



2024 WaveMaker Awards

Crook Horner Lofts



Project Information

Project Name: Crook Horner Lofts

Project Address: 303 N Howard Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

Applicant Name, Address, Phone and Email: Attn: Christopher Mfume, Spaces / 200 E Pratt St, Baltimore, MD 21202 / (410) 941 – 9353 / Chris@civicgroup.com

Project Participants: Developers – B&B Urban, The Civic Group / General Contractor – J. Cole Builders / Architect of Record – SM+P Architects / Interior Design & Staging – Drummond Projects / MEP – SRBR Engineers, Inc / Structural Engineer – Skarda and Associates / Civil Engineer – KCW Engineering Technologies, Inc / Environmental Engineer – Jenkins Environmental Inc / Historic Tax Credit Consultant – Atelier Giguere, LLC / Financing – PeoplesBank, MD Neighborhood Business Works, MD Historic Trust / Management – QP Management / Leasing – Monument Sotheby’s Realty

Project Completion Date: March 22nd, 2024

POC for Award Submission: Grant Ringelman, (443) 248 – 0968, Grant@civicgroup.com

High-resolution images of plans and/or photographs

Featured Image and 2-3 Additional Images for ULI Marketing Purposes

Project Overview

Provide a descriptive 2-3 sentence project overview

The Crook Horner Lofts is a historic renovation and adaptive reuse of an 1890s plumbing supply warehouse in the heart of the Bromo Tower Arts & Entertainment District. It consists of 15 flexible live/work loft apartments with two ground-floor commercial spaces. The Crook Horner Lofts are designed to serve the needs of the burgeoning tech, entrepreneurial and artistic population attracted to the Bromo Arts District, and to kick-start the transformation of the once bustling North Howard Street corridor into a 21st century neighborhood and retail destination.

Completeness

Describe in detail the completeness and financial viability of the project.

The Crook Horner Lofts buildings were acquired in January of 2019 after having sat vacant for over 20 years. Originally, the buildings were home to Crook Horner & Co. Plumbing Supplies, and later Pollack’s Furniture and Rugs. The details of the historically authentic restoration were coordinated by SM+P Architects and verified by the project’s historic consultant, Atelier Giguere, LLC.

The project received over 20 percent of its funding, or roughly \$2.5 million, through loans, grants, and credits from the State of Maryland, including a loan of almost \$900,000 through the Neighborhood Business Works Program of



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the MDHCD, and historic tax credits through the Maryland Historic Trust and the National Park Service. PeoplesBank provided \$4.9 million in construction financing and \$3.7 million in permanent financing. The City of Baltimore also provided a partial exemption of future real estate taxes through the CHAP Program.

The renovation began in June of 2021 and was led by J. Cole Builders. The project began pre-leasing in November of 2023 and received its certificate of occupancy in March of 2024. The project is currently being marketed to tenants and has already secured six residential leases and one retail lease.

A Sense of Place and Quality

Explain how the project reflects the special characteristics of the locality, community, and region in which it is located OR creates an inspiring environment that becomes an important part of the surrounding community. Speak to design, construction, economics, marketing, and management.

Great care was taken to preserve the historic elements of the Crook Horner Lofts, as the buildings are century-old artifacts of Baltimore's commercial heyday. Specific features that were maintained, and in some cases remade to historic specifications, include the original Douglas fir hardwood floors, cast-iron and plaster columns, dramatic 9 to 13-foot-high tin ceilings, and oversized aluminum clad wood windows. The apartments range in size from 900 to 1,600 square feet and boast 1 ½ baths, including a signature master bathroom with both a glass-enclosed shower and soaking tub, in-unit washer dryers, highly efficient electric heat pumps for heating and cooling, and free high-speed internet. At the street level, a marquee 3,000 square foot retail space offers a three-sided block long space with high ceilings and abundant windows to echo its historic character and provide ample natural light. The space opens to a public alley that will be available for outdoor use by the tenant.

Despite creating a highly attractive physical space, the development team understands that the present environment for the retail uses at this location will require a low rent burden during the early years of a lease to attract and retain desirable tenants that can flourish at this location. In keeping with its view that this project will be one that is transformative for the area, the development team is seeking a second retail tenant that will enliven the corner with activity from morning into the evening hours. The smaller retail space has already been rented to a woman/black owned interior design business, [Decorelle](#), assisted through the BOOST program of the Downtown Partnership.

The building itself represents a thoughtful investment into the revitalization of Baltimore's Howard Street corridor and aims to be a catalyst for future development by others in the area.

Sustainability

Describe how the project incorporates elements of sustainability such as being in a priority funding area (preferably a redevelopment or infill site), use of existing infrastructure, utilization of green technologies (building and/or site), use of alternative transportation methods, and/or transit-oriented design, and addressing existing local neighborhood needs such as job training, employment growth, educational and recreational programs for all ages.

The Crook Horner Lofts made use of two formerly vacant commercial buildings at the intersection of Howard and Saratoga Streets, maximizing the use of existing infrastructure and reducing the significant increase in carbon emissions resulting from demolition and new construction. The renovation achieved a sustainable rating equivalent to LEED Silver by meeting various energy conservation, water efficiency, site and material sustainability, land use,



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and indoor environmental quality standards prescribed by the International Green Construction Code (IgCC). All lofts come with energy-efficient appliances, LED lighting, Zero-VOC paint, and high-efficiency energy recovery ventilators for fresh and healthy air. Additionally, each loft comes with lockable bicycle storage in the basement to encourage the use of alternate means of transportation. The site is perfectly positioned to provide residents with walking access to the recently renovated Lexington Market, the University of Maryland Medical Center, the Inner Harbor, Hippodrome and Everyman Theatres, and CFG Bank Arena. The Crook Horner Lofts are also within two blocks of the CityLink Blue and 120 bus lines, the Light RailLink between BWI Airport and Hunt Valley, and the Metro Subwaylink between Johns Hopkins Hospital and Owings Mills, providing sustainable transportation options throughout Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

Visionary and Emulation

Illustrate how the project steps out from the norm, taking a concept to a brand-new level that others will want to emulate.

In comparing the current condition of Baltimore’s vacated historic N Howard Street corridor to its prominence in the first half of the 20th century, the development team saw an opportunity to redevelop a building of historic character that could revitalize a street filled with buildings of irreplaceable architectural interest. The team believes that the Crook Horner Lofts will be an important catalyst to additional retail development that will bring pedestrian street life back to the area – an essential requirement for reducing crime and the perception of crime. It sees a rejuvenated destination district that will emerge for eating, entertaining, and living. To spur this movement, the development team introduced the uniquely spacious, open floor plan “true” lofts suitable not only for living but also for working from home and entrepreneurial ventures. It is the team’s hope that this style of living space will become increasingly popular in a post-Covid-19 environment, and that it will allow the benefits of a comfortable balance between work and leisure in a single space.

A Need

Demonstrate that the project responds to the unique needs of the area in which it is located and to the customers it will serve.

The Crook Horner buildings once anchored the northern edge of Baltimore’s historic department store district – where Hutzler’s, Hochschild-Kohn, and Stewart’s were located. The North Howard Street Corridor currently presents a ghostly presence of a once glorious past, but there are many green shoots now sprouting to reinvigorate this well-positioned area. As was previously mentioned, the historic Lexington Market, dating from 1782, is within walking distance of the project and recently reopened to the public after an extensive renovation and over \$40M in investment. A series of mixed residential and commercial renovations have also been completed a block to the north on Franklin Street and several new residential buildings have been proposed along the N Howard Street corridor. It is the development team’s hope that the momentum generated by these projects will secure N Howard Street as a safe and desirable neighborhood to live in, and thereby result in increased commercial use.