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Courthouse Lofts | The Architectural Team (TAT)

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One of 2021's most unique new multifamily communities, Courthouse Lofts, is the adaptive reuse of the 250,000 square foot former Worcester County

Courthouse in Massachusetts into 118 mixed-income residential units and an onsite museum dedicated to pioneering cyclist and Worcester resident Major Taylor.

Rethinking The Future Awards 2022

Second Award | Housing (upto 5 floors) (Built)

Project Name: Courthouse Lofts

Studio Name: The Architectural Team (TAT)

Design Team:

Architect: The Architectural Team (TAT)

Contacts: Mike Binette, AIA, NCARB | Senior Partner + Managing Principal

Phil Renzi | Senior Project Manager

Rebecca Maybury, AIA | Project Manager

Interior The Architectural Team (TAT)

Contact: Meghann Van Dorn | Director of Interior Design

Developer: Trinity Financial

Contacts: Patrick Lee | Principal

Michael Lozano | Vice President Development

Aaron Horne | Assistant Project Manager

Sadio Desmond | Brand Manager

Kevin McCarthy | Senior Design and Construction Manager

Bruce Polishook | Senior Construction Manager

General Contractor: Tocci Building Corporation

Contacts: John Tocci | Chief Executive Officer

VJ Tocci | Project Executive

Area: 250,000 square feet

Year: Completed in 2021

Location: Worcester, MA

Consultants:

Landscape Architect: DMLA

Contact: Deborah Myers, ASLA | Principal

Civil Engineer: Bohler Engineering

Contacts: Josh Swerling, PE | Principal

Jim Cranston | Project Manager

Nick Dewhurst | Senior Design Engineer

Structural Engineer: DM Berg Consultants

Contact: Ali R. Borojerdi, P.E., LEED AP | Vice President

Fire Protection, Plumbing, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineer: Petersen Engineering, Inc.

Contacts: James Petersen, PE | Principal

Chuck Dudas, PE | Senior Manager

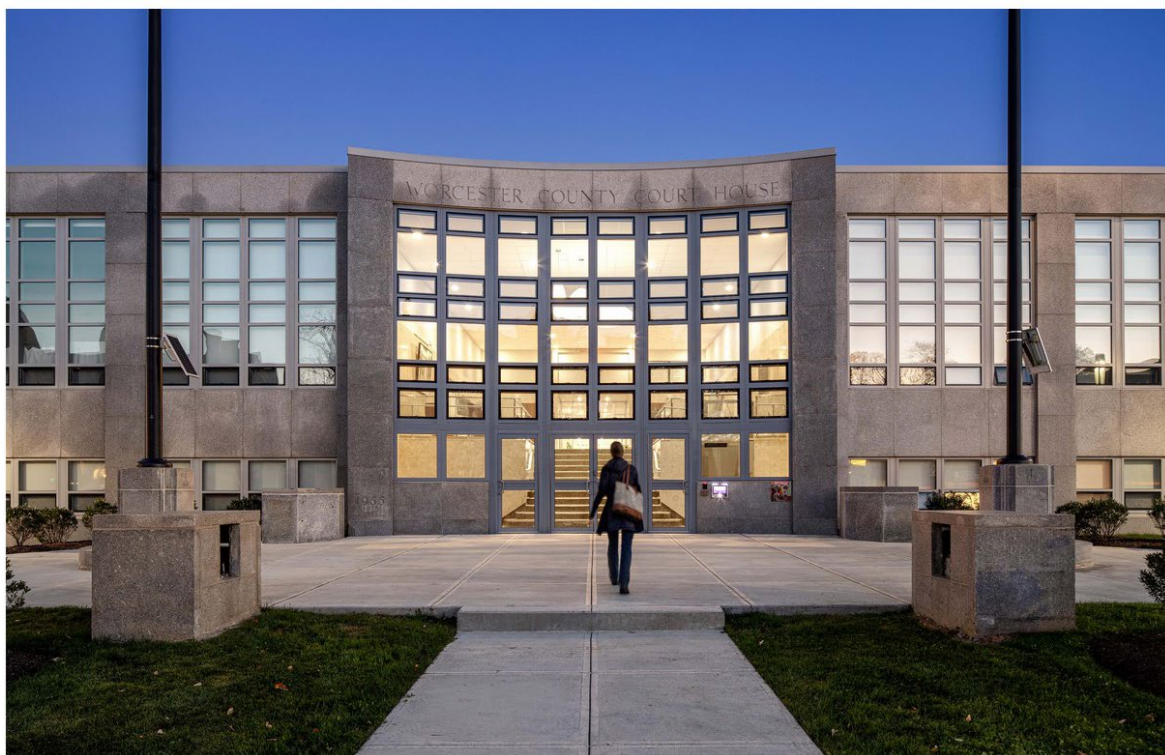
Jason Ngai, PE | Mechanical Engineer

Michael Trickett, PE | Electrical Engineer

Historic Consultant: Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.

Contact: Alisa Augenstein | Senior Architectural Historian

Photography Credits: Ed Wonsek



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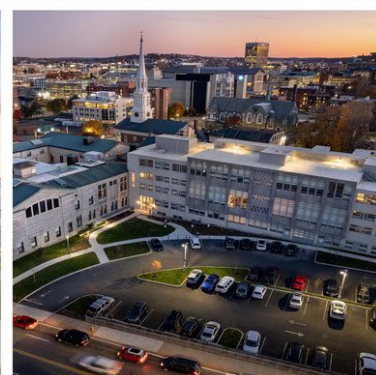
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The intricate conversion maintained the regional landmark's historic integrity and was consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. With a thoughtful, comprehensive vision, Courthouse Lofts sets an important precedent for rethinking large-scale institutional properties as solutions for current housing crises, while preserving culturally significant historic character for future generations and creating meaningful living experiences in the present.



LIGHT-FILLED, LIVELY + LIVABLE SPACES

The deep floor plate of the old courthouse was a direct result of multiple additions over the years that left many internal spaces lacking daylight. To bring natural light back into the core of the building – essential for maximizing residential units – the design team opened previous floor infills and created two interior courtyards. When the 1955 Annex addition was constructed, a third location between the 1878 and 1898 additions was also infilled; removing it opened the original 19th-century granite facades up to the sky after being hidden for more than 65 years, allowing natural light to permeate the central knuckle of the building. The rehabilitation included the repointing of all exterior granite and buff brick elevations, installing historically appropriate aluminum windows, and restoring existing wood trim, terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, stained glass windows, and ornate plaster ceilings.



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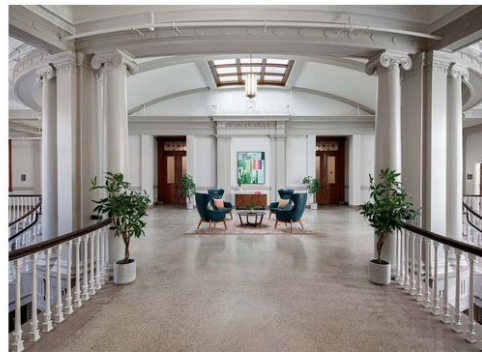
Courthouse Lofts offers pragmatic ideas for architects working to convert buildings from different time periods for new uses. Over time, the original 1840s-era granite building was expanded with multiple additions in 1878, 1898 (Old Courthouse), and 1955 (Annex). Therefore, during the renovation and conversion process, the design team thought strategically beyond the typical façade, fenestration, and roof restoration considerations. Each section of the courthouse complex reflected its associated era's design aesthetic and construction techniques. Since the entire complex is a designated landmark, historic elements from each section had to be thoughtfully preserved. The design team painstakingly restored original courtrooms from each era of construction, along with main entry spaces, circulation corridors, stairs, ceilings, flooring, stained glass, and spatial volumes. This approach is more important than ever before: As midcentury properties become eligible for historic landmarking, this design

team's careful attention to modernist features and their historic character will provide a critical case study for the future.

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COMBINING OLD + NEW

The massive complex – complete with grand stairs, elegant balustrades, soaring ceilings, and Fluted Corinthian and round and square Doric columns – required a strategic and creative interior design solution to ensure spaces feel intimate, welcoming, and functional as a modern living environment. The design team leveraged each area's distinct architectural character while adding contemporary functionality. This resulted in era-appropriate spaces with memorable detailing such as custom artwork, saturated color accents, strong geometric shapes, and flexible furniture configurations for socializing, working, or relaxing. Resident amenities include a clubroom, media and game room, fitness center, children's play area, pet spa, makerspace, a landscaped courtyard, and playground.



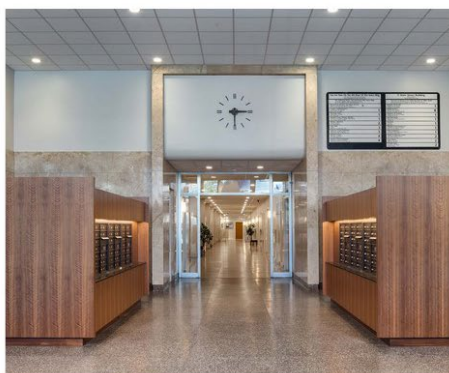
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Courthouse Lofts also demonstrates how architects can employ major interventions to create effective residential programs, while remaining sensitive to a building's historic character. The design team generated code-compliant and efficient interior circulation by selectively removing existing stairways to simplify interior wayfinding. Similarly, the design team amplified natural light penetration by removing non-historical infill additions and forming numerous interior courtyard spaces. As a result, the 12 courtrooms, four libraries, nine lobbies, 11 major corridors, and 30 stairs were largely retained and incorporated into the residential program. These interventions underscore the core project vision: Honoring the building's history while giving it contemporary utility.

CREATING CONTEMPORARY FUNCTIONALITY

The light-filled mailroom is centrally located in the primary entrance of the original 1950s addition, which features floor to ceiling windows facing West. To amplify the space's classic mid-century character, the design team integrated original rose-colored marbled floors and walls, the mid-century modern clock, etched quotations, mid-century light fixtures, and restored historic phone booths into the design. The designers curated a custom walnut-rendered mail bank featuring clean, elegant, modernist lines. The result? Preservation and personality perfectly matched.



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From an interior design perspective, common areas use millwork and FF&E to emphasize zones that break up large spaces with discrete amenities. For example, the monumental domed main courtroom serves as a resident clubroom with multiple uses, including a kitchen built into a former witness stand, media areas in the former audience seating plinths, and a restored holding area behind the jury box. In the center of the space, lounge and remote work settings enhance functionality and reduce the room's perceptual scale. The design of individual units is equally creative – out of 118 units, only two share the same floor plan.

Ultimately, Courthouse Lofts offers an ideal case study of how design teams can sensitively restore and adapt historic buildings, creating essential residential offerings for new generations that look beautiful, function flawlessly, and continue to tell remarkable stories.



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