

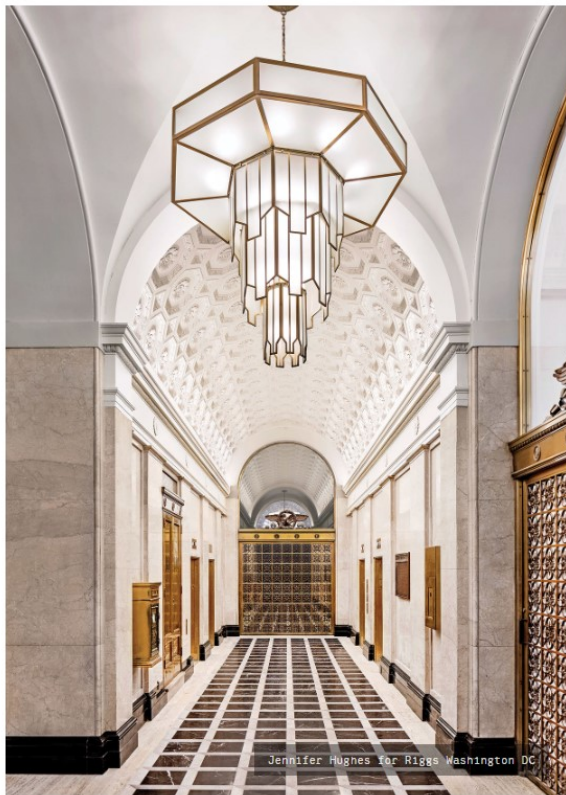
Places Restored, Threatened, Saved, and Lost in Preservation Magazine's Spring 2020 Issue



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By:
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In each Transitions section of Preservation magazine, we highlight places of local and national importance that have recently been restored, are currently threatened, have been saved from demolition or neglect, or have been lost. Here are five from Spring 2020.



Jennifer Hughes for Riggs Washington DC

Riggs National Bank

Restored: Riggs National Bank, Washington Loan & Trust Company Branch

A onetime Riggs Bank building in Washington, D.C., has been rehabilitated as the Riggs Washington DC luxury hotel. Architect James G. Hill designed the original 1891 structure for the Washington Loan & Trust Company, incorporating a granite facade and wide, rounded arches characteristic of the Romanesque Revival style. In 1954, the company merged with Riggs Bank, informally known as the "Bank of Presidents" for managing the finances of many U.S. heads of state, including Abraham Lincoln, Harry S. Truman, and Richard Nixon. In the 1990s the building was sold and converted into a Marriott Courtyard hotel. Global Holdings Management Group purchased it in 2017 and brought on hospitality company Lore Group to transform it into the Riggs. Preservation consulting firm EHT Tracerics guided Lore Group through the review process for the National Register-listed building, and architecture firm Perkins Eastman oversaw the renovation, which included the cleaning and restoration of original coffered ceilings, Corinthian columns, and tiled floors. The Riggs, a member of Historic Hotels of America, opened in February of 2020.



Bank of California Building in San Jose, California.

Threatened: Bank of California Building

The former Bank of California building in San Jose, California—believed to be architect César Pelli’s only work in the city—could soon be torn down. Pelli designed the Brutalist structure while working for the architecture firm Gruen Associates, and it was completed in the early 1970s. After closing as a bank, the building was utilized as a family court until the city relocated its services in 2016. Two years later, developer Jay Paul Company purchased the building and seven others that compose much of the City View Plaza complex. The San Francisco-based company announced plans to raze the complex, making way for more than 3 million square feet of new office and commercial space, and began moving tenants out of active buildings by the fall of 2019. In response, the nonprofit Preservation Action Council of San Jose urged the city’s Historic Landmarks Commission to recommend designation of the bank as a City Landmark, citing its architectural significance and role in San Jose’s downtown revitalization. The council is currently drafting an environmental impact report in hopes of convincing the developer to examine alternatives to demolition.



Columbus Square Pavilion in Philadelphia.

Lost: Columbus Square Pavillon

Since 1960, a Midcentury Modern pavilion designed by architects Roth & Fleisher had stood in Philadelphia's Columbus Square. It was one of the last extant structures connected to Elizabeth Hirsh Fleisher, the firm's co-founder and the city's first female licensed architect. Built as a senior center, the circular pavilion featured a crown-shaped roof that made it a neighborhood landmark. It later hosted classes and weightlifting events before falling into disuse. In 2013, the Columbus Square Advisory Council and the nonprofit Community Design Collaborative began working on a plan to renovate the park. They ultimately landed on a design, approved by a community task force made up of neighborhood residents, that would involve demolishing the pavilion. However, many locals felt they had been excluded from the decision-making process, observing that the pavilion's good condition and small footprint made preservation a viable alternative. They circulated a petition to save the building in September of 2019 and garnered more than 2,700 signatures, while advocacy group DocomomoPHL sent letters of support to Philadelphia's parks and recreation department. The department ultimately allowed the demolition, and the structure was razed in December of 2019.



Tom's Diner in Denver, Colorado.

Saved: Tom's Diner

The Googie-style Tom's Diner in Denver opened in 1967 as part of the Colorado coffee shop and restaurant chain White Spot. Designed by the well-known Googie firm Armet & Davis, the diner changed hands in 1999 but remained a highlight of the city's historic Colfax Avenue corridor. In the spring of 2019, nonprofit Historic Denver learned that the property's owner, Tom Messina, and a local developer had applied for a certificate of non-historic status, a frequent precursor to demolition. Community members quickly mobilized, circulating petitions and starting a GoFundMe campaign to fund an application for historic designation. With only days to spare before the designation deadline, Messina agreed to consider alternatives. Historic Denver connected him with preservation-minded developer GBX Group, and the two parties announced a partnership in December of 2019 to sensitively rehabilitate the diner into a new food and beverage space. The building is now protected by a preservation easement accepted by the Colorado Historical Foundation.



Watson, Newell & Company Factory in Attleboro, Massachusetts.

Restored: Watson, Newell & Company Factory

Located in Attleboro, Massachusetts—once known as the “Jewelry Capital of the World”—the Watson, Newell & Company silversmithing factory has found new life as Sterling Lofts, mixed-income housing for residents aged 55 and older. The existing complex was itself an adaptive reuse project, constructed between roughly 1889 and 1947 from the 1811 remnants of the city’s first cotton mill. WinnDevelopment purchased the property in 2017 after it had been largely vacant for about 15 years, with the help of \$7.6 million in federal and state historic tax credits. The company brought on Robert J. Verrier, an Attleboro native, and his firm, The Architectural Team, as lead architects. Crews salvaged wooden gears from broken turbines, replicated nearly 350 windows, and repointed the factory’s exterior masonry to historical standards, including parts of its distinctive, 300-foot chimney. Large brick safes that once stored silver were repurposed as mechanical rooms, while the former boiler room became a public gathering space. Sterling Lofts received its certificate of occupancy in October of 2019, and its first residents moved in the following month.

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