

An Art Deco rescue mission in the heart of Wilkes-Barre

The Diamond City is looking a whole lot brighter these days thanks, in part, to the improvements made to the office building located at 187-189 North Main Street.

Privately funded, the renovations transformed the once-desolate, dimly lit corner into a vibrant expression of urban life during daylight and evening hours. After sunset, the dusk-to-dawn building lights brighten the neighborhood and make it safer for neighborhood residents.

Situated on the northeast corner of North Main and North Streets, the building was built in the 1940s and is architecturally distinct from other residential and commercial buildings in the surrounding neighborhood.

Specifically, the building incorporates the sharp, horizontal lines and geometric features found in Modern Art Deco building structures. Also unique to this building is the street-accessible parking lots at the building front. With a parking lot on each building level, direct access to interior building spaces is expedited by the dual parking levels.



Previously owned by an absentee landlord, three-fourths of the building was empty and uninhabitable.

The need to make improvements was evident — the building survived for more than 25 years with virtually no maintenance. Reflecting the late 20th century deterioration of urban infrastructure prevalent throughout greater Wilkes-Barre, damage to the building during this period was pronounced.

When Jim Kerns, president of QproQ Engineering Inc. purchased the 3,700-square-foot building, he made significant renovations to both the interior and exterior. Preliminary renovations were completed during 2007. The lower level is home to



QproQ Engineering Inc., and the second floor provides Class A office space.

The restored, clean white-and-grey façade is characteristically Art Deco, and the bright finish emphasizes the arrangement of intersecting rectangular boxes formed by the exterior building and site retaining walls. When sunlit, the intersecting boxes create a further delineation of intersecting shadows that add depth to the wall surfaces.

Throughout the property, horizontal banding, a distinct element in Art Deco construction, is repeatedly reflected in the site retaining walls, the rectangular building boxes that dissect the interior spaces, the building flashing, the second

floor balcony, the six-tier horizontal pipe railings, the aluminum window heads and sills, and finally, the mortar bed joints in the painted masonry block building. When combined to form the façade, all of these individual elements create a powerful statement reflecting Art Deco building construction in a historic perspective.

While notably improving the aesthetic quality of the corner property, improvements such as the building railings on the exterior and efficient heating and cooling systems on the interior provided a safe environment for the building inhabitants. Building renovations also included complete replacement of site parking surfaces and retaining walls, the roof system, windows, doors, electrical systems, and finishes.

Always looking for ways to improve, Mr. Kerns commissioned Sandy Trocki, a local artist in late 2008 to further enhance the façade of the building. The artist chose colors that complement its Art Deco nature. Ms. Trocki added a sense of life and beauty to the building with hand-painted renderings. ■

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BRIAN WEST

Promoted to
Director of Operations

Brian West was recently promoted to the position of Director of Operations for Prizm Asset Management Co, LP. Prizm manages retail and office facilities in the City of Scranton, Lebanon and Reading. Most notable is the Mall at Steamtown. West joined Prizm in July 2007 after leaving Harper Collins Publishers. West and his wife, Maureen, reside in Archbald with their three children.

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