



Calling Them Out: Grow the promise and enthusiasm behind revival of the Durant

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Flint Journal staff

The Durant is back!

The revival of this former hotel from its zombie-like slumber since it closed in 1973 is a powerful sign that downtown Flint is growing ever stronger.

Building by building, downtown is coming back to life. The Durant is a powerful statement that this city does have a future.

Given up for dead, the formerly glamorous Durant Hotel was snatched up by the Genesee County Land Bank Authority in 2005. Work to rebuild the eight-story carcass began in 2008.

The way former Land Bank Chairman Daniel Kildee described the Durant also could apply to too many parts of this city. "It looked like the Titanic without the water," said Kildee, now cofounder and president of the Center for Community Progress.

In short, a wreck.

A funding patchwork of state and federal tax breaks, brownfield financing, a Charles Stewart Mott Foundation grant and investment from Lansing-based Karp & Associates and Prater Development brought the Durant back from the brink.

Its magnificent lobby and ballroom are described as gifts to the community.

Fantastic. Many thanks to all involved in this big project.

As we see it, the Durant's biggest gifts to the community will be the tenants already moving into its 93 apartments, and the energy they bring into Flint.

Who would have thought we'd ever again see people moving into downtown? Not only that, but a thriving college-town

culture come alive, thanks to the draw of Kettering University and UM-Flint's burgeoning campus?

It wasn't too many years ago that many people were willing to stick a fork in the city's center and call it done for good.

Thanks to this project and others, though, downtown is filling up, and its enthusiasm threatening to spread.

May the hope, promise and hard work that resurrected the Durant now begin to bleed into this city's neighborhoods.

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