



Long-vacant Durant Hotel in Flint becoming apartments; What do you think of this project?

Posted by Ron Fonger | The Flint Journal October 27, 2008 16:51PM

Flint Journal extras: This is an updated version of a [previous post on this article](#).

FLINT, Michigan -- Dignitaries will be front and center in the city's historic Durant Hotel today as they announce a \$30-million investment that will turn the downtown landmark into a renovated apartment complex.

But soon after they leave, the project developer said he'll waste little time before opening the throttle on the massive job.

"We'll be working every hour of every day until it's done," said Richard Karp, whose company will become part owner of the property and project developer. "We're pleased and honored and excited."

Karp and Genesee County Treasurer and Land Bank Chairman Daniel T. Kildee are among those expected at a news conference this morning to announce that construction is about to ramp up with the goal of completion before classes start next fall at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Plans call for the building to be redeveloped into 93 apartments aimed at older college students and professionals who work in or near the downtown area.

Kildee, officials from a new limited liability company that will own the building, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Ford Foundation are among those expected to make the announcement official Tuesday from inside what was once Flint's grandest hotel.

"For 53 years, that building was the symbol of Flint's ascendancy. ... It was the place to be," Kildee said. "For the last 35 years it's been sitting there ... a symbol of Flint's decline."

Flint Journal extras

About the Durant Hotel project

- Big plans: The project involves the creation of 93 apartments with rental rates ranging from \$440 to

THE FLINT JOURNAL

Question of the Day

Are you excited about the plans for the Durant Hotel?

Yes, absolutely  70.6%

No, I could care less  29.4%

Total votes: **85**

See all polls [here](#) or [here](#).

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\$825 with amenities like in-apartment washer and dryer, granite countertops, stainless appliances and high ceilings.

- Location: 607 E. Second Ave. in downtown Flint.
- History: Opened in 1920, the hotel was named for William C. Durant, the founder of General Motors. It has been vacant since 1973.
- New owners: 607 E. Second Avenue LLC, a new limited liability company created by Karp & Associates and Prater Development.

Related articles:

• **Oct. 27, 2008:** [Officials to announce renovation of Durant Hotel in Flint into apartment complex](#)
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Kildee said a renovated Durant could again mirror the changing fortunes of the city's downtown, which has seen millions in new investments in recent years.

The announcement that the Durant will be redeveloped does not come as a complete surprise.

Interior demolition started in June, work the county said had to be done whether it decided to demolish or help redevelop the Durant.

And last year, the Land Bank created a holding company to push the project forward and signed a pre-development contract.

But officials said it was impossible to make the project work without arranging millions in public and private financing to subsidize it and provide start-up costs.

Funding includes \$2 million from the Mott Foundation, \$4.8-million in county-backed borrowing (to be paid back with captured property taxes from the Durant and other Land Bank-owned properties), and \$1 million from the Ford Foundation.

Opened in 1920, the Durant closed in 1973 and has been the subject of several failed redevelopment proposals in the past. The Land Bank purchased the building in 2005 with plans to demolish or redevelop it rather than allowing its continued deterioration.

Kildee said the sale to 607 E. Second Avenue LLC will be for a little more than \$500,000, a price that will allow the agency to get back all the money that it has spent on the job.

The limited liability company includes Karp and Prater Development in the Lansing area.

Karp said he came convinced the Durant project could thrive after seeing strong response to the UM-Flint student housing that opened this year.

"With the success of the First Street Residence Hall ... our concerns were put to rest," he said.

Tracey Whelpey, owner of the Lunch Studio, 444 S. Saginaw St., said the green light for the Durant is great news for downtown.

"I'm really excited," said Whepley. "I plan on sticking around. I think it's going to be pretty cool around here."

Reader comments on a [previous version of this article](#):

Posted by sos48503 on 10/27/08 at 2:39PM

Watch Williamson try to take credit for this. He had nothing to do with this. Mark my words, he wants to trick people into thinking Downtown redevelopment is his doing.

Posted by Lndscpurbnsm on 10/27/08 at 2:57PM

This is great, but I still have to throw my hands up in the air about their decision to include an above ground, 2-story parking ramp on 3rd/Univeristy Ave. Especially given the existing ramp across the street is never utilized completely unless there's a big event at the Northbank Center...

Put an automated facility (given that this is going to be primarily residential) underground and develop the space above to complement the new corridor and hotel.

As it stands, the UM-Flint end of "University" Ave. is more a testament to parking lots and parking ramps than it is a gateway to the university.

Give me a break!

Posted by Delmont on 10/27/08 at 3:19PM

SOS:

Give it a rest.

Posted by Lndscpurbnsm on 10/27/08 at 3:36PM

And by "aimed at" do they mean they're shooting above or below, say, \$700 an apartment?

Posted by chanel227 on 10/27/08 at 5:27PM
sos48503
I agree....GIVE IT A REST!!

Posted by opnureyes on 10/27/08 at 7:39PM
Sos, keep it up. I feel that is good prediction. I am happy that something else is going downtown. Its nice to see the durant will no longer be an eyesore. I still have the same concern though. I feel the Durant will be filled with college kids, not used to an urban area. Lets face facts here. Once you go north of Fifth Ave. its a higher crime area. These students will be targets. My concern is the lack of police coverage. If the police are unable to respond until 3-5 hours. This is unexceptable. There is just not enough cops for the call volume Flint has. I feel something needs to be done about this. I hope that U of M police force will step up to bat. I know the mayor wants to lay off another 20 officers. Folks this is the #3 city for violent crime. Criminals will see this complex as a meal ticket. Hopefully the mayor swallows his pride and stops spending money. This is the only way we will get what our taxes pay for....a police response.

Posted by sos48503 on 10/27/08 at 8:39PM
Watch tomorrow's press conference you'll see Williamson try to act like he did this. I don't blame him, but truth is he will try to steal Kildee's press. He did a few weeks ago and you know I am right. Chanel227 and Delmont. Williamson gets in the way 100x than he helps downtown. Unless you think buying the Genesee Towers for 6 million as helping. And when its all said and done it will be 6 million. Its called binding arbitration for a reason.

Posted by MIcynic on 10/27/08 at 8:40PM
Downtown Flint is about the safest place in the County. I've worked downtown for many years and have never been bothered by anyone, day or night, weekday or weekend. The development of the Durant is a great advance for the City of Flint and especially for the UM-Flint campus. Adding more rooms for students and others downtown will add to what is a growing momentum of positive happenings for Flint.

Posted by opnureyes on 10/27/08 at 8:59PM
Micynic I beg to differ with downtown's safety. I guess you work during the day, not at night. As a Flint Police Officer, I imagine I might know a little more of the crime stats downtown. One of the biggest crime area's is just north of that complex. I know this from first hand experience. I am by no means saying that if you go downtown you'll get shot, but lets not paint a pretty picture on it either. I think saying its the safest place in the country, might not be accurate. If you want to deceive yourself and say no shootings or robberies ever happen downtown, go ahead. I sure wouldn't let my faimly go downtown at night by themselves. But hey what do I know, just patrol the area.

Posted by Lndscpurbnsm on 10/27/08 at 9:24PM

I think the point is that while there is a crime problem with the city, much of it--and I've experienced this first hand--is completely and utterly wrong.

One way to reduce and fight crime is to develop the city as an attractive place to live and work. You can design our public infrastructure--from streets to parks--in a way that will reduce the ability of criminals to use it for illegal activities. By increasing the number of people living downtown and increasing the number of eyes on the street, non-criminal behaviors and opportunities to do things besides commit crimes, you're making the downtown safer.

This doesn't eliminate the need and importance of police, especially in Flint, but it can help. Even a little.

Of course, a large, 2-story parking ramp, with a design that creates a vacant & blank facade, insular orientation, and a wall along Parking Ramp Ave...I mean University Ave...they're only making the problem worse, not better.

Posted by opnureyes on 10/27/08 at 9:35PM

I agree Lndscpurbnsm with improving the image of downtown could reduce crime. I was just stating until this transfer of population occurs to the downtown area, the city needs a plan to address the crime issue. This has not been done. Laying off officers would only make the situation worse. This is the only plan the administration has thought of. I also agree that the parking ramps will only add to the problem. I still feel that this development is a step in the right direction though. I was just throwing some of my concerns out there.

Posted by flintmiosa on 10/27/08 at 10:52PM

All of the development in downtown area is positive news. I agree with one of earlier posts, we need underground parking structures and better security. Perhaps UM-Flint PD can step up incrementally, and perhaps, just perhaps, Flint PD can somehow patrol the downtown area moreso...we do NOT need layoffs or cutbacks...we need manpower and better utilization of our LE officerws time.

Posted by flintmiosa on 10/27/08 at 11:00PM

We need more PD, more security type personnel and lighting; in addition, utilize surveillance cameras to the max in the downtown area. The British do this and do it well. Utilize the technology that is already out there.

Also, the trees, bushes and landscaping on University Ave look great! When do the lights come on? I interact w PD alot, I own a business and drive the downtown area at various times of day, night...its getting better but I will not turn my teenagers loose there yet. No place for youngsters. More housing = more students and diversification of the income stream. We need to all stop the bickering amongst the politicians, stay focused on revitalizing the city, be positive when possible to the Press and move forward.

I'll feel safe at night when I can walk the streets without fear downtown. Im an optimist. We are in the right direction. We have a chnce to turn it around like other urban centers. We must remain focused.

Posted by jacobsmith on 10/28/08 at 8:34AM

I want to thank those who had to work around and through the mayor to bring this into the city. Just a few weeks ago the Con was attacking the Land Bank and everything it is involved with, the only time he relented was to pull another press conference victory.

This bodes well for the future of the city, once we sweep out the trash filling city hall we can begin to move forward!

Posted by miasma on 10/28/08 at 9:58AM

I work with a local news organization, and you wouldn't believe how many people actually think the Don has something to do with downtown development. I remind them that all he's done is make it LESS attractive to businesses. Didn't he threaten to try and end renaissance-zone tax rates for some downtown businesses? And 46 laid off police officers? No one will live somewhere they don't feel safe.

Furthermore, who knows? You might wake up in your new apartment to the sound of a new drag strip next door. King Don does what he wants, when he wants.

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