

Democrat and Chronicle

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A GANNETT COMPANY

TRANSFORMING ROCHESTER: FORMER FACTORIES

PAST INDUSTRY SHAPES FUTURE



MAX SCHULTE/@MAXROCPHOTO/ STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Above, Ken Glazer, managing partner at Buckingham Properties, at the company's Edge of the Wedge development, an old factory warehouse, below, being renovated for apartments and commercial space on South Clinton Avenue near Gregory Street.

And a story of ingenuity is behind each old site

BRIAN SHARP STAFF WRITER

Century-old relics across Rochester are finding new life through multimillion-dollar renovations that are transforming the old manufacturing sites on the edge of city neighborhoods into new lofts, townhouses and restaurant or retail space.

Each carries a bit of the city's history.

In its heyday, the Cunningham Carriage Factory in the Susan B. Anthony neighborhood employed more people than Eastman Kodak Co. and Bausch+Lomb combined. The former Shantz Button Factory off Monroe Avenue near Interstate 490 flourished at a time when the city was renowned for its textiles and garment industry.

And a four-story warehouse on South Clinton Avenue with views of downtown was home to a pair of the city's early camera and lens makers before Kodak was a household name.

"This is a really cool building," said Ken Glazer, managing partner with Buckingham Properties, which has taken on the building on South Clinton near Gregory.



See a video on how developers are using factories of the past to shape the city's future. DemocratandChronicle.com

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Future

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"There aren't that many left."

The property, renamed Edge of the Wedge, should start welcoming residents to its 30 market-rate apartments in February. Glazer has a restaurateur lined up to open The Cub Room, modeled after the former Lower Manhattan hot spot by the same name, and is negotiating to fill two other cavernous spaces with similar tenants. Leasing has begun at DePaul Properties' Carriage Factory Apartments, which is nearing completion on 71 affordable units. And people begin moving in Saturday to the renovated and renamed Button Lofts.

About half of the 39 units in that building are leased, according to developer Adam Driscoll of DHD Ventures.

Elsewhere, construction began this month converting old factory warehouses to housing on Avenue D and in the High Falls district totaling 59 units.

"If you are a developer, you have to have some vision," said Delmonize Smith, the city's neighborhood and business development commissioner. "Occupancy rates are very high for these."

Much like housing has transformed downtown, so too are these projects affecting their neighborhoods.

The Carriage Factory sat vacant for 25 years. While the Susan B. Anthony neighborhood has seen investment, "you go around the block to Litchfield (Street), and you have this dense, empty factory," said Gillian Conde, vice president for DePaul. Not just one building but an expansive complex — notable for being the last of its kind in the nation but nonetheless blighted.

Renovating the Carriage Factory seemed "the very natural next step," she said. But it was in bad shape. "Other groups had looked at it in the past, and it was just deteriorating. It was a now or never moment."

DePaul already had invested along the West Main Street corridor, as had the city and others. What has struck Conde is the history here, the "tremendous local stories," she said. "It is great to bring them back."

"I didn't know the magnitude (of the impact) the Cunningham (Carriage) Factory had on Rochester," she said, referring to



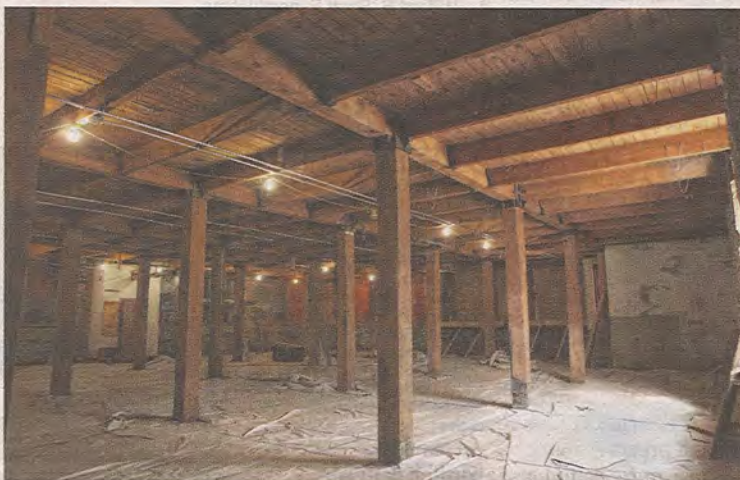
A circa 1920 image from the former Cunningham Carriage Factory on Litchfield Street.

PROVIDED BY DEPAUL



"It is such an incredible story, and I am so grateful we can tell part of it."

GILLIAN CONDE
DEPAUL VICE PRESIDENT



MAX SCHULTE/@MAXROCPHOTO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The future site of The Cub Room restaurant at Buckingham Properties' Edge of the Wedge, now under construction and expected to open in the spring.

About this series

Each Friday, the *Democrat and Chronicle* will highlight projects that are transforming Rochester. The 10-week series will focus on big developments, from College Town to Midtown and the Port of Rochester. But transformation takes many forms, large and small. Share pictures of how you see your city changing on Twitter or Instagram, and tag them #transformroc, or email bdsharp@DemocratandChronicle.com. We'll share some of our favorite photos submitted during the series at DemocratandChronicle.com.

Coming next week: A look at the Inner Loop East Project.

its prominence in the 1880s and its days producing high-end carriages, then cars and even a few airplanes. "It is such an incredible story, and I am so grateful we can tell part of it."

Though these developments are on the edge of rebounding neighborhoods, "legend lives for a long time," Conde said. "It takes a while for people to change their perception."

Perceptions are shifting, however, as people move back to the city. Said Conde: "People who have come and experienced the building love it (and) see it as another step ... We have

robust interest. People, really, they are not shying away."

Buckingham also owns an older building in the carriage complex on nearby Canal Street, the old Volunteers of America warehouse, and is in discussions about its future development. Similarly, the Button Lofts building is part of a rare surviving and formerly run-down complex, with another developer taking on a separate wing.

"People like to develop where they see development," Mayor Lovely Warren said, noting that Rochester is at a stage where there are investments being made in every part of the city.

Like DePaul, the Button Lofts' developers have embraced history, going so far as to secure listing on the National Register of Historic Places and receiving historic tax credits to assist with financing.

That carried high standards for renovation, which DHD, Passero Associates and other partners took to a new level. The group painstakingly worked to re-create the beveled wooden windows in 14-gauge aluminum, replicating trim details down to one-sixteenth of an inch. The manufacturer liked the result so much, they have added it to their product line, officials said.

"I could sit here and go on all day," said project



MAX SCHULTE/@MAXROCPHOTO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Ken Glazer looks toward downtown from the roof of Edge of the Wedge. "You get to see our tri-fecta from here," he said. "Bausch+Lomb, Xerox and Midtown. I particularly like this view."

manager Wayne Corbett — and he does, noting the hand-tooled knobs for the cupboard doors, the distressed wood chosen for cabinets, energy-efficient windows, and uniform window treatments purchased and installed so the building will have a finished appearance from the outside.

Shantz was the city's second-largest button manufacturer behind Rochester Button Co., whose building still stands on State Street at the edge of the High Falls District. The city's dominant industry would ultimately yield to photography and optics and people like Ernst Gundlach, who came from Germany in 1876 to work for B+L making lenses for microscopes, and ended up in business for himself.

Gundlach Optical, lat-

er Gundlach-Manhattan Optical Camera Co. with its Korona cameras, began on St. Paul Street, moved into downtown and ultimately located with Seneca Camera Manufacturing in the South Clinton building. The company was short-lived, split up and sold off by 1900. Seneca tried to compete with Kodak, lasting another quarter-century before being purchased and relocated to Minnesota. Nearly a century later, a faded sign on one side of the building reads Ward Supply Co. shipping and receiving and, on the other, Buckingham Properties and Edge of the Wedge.

"We really stuck to the bones of it," Glazer said of the renovation. "There weren't many pieces or artifacts."

But there were good bones. A stone basement,

brick masonry and heavy timber post-and-beam construction — similar to the building across the street at 742 S. Clinton Ave., on which Glazer and his partners expect to close on Monday. The Wire Wheel auto shop will stay, and Edge of the Wedge will gain parking.

Climb the Edge's old stairway to the rooftop, and future rooftop garden, and you step out to a picturesque view. Looking north is downtown — the heart of the city and Buckingham's biggest investments.

"You get to see our tri-fecta from here," Glazer said. "Bausch+Lomb, Xerox and Midtown. I particularly like this view."

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