good visibility and connection to its urban setting.

Nominated by: Leers Weizapfel Associates

# Courthouse Lofts, Worcester



Courthouse Lofts was a courageous effort to turn an iconic municipal building utilized to administer justice for more than 150 years into mixed income housing and a museum. The structure consists of over 200,000 square feet in Downtown Worcester; it is part of a larger revitalization of Worcester's Historic Lincoln Square district. The original building, in Greek Revival style, is on the National Register of Historic Places. The courthouse's other additions exemplify the Beaux-Arts style of the late nineteenth century, while a modern Mid-Century design is reflected in the last addition known as the Annex.

The owner, Trinity Financial, organized financing from federal, state, and local sources to obtain historic tax credits and affordable housing funds. The singularity of this achievement was captured by The Architectural Team's (TAT) senior project manager, Phil Renzi: "Courthouse Lofts is one of the most extraordinary adaptive reuse projects our firm has taken on... Our design team faced the challenge of restoring and combining multiple historic structures from different centuries into a single community, and the result is truly exceptional. This community combines the best of modern living with monumental and exquisitely detailed historic architecture."

Historic preservation not only salvaged this prestigious structure but went all out in its restoration. Every interior element integral to the structure was retained, as well as built-in furnishings typical of a courthouse. Those furnishings serve as tangible reminders of its former mission. Living rooms of several apartments display a judge's bench and jury box, creating one-of-a-kind living environments.

Interestingly, the architect who designed the interior vaulted spaces at the 1897 main entrance was Rafael Guastavino, whose iconic domes grace buildings like the Boston Public Library, Ellis Island's Registry Hall, and Carnegie Hall. Coincidentally, the construction manager and restoration contractor for Courthouse Lofts, Tocci Building Corporation, is headquartered in the Woburn, MA manufacturing building where Guastavino fabricated his tile.

The Worcester Courthouse stood vacant for 15 years, awaiting an architect like TAT to transform it on a personal, human scale. TAT created substantial townhome units in previously inaccessible basements and attics by designing to allow access to above and below floors and obtain natural light from the courtyards. TAT's vision saw grand stair entrances become a dramatic "front yard" for apartments, where neighbors can relax amid lounge furnishings and bookcases. The most prominent room in the building, the Superior Courtroom, is a community lounge for residents to socialize in an inspiring historic space.

A structure which served this community for more than a century and a half is again "of the people" and "for the people" - now as mixed-income housing. It was an honor to work on a building of such historical and emotional significance to the community; it now stands as a symbol of the revitalized spirit thriving in the proud City of Worcester.

Nominated by: Tocci Construction



Which project do you think deserves  
this year's award?  
Vote for your favorite, starting on  
April 11!



Voting will be open from April 11 through May 11.  
The winner will be announced LIVE during our 2022 Preservation Celebration at Boston's  
Fairmont Copley Plaza.

To cast your vote and see more project images, visit  
[www.preservationmass.org/peoples-preservation-choice](http://www.preservationmass.org/peoples-preservation-choice)

To purchase tickets or sponsorships to our May 11 event and support Preservation  
Massachusetts' statewide work, visit [www.preservationmass.org/awards](http://www.preservationmass.org/awards)

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