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WILMINGTON TOWER

for: Westover Companies



Above: "Market Tower at 901 Market Street, Existing" Photo by Allison Klingler.
 Right: "901 Market Tower, Proposed" Rendering by Jeff Ivins and Allison Klingler.
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Dever Architects Receives City Approval to Revitalize Historic Gem:

In 1892, the Equitable Guarantee and Trust Company Building was built at the corner of Market and Ninth Streets in Wilmington, DE. Designed by Baker and Dallett of Philadelphia, the masonry building covered with ornamental terracotta and brickwork rose to six-stories – making it Wilmington’s first skyscraper.

The original design featured a water table base, circle-headed windows, various detailed belt courses, an intricate cornice, and a commanding main entry archway. In the 1910s, three stories were added that maintained the feel of the original design with continued window ornamentation and a detailed cornice.

Then, in the 1950s, the building became the Bank of Delaware and the owners looked to update the building. They wanted to use a new method of construction, create a completely modern look for the building, and change the view of the Wilmington skyline.

Their changes ruined the original design.

As well as a 14-story addition, the modern look required shaving all the ornamentation down to the brick, so that the face was flush enough to accept ribbed, aluminum siding. Vertical fins were added to cover the building from the ninth to the second floor and a new granite front was added over the water table on the first floor.

Then, in the 1980s, in order to update what was now called Market Tower, another design took inspiration from the Art Deco Woolworth building across the street. A cream and orange façade was put up, featuring a stepping

motif and medallion details. And so the building has remained covered in 1980s stucco, with no sign of change as new tenants moved in and out and altered nothing but the interior layouts.

Until the building was bought by Westover Companies.

Founded in 1965, Westover Companies provides quality retail, office, and apartment spaces. Seeing hidden potential trapped beneath a rough exterior, they turned to Dever Architects, with whom they had a very long-term relationship and who had just finished the design of their Audubon Village Shopping Center, (April 2018 Newsletter) to transform this half-vacant office building into a vibrant mixed-use of new commercial space on the 2nd and 3rd floors with luxury studio, one-, and two-bedroom apartments above.

Together, they learned what a historic gem they had found and the changes it had gone through that permanently changed its face. So, Westover and Dever Architects decided to return the building to a traditional façade, using modern-day materials that would meet the code for high-rise buildings and taking inspiration from the original 1890s design.

But, in order to bring back a stone base, circle-headed windows, belt courses, cornices, and an impressive main entryway, Dever Architects first had to make a presentation to Wilmington’s Design Review and Presentation Committee, which oversees changes made to buildings in the historic districts.

The December 2018 presentation included a 50-page booklet with a month’s worth of drawings, renderings, and photographs. Materials were selected, details were drawn out, and the project manager spoke at the evening Committee meeting in order to present the building’s design.

And in January 2019, Westover and Dever Architects received official word of the Committee’s approval of the design.

Now, as we move into 2019, Dever Architects is putting the final details into their design and creating documents for construction. Westover hopes to start construction in the summer and, soon enough, the building’s new offices and apartments will open and it will take on a fourth new name:

“901 Market Tower.”



Left: “The Equitable Guarantee and Trust Company” Photo Circa 1900.

Center: “The Equitable Building” Photo Circa 1940.

Right: “The Bank of Delaware” Photo Circa 1960.