

East Central Illinois Service Group

Pour Brothers Taproom



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The History of 40 East University

On a clear day in 1912 in Champaign, IL when University Avenue was still a dirt road, Barnum and Bailey's Circus paraded with over a dozen elephants as illustrated in the picture below. The Lumberyard, seen in the photograph, was one belonging to Marvin Lapham. Mr. Lapham was a union soldier who settled in Champaign, IL after the civil war. His thriving lumberyard was responsible for the construction of most buildings in the area including the ever so important railroad.



In 1918, on the corner portion of the lumberyard site, University and Market St., construction began for the Overland Rickard Car Dealership and Showroom, which opened in 1919. The Dealership featured Automobiles getting 459 miles per tank and 30 miles per gallon! For the next dozen years, Overland Rickard sold cars to the growing community of East Central Illinois Community.



Eventually closing in 1932 the building absorbed various tenants such as Sears and Roebuck (1935-1941), Piccadilly Liquor (1956-1967) and the Champaign-Urbana Convention and Visitors Bureau from the mid 80's to early 90's. The last organization to occupy the building was Habitat for Humanity until 2006.

PRESENT DAY

Over the course of the next 12 years, several projects were proposed but the cost of modifying the building was too challenging. The building needed all of its basic utility services modified or completely redone: the project lacked sufficiently sized water piping; rusted out sewer pipe systems above and below ground; no fire suppression; outdated and undersized electrical service; a worn out ballasted on top of a tar roof – and – an elevator built in 1918 to haul cars to the 2nd floor that no longer met any type of current building code. Removal of the elevator plus dealing with its “not so desirable location”, required significant structural reinforcement to support the large poured concrete elevator shaft and penthouse on the roof. Considering the associated costs to create a leasable “Vanilla Box”, the owners needed to find a way to “cash flow” a deal and breathe new life into a landmark downtown building.



HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Our proposal was to put together a Design-Build team that we would direct for the building owner. First, we did some detailed but conceptual estimates, established an approved budget with the owner. We then interviewed a number of architects and designers to select the right one to work with. Finally, we broke the project down into four overlapping parts:

- Shell renovations which included recreating the exterior appearance of the 1919 photo
- Interior renovations to gut, clean up and asses the existing infrastructure
- Perform code review and design a flexible “vanilla Box” scheme that could accommodate potential tenants from office to banquet hall to restaurant/bar
- Tenant specific design and buildout

All involved agreed that prioritizing the historical value and appearance would move us forward best by appealing to the city officials and local historic society members.

Items such as new black aluminum storefronts, 2nd floor windows mimicking the Overland Rickard Car Dealership (down to the mullion alignment), restoring the original exterior heavy wood bi-fold doors, and repairing and painting the original ornamental coping cap were addressed.



Our challenge was that if we could not maintain the budget the owner was out; if we could not satisfy the city with appearance goals the city financial incentives were not going to be approved; and if we missed the end of August (when the students came back) opportunities for a quality tenant was out. In other words, there was a lot of pressure to be accurate, creative and productive.

EXECUTION:

The Exterior Shell renovation was straightforward with the most critical portion being the selection of the right vendor for the storefronts and 2nd floor windows. At the same time we were analyzing the different types of window materials, we started soliciting bids, gutting the interior walls and mechanicals. This required a lot of coordination with the architect and structural engineer. We would demo, install shoring, demo some more, install permanent steel posts and beams and so forth until we were able to open up the space allowing for 1-3 potential tenant spaces and 5-6 industrial loft style apartments on the 2nd floor.

Almost immediately during the shell and demo work, a strong potential tenant surfaced who was willing to commit to a long-term lease – provided we maintained the budget, the schedule and the “look” – no pressure... After several interactions with the owner, the tenant and the architect it was agreed to focus on a single tenant concept for the first floor. We immediately transitioned into developing a Vanilla Box at the Owner’s cost that would interface with the Tenant’s buildout, yet to be determined...

DETAILS AND CHALLENGES



Building permit #1: The Vanilla Box Phase of the project involved installing all new Electrical and Mechanical systems, fire suppression, storefronts and bathrooms. Some of the cost saving measures utilized to create the industrial look were:

- polishing the existing concrete floors
- sand blasting the many layers of paint and plaster off of the interior brick
- cleaning and painting the existing poured concrete ceilings

The location of the building drew a lot of pedestrian foot traffic to the train station, restaurants and other local establishments. We required a spotter for exterior work that involved the use of heavy equipment to ensure the public remained outside of barricades and took the safest routes around the building to their destination. Safety was one of many challenges and by far the most important. The crew took this responsibility seriously and dutifully managed safety with signage, meetings and constant communication.

****Zero Recordable incidents was a recognized and celebrated accomplishment at the Pour Brothers Grand Opening****

When it comes to Public Relations and conservation the “Pocket Prairie” was responsible for several delays to the schedule. The alleyway between our project and the building to the north was native Illinois prairie grass that was used for study by Preservationist David Monk which he cultivated and maintained for 30 years. Because Mr. Monk lacked the means to relocate these plants on his own ECI coordinated with the Champaign Park District and volunteered time and equipment to relocate the plants to new designated areas where Mr. Monk could continue his work and conduct educational tours. This was not as simple as it sounds. Some of these plants had roots up to 14’ deep and required swift relocation to survive. During the course of this volunteer operation there were protests, media coverage and plenty of dialogue that continued to shrink our timeline. Eventually, all of the issues

were worked out but our time line for **Permit #2 (Pour Brothers Taproom)** had been reduced to just 5 weeks.



Already facing time constraints, we needed to manage our costs tightly over the next five weeks to maintain our budget. Through diligence and persistence, we obtained all of the custom reclaimed wood required for the Pour Brothers interior theme. The “pour walls” were constructed in two days time. Soffits, reception counters, bar framing, cooler assembly and MEP’s followed. From there it was all about effort and meeting the day to day goals. Each sub-contractor was challenged with a time line and inspection dates to achieve our target public health and final building safety inspections. The goals were set, timelines were managed and we completed the custom tenant build out in 34 days. **On Time, Under Budget and within Stringent Guidelines.**

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

In its opening weekend the Pour Brothers facility was visited by all who participated and several city organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and The Historical Society. Visitors from their original location came from Peoria, IL to what all the hype was about. However, the most flattering of compliments was when senior pictures and engagement photos were being shot in front of the refinished heavy wood bi-fold doors as the background.

Featured in the picture below are several members of the team that performed work, city officials, Architects, building owners and even the Preservationist David Monk joined us in celebration of a project that captured historic appearance and was much needed improvement in the downtown community.



The cooperation between the City, the business owner and ECI through implementation of creative solutions, attention to the historical significance has come together and created a financially successful project for all involved. P3 at its finest!!!

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

This project is being submitted and worthy of excellence for the following reasons:

- The teamwork of city officials, building owners, architects, contractors and tenants in an effort to restore a historical city landmark and turn it into an economically viable business
- Coordination with the Park District and volunteering our resources to preserve native plant life and advance research
- ZERO Recordable incidents
- Achieving profitability while maintaining the budget and timeline at the satisfaction of our customers and community.

