

PRESERVING THE PAST WHILE BUILDING THE FUTURE IN BINGHAMTON, NY

Transformation of the Historic Carnegie Library to the Culinary and Event Center at SUNY Broome Community College

Winner of the New York State Historic Preservation Award (2020)

Photos: Tim Wilkes Photography

Preserving historic architecture, bringing vitality to downtown, and providing career training and opportunity for the region's workforce? All ambitious goals, all accomplished with the completion of this landmark project.

The renovation and adaptive reuse of the historic Carnegie Library into the Culinary and Event Center by SUNY Broome Community College has had a profound impact on the Binghamton community and will continue to do so for decades to come. The history of this building reflects the history of the community itself, and with this thoughtful and dynamic transformation, the Culinary and Event Center is helping to bring new life to the City of Binghamton and the Southern Tier region while honoring that history.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY HISTORY

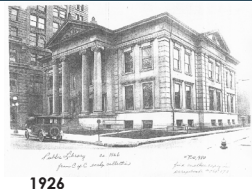
Once a thriving center of the Southern Tier economy and a cultural hub, Binghamton was the main conduit to Albany during the early 1900s. During this time of cultural and economic boom, the creation of one of the Carnegie endowed libraries in 1910 made downtown Binghamton a cultural center.

For over 80 years, the library functioned as a center of learning and resources, and added vibrancy to the thriving community. As it aged, the library building became expensive to maintain and heat and the library decided to consolidate into another downtown building in the 1990s. The existing building sat dormant for over 30 years and started to show significant signs of deterioration.

As the viability of the City center lessened, there were no tenants for the existing building and its subsequent decline became a symbol of the economic deterioration of the entire area. As its once proud prominence on the public square was once celebrated, it now had become a constant reminder of decline.

"This transformation represents an important downtown presence for the College and contributes to the renaissance of downtown Binghamton." –

Steve Trobe, AIA, Sr. Project Architect, Passero Associates



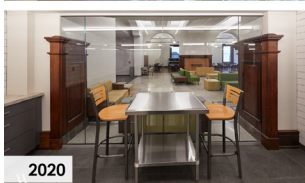
Restoration of the former Binghamton Carnegie Library is a critical investment in the revitalization of the City's downtown. To honor the historic nature of the building, the primary facades were restored, and a harmonizing addition was built in the rear of the building.



The addition complements the historic building without competing with it. The addition houses a new and accessible main entrance and some of the more complex culinary spaces.



The historic grand stair has been restored with minimal intervention; the simple background providing a canvas for the sculptural form and design of the stair to shine.



The central hall of the library is the heart of the new Culinary Center. Now a student lounge, it connects to both the historic and new grand stairs, classrooms, and an event space.

PRESERVING THE PAST WHILE BUILDING THE FUTURE IN BINGHAMTON, NY

COLLABORATIVE VISION

Neither public resources nor private development could afford the deferred maintenance the building needed. Finally, in 2016, the City and the local community college collaborated on a solution to utilize New Markets Tax Credits, Historic Tax Credits, and NY State construction funds for academic buildings to find a path for resurrecting the building and adding a downtown presence for the community college.

The partnership envisioned creating a new academic program for the College to house a culinary arts and event planning venue with the historic library being the cornerstone of the project.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

Creative programming and design by the Architects and Engineers on the design team, namely Passero Associates, Bialosky Cleveland, and McFarland Johnson, found an adaptive reuse of the architecture to create a new life for this building.

Carved limestone façade, interior terrazzo, Doric columns, tile roof, copper flashing, and 16-foot ceilings with coffers are just a few of the many elaborate features that would make the replacement cost of this building over \$100 million. Renovating the building would cost about one-tenth of that price, while sustaining the architecture, the fabric of downtown, and 100 years of memories and learning that could never be replaced.

During the investigation of the existing building by 3D scanning, it was discovered that one corner of the building had sunk 6". The basement slab was removed, and interior piles installed to stabilize the structure and ensure further damage would not occur. The new addition is also placed on piles on a tight urban site.

The complete Historic structure was lovingly restored with wood historic windows, \$1.0M in interior plaster repair and consolidation, restoration of the clay tile roof, and the reclamation of the original skylight system.

The large public spaces serve as event spaces for dinners and lectures, while the harmonizing addition houses the robust needs of the teaching kitchens.

"The Carnegie Library once welcomed the public, providing knowledge. The Culinary Center now provides learning opportunities for students and the community."

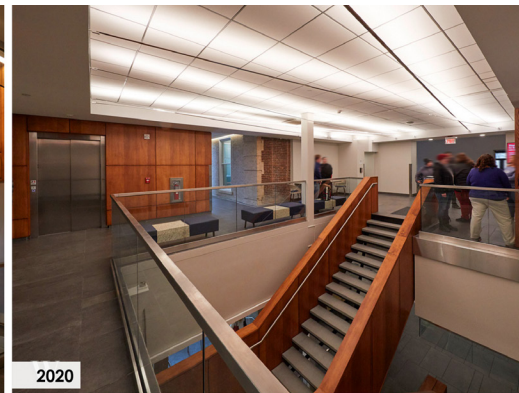
***– Emily Connors, AIA, Project Architect,
Passero Associates***



The former Reading Room is now a multi-purpose and event space, an opportunity for students to practice their skills. New wood flooring echoes the look and feel of the original.



The mezzanine was required to stay as a character defining feature of the original library. Ultimately it was found to be an ideal space for the Fabrication Lab.



The new grand stair connects all three levels of the building. The wood used on the guardrail and around the elevator shaft are a contemporary reference to the historic wood paneling.



The second floor of the historic library had been significantly altered with dropped ceilings, wall paneling, and vinyl flooring. It is home to a new Demonstration Kitchen, where a camera projects the professor's demonstration onto a screen for students to see.

PRESERVING THE PAST WHILE BUILDING THE FUTURE IN BINGHAMTON, NY

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

The renovation of the building and its reuse as an educational and economic resource is a symbol of the rebirth of this downtown. As Binghamton reimagines itself as a college town, the project demonstrates ingenuity and perseverance and gives the entire community opportunities to share experiences.

This project has been the heart of the downtown community for well over 100 years. It brought together citizens of all ages and stages of life at the crossroads of learning and discovery. Memories of the building were shared at the newly dedicated grand opening, uplifting all. The complete restoration and addition with state-of-the-art technology will give this building another 100 years of new traditions, and will help revitalize the emerging City's re-emerging downtown.

Now housing a vibrant community of students, teachers and enthusiastic diners and community members, the former Carnegie Library is enjoying new life while honoring its history. Time and abandonment had taken their toll on the structure, but with care and attention to detail, this building has been restored to use for generations to come.



Located in the heart of downtown Binghamton, revitalization of the former Carnegie Library brings new life to this iconic and beloved building.

Photos: Tim Wilkes Photography

The Architects and Engineers at Passero Associates are ready to bring their expertise to work in meeting design and construction challenges, helping to determine cost-effective solutions that will transform our communities.



The original skylight opening, previously yellowed and dark, shines light inside the building, spanning over two spaces in the new layout. Here it brightens up the new bar for special events.



On the second floor of the addition are the two large Kitchen Labs. These spaces provide flexibility to teach a wide range of culinary skills and practices.



The addition also includes a second Demonstration Kitchen for smaller groups and classes.



The lower level of the historic building had suffered the greatest amount of damage during its three decades of vacancy. It has been transformed into classrooms and offices for the school. Pictured here is the Beverage Lab, where students learn bartending skills. The wood wrapped bars, and copper lights and shelves, tie the design thematically with the rest of the building.