



October 16, 2007

Board of County Commissioners  
Cuyahoga County  
1219 Ontario Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Cleveland, OH 44113

Dear Commissioners:

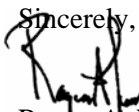
The National Trust for Historic Preservation wishes to voice our support for adaptive reuse of Marcel Breuer's Ameritrust Tower. The National Trust is a private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to protecting the irreplaceable. Our Washington, D.C. headquarters staff, six regional offices and 28 historic sites work with the Trust's quarter-million members and thousands of local groups in all 50 states.

As you know, the Ameritrust Tower is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is architecturally significant as Breuer's only realized design for a skyscraper. We understand you would consider selling the complex to an interested buyer for redevelopment. The National Trust strongly encourages you to investigate this possibility to save the building from the landfill through sale to a preservation-sensitive developer committed to saving both the Rotunda and the Ameritrust Tower.

In our experience, historic structures from the recent past can be successfully renovated to meet today's needs and provide an interesting contrast to adjacent classically-styled historic buildings. The recent rehabilitation of Minneapolis's Farmers and Mechanics Bank, portions of which were built in both 1942 and 1963, is a case in point (see enclosed).

Private development of the Ameritrust Tower would also open the door to use of federal and state historic tax credits, powerful tools for rehabilitation and economic revitalization across the country. In our experience, rehabilitation of historic buildings often provides cost savings over demolition and new construction, when all factors are taken into account. Seeking a private development solution would not only be fiscally responsible, it would serve the public's interest by keeping materials from the demolished building out the landfill and avoiding the unnecessary waste of the Tower's embodied energy.

The National Trust hopes you will seriously consider a preservation solution for Marcel Breuer's Ameritrust Tower, either through continued county use or through sale to a preservation-minded new owner. We thank you for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact myself or Jennifer Sandy, Field Representative for Ohio, to discuss this matter or if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,  


Royce A. Yeater, AIA  
Midwest Director

*Protecting the Irreplaceable*

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# ARCHITECTURE

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#### GREAT ADAPTATIONS

Minnesota architects get creative in renovating a range of historic structures, including naval shipyard buildings.

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#### MID-MOD MINNESOTA

Simplicity, strength, and honesty. A look back at the lofty ideas of midcentury modernism in Minnesota.

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#### STUDY HALL

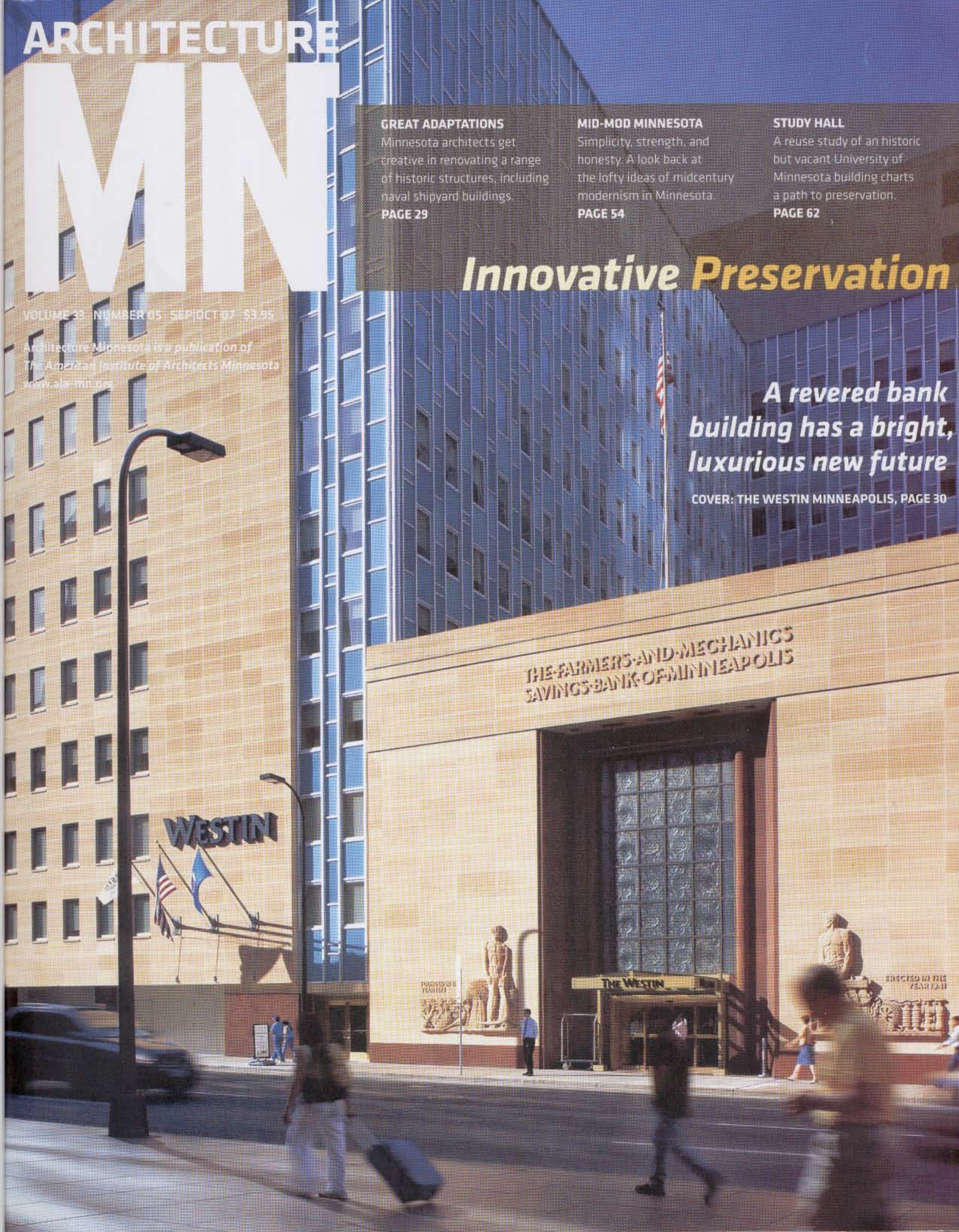
A reuse study of an historic but vacant University of Minnesota building charts a path to preservation.

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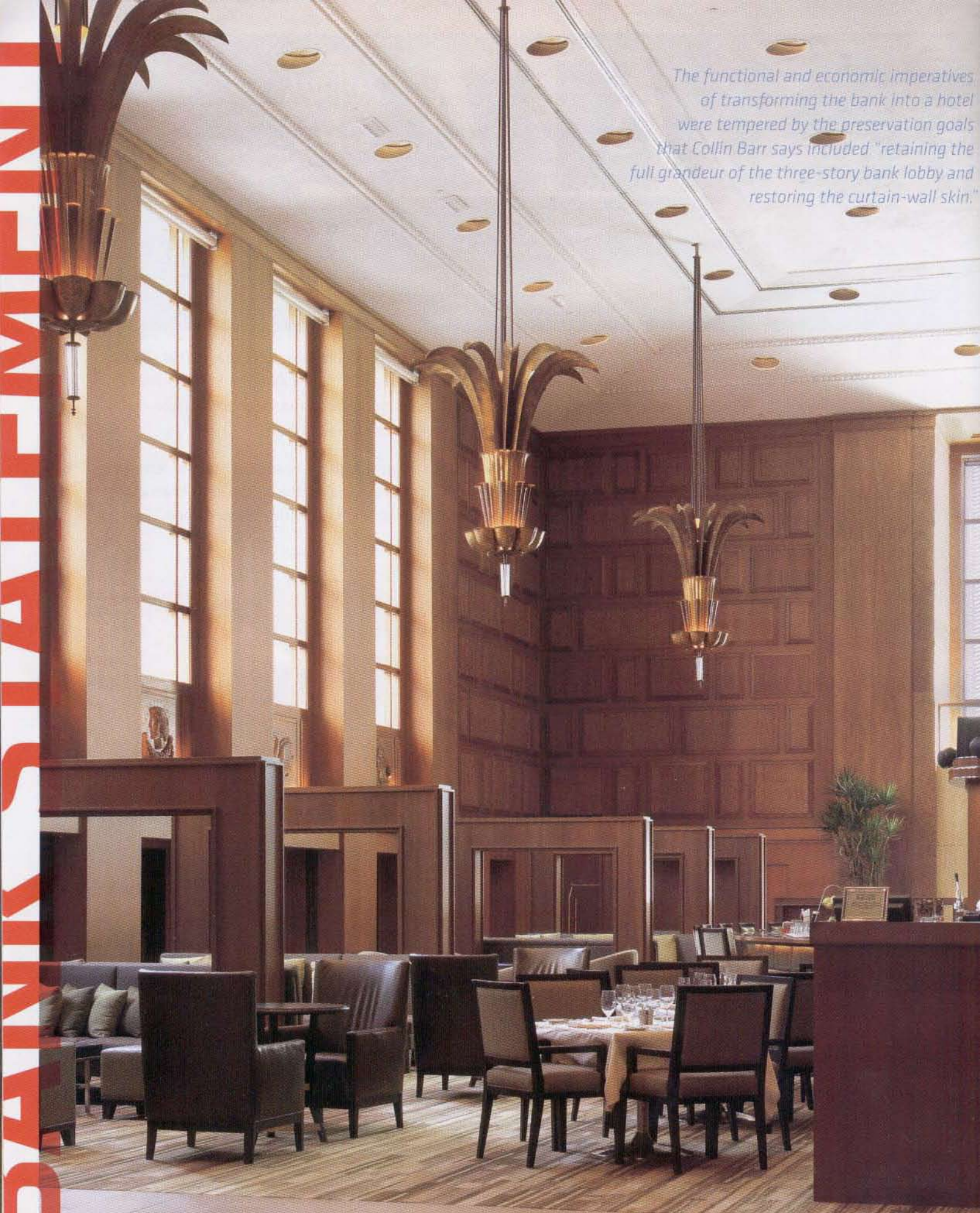
## Innovative Preservation

*A revered bank building has a bright, luxurious new future*

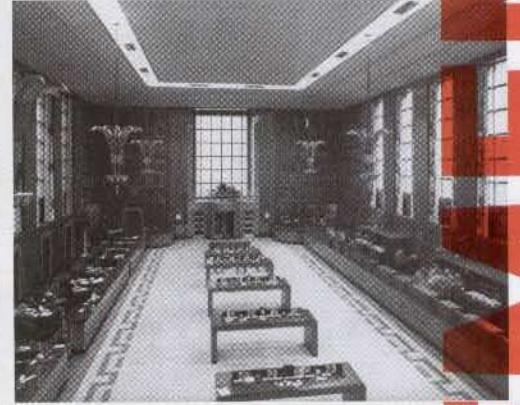
COVER: THE WESTIN MINNEAPOLIS, PAGE 30



*The functional and economic imperatives of transforming the bank into a hotel were tempered by the preservation goals that Collin Barr says included "retaining the full grandeur of the three-story bank lobby and restoring the curtain-wall skin"*



MINNESOTA



By Nancy A. Miller

# BANK STATEMENT

HISTORY TAKES CENTER STAGE IN AN ADAPTIVE REUSE OF MINNEAPOLIS' REVERED F&M BANK BUILDING AS A CHIC HOTEL AND RESTAURANT

Stepping through the front doors of the new Westin Hotel at Sixth Street and Marquette Avenue in downtown Minneapolis—past the bare-chested, heroic, bas-relief sculptures representing “Farmer” and “Mechanic” that flank the entrance, under the ornamental, red-granite-framed Corning Glass window that surmounts the doors, and into the soaring, teak-paneled space of the former banking hall—is like stepping into the past... with drinks. And beat-driven contemporary music. Even with a new atmosphere, the three-story space, which has been transformed by ESG Architects and Ryan Companies into a stylish and popular restaurant and bar called BANK, is a stunning reminder of a time when men were men, women were women, and banks were, well, civic institutions. Everywhere in the renovated building there are remnants of

its past as home to Farmers & Mechanics (F&M) Savings Bank of Minneapolis, prompting the curious visitor to inquire about the history of the building and the bank that built it.

## An Urban History

Founded in 1874, when the city was barely 20 years old (population 30,000), the Farmers & Mechanics Savings Bank was, as its name suggests, organized to serve a class of workers who were often ignored by larger, profit-driven commercial banks. According to Charlene Roise, historical consultant for the project, mutual savings banks were established out of “enlightened self-interest and were sort of paternalistic,” as they were overseen by unpaid boards of trustees that protected the concerns of laborers, the banks’ primary depositors.

*ESG Architects and Ryan Companies restored the curtain-wall panels of the F&M tower to their original shades of aqua blue, stripping away gray paint that had been applied in the 1980s. The addition of a floor with windows, inserted where the Farmers & Mechanics sign was once located, allowed for the development of more rooms while maintaining the overall integrity of the façade.*





## THE WESTIN MINNEAPOLIS

### Client:

Ryan Companies US

### Architect:

Elness Swenson Graham Architects  
[www.esgarch.com](http://www.esgarch.com)

### Principal-in-charge:

Mark Swenson, AIA

### Project lead designer:

Mark Swenson, AIA

### Interior designer:

Moncur Design Associates, Inc.

### Construction manager:

Ryan Companies US

### Size:

215,000 square feet (214 rooms)

### Cost:

\$35 million

### Completion date:

May 2007

### Photographer:

George Heinrich

Historical photos courtesy  
of Minnesota Historical Society

As Minneapolis' working classes swelled in the late 19th century, the proposal of Aaron Denman Mulford—a New Jersey transplant who came to Minneapolis in 1871 to cure his tuberculosis (the Minnesota climate was reputedly ideal for this)—to establish a mutual savings bank was well received by civic-minded local leaders.

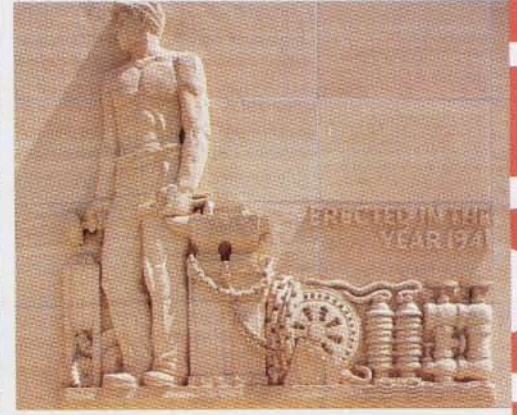
From that point forward, the history of F&M, Roise observes, fairly paralleled the urban development and evolution of the city. Opened in the Nicollet House near Bridge Square, F&M Bank later occupied two other offices in the same vicinity, in what was then the heart of the nascent city. However, by 1890 that area was already deteriorating into a somewhat seedy location, as reputable commercial interests shifted toward the west. In 1893, in the midst of a nationwide financial panic, F&M celebrated the opening of the first purpose-built bank building in Minneapolis. The neoclassical structure at 115 Fourth Street South (now occupied by Schieks Palace Royale), designed by the local

firm of Long & Kees, saw the bank enter the 20th century and weather the Depression.

By the late 1930s, however, the commercial and banking center of the city had shifted yet again, to Marquette Avenue. In 1939, the bank—"chased by blight" throughout its history, says Roise—quietly acquired land at the corner of Sixth and Marquette, at a fraction of its pre-Depression value, and hired local firm McEnery & Krafft to design a new building. With the integrated art and architecture of the recently opened Rockefeller Center in New York as a model, the firm designed a limestone-clad, Art Moderne "solid tank of a building," says Roise, with WPA-inspired, Minnesota-themed sculptures created by local artist and educator Warren Mosman. The three-story banking hall, backed by a five-story office tower, opened in 1942.

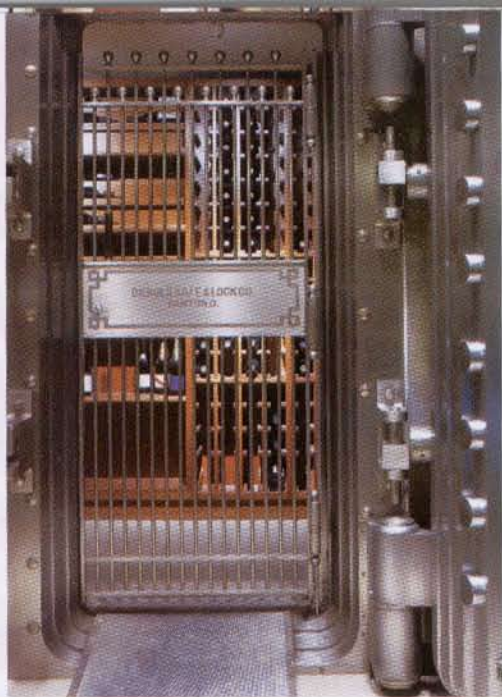
In the ongoing evolution of the city, blight was once again on the creep by the mid-1950s, this time at a scale and in a form that sent

With the integrated art and architecture of the recently opened Rockefeller Center in New York as a model, architects McEnary & Krafft designed a limestone-clad, Art Moderne "solid tank of a building," says Charlene Roise, with WPA-inspired, Minnesota-themed sculptures created by local artist and educator Warren Mosman.



Significant design features, such as the grand staircase at the end of the banking hall, the decorative Corning Glass windows above the entrance, and the bas-relief sculptures across the façade, were all restored in the renovation. The banking hall, although transformed with a bar, kitchen, and tables, retains its original grandeur. Wood arches that help to define the three-story space at the dining level are minimally intrusive.





*"The tower seems to float. That feeling of lightness, and the curtain wall, was such a contrast to the heaviness of the original building. I think it's a really interesting lesson in how you can add on to an historic building in a way that old and new are compatible."*

*—Historical consultant Charlene Roise*

businesses fleeing to the suburbs and caught Minneapolisians in a clutch of anxiety about the future of downtown. What happened next changed the course of the F&M building and the city. Roise says that "civic leaders got together and said, 'We're going to fight this. We're not going to let this happen to our city.' The decision to build a tower addition to the F&M Bank building was part of the larger decision to hold the line and say, 'We're not going to let urban blight ruin Minneapolis.'" The 11-story, L-shaped tower, clad in aqua-blue porcelain-enamel metal panels and limestone, designed by the architects of the original building, McEnary & Krafft, and opened in 1963, was the result.

While the investment asserted a faith in the city and was part of what Roise calls "the genesis for the renaissance of Minneapolis," the new bank building did have one nod to the burgeoning car culture of the suburbs: drive-in tellers. Entering from Sixth Street, at the base of the new tower, customers drove onto a mechanical turntable that rotated their cars 180 degrees, toward banking lanes that then emptied back out onto Sixth Street. The banking hall and other features of the original 1942 building remained largely intact.

Roise admires the attitude of the 1963 addition and the fact that the architects did not attempt to mimic their earlier work. "The tower seems to float," she says. "That feeling of lightness, and the curtain wall, was such a contrast to the heaviness of the original building. I think it's a really interesting lesson in how you can add on to an historic building in a way that old and new are compatible."

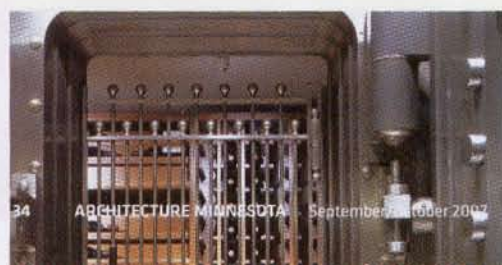
Despite its efforts, the Farmers & Mechanics Savings Bank of Minneapolis was, by the time the tower was completed, nearing its end. The bank was prohibited by state legislation from expanding its business with suburban branches until the 1970s, just as the economic structure of mutual savings banks hit the brick wall of rising interest rates. Nationwide, the industry, with the majority of its assets in the form of long-term, low-fixed-rate mortgages, and customers demanding higher rates of return on their savings, saw a number of dramatic bank failures. In 1982, the FDIC quietly negotiated the purchase of F&M by Carl Pohlad's Marquette Bank, which was sold 10 years later, along with the building. By 2002, the banking hall was closed and the office building was underused and facing an uncertain future. Charlene Roise, who prepared the successful application to place

the structure on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005, says, "I don't think people really realized how threatened the building was."

#### **A Challenging Renovation**

In 2004, Ryan Companies saw an opportunity to redevelop the building as a luxury hotel, taking on the project as developer and contractor. Collin Barr, Ryan's president for the Minnesota region, says that complicated negotiations to purchase the building were the first of many challenges the renovation presented. ESG Architects principal Mark Swenson, AIA, similarly recalls a series of challenges, such as the building's "scarce resource called windows." Trying to fit the 214 rooms that were needed to make the project economically viable into the L-shaped tower, says Swenson, was "an incredible struggle because what we were working with wasn't a natural geometric layout for a hotel." In addition to the narrow floor plates and shortage of windows, the design team was faced with 24-foot-wide structural bays that were four feet shy of accommodating Westin's typical 28-foot-wide structural bay (for two 14-foot-wide rooms). The solution? Rooms are two feet narrower and three feet longer than the typical Westin room. While

>> continued on page 56



*Everywhere there are remnants of the building's original function, such as the enormous and thick steel vault doors, which were repositioned—with no small amount of effort—to serve as doors to a wine vault on the main floor, and a conference room on the lower level.*



THE FAIRMERE AND MECHANICS  
SAVINGS BANK OF MINNEAPOLIS

WESTIN

THE WESTIN WESTIN

## Bank Statement

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the change in dimensions sounds simple enough, it required a mind-bending configuration of more than 50 different room plans (a new-construction hotel might have seven room plans), in addition to the use of flat-panel televisions and narrower furniture. "It was very much like trying to figure out a Rubik's Cube," says Swenson.

Of course, all of that work occurred not just in an existing building but in an historic one. The functional and economic imperatives of transforming the bank into a hotel were tempered by the preservation goals that Collin Barr says included "retaining the full grandeur of the three-story bank lobby and restoring the skin." The skin to which Barr refers—the curtain wall composed of porcelain-enamel metal panels—had to be insulated and retrofitted with double-pane glazing. The curtain wall also was restored to its vibrant, aqua-colored 1960s glory with the chemical removal of gray paint that had been applied in the 1980s. The most daunting challenge, however, was having to add an entire floor to achieve the required number of hotel rooms—without compromising the design of the historic exterior. This was accomplished through creative structural engineering: 26-inch-deep beams in the mechanical floor of the tower's west wing were replaced with 14-inch-deep beams, creating another floor for rooms within the existing building envelope. Metal panels on that floor were switched out with windows—a solution even the strictest preservationist can admire.

Other challenges included fitting a restaurant, bar, kitchen, and hotel front desk into the historic banking hall; engineering a swimming pool onto the third floor of the office tower; inserting new elevators; creating a light-well for rooms located on the interior of the block; and moving vault doors that each weigh several thousand pounds. Barr says that one of the Ryan superintendents involved in the enormous Sears/Midtown Exchange project said that the Westin was the hardest project he ever worked on. Barr concurs.

And yet to the visitor sipping an elegant cocktail in the bar, enjoying the modern amenities while admiring the historical detail, it all appears so effortless. **AMN**



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