

**The Historic Skinner Building:**

**Engaging the Past  
Exploring the Future**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The studio group would like to thank Olivia Mausel and the members of the Holyoke Historical Commission for granting a demolition delay order so that this work could occur. Holyoke City Councilor Diosdado Lopez and Carlos Vega --Executive Director of Nueva Esperanza were instrumental in assisting with our efforts. Jeff Hayden --Holyoke Economic Development Director and Holyoke Mayor Michael Sullivan provide realistic and constructive assessments of the progress reports. Opportunities to review the presentation work with Holyoke City Councilor Elaine Pluta, State Representative Michael Kane and Legislative Aide Helene Florio were greatly appreciated. The students who participated in this studio include Sarah Currie, Diana Daly, Emma Lang, Justin Mello and Justin Shatwell.

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# The Historic Skinner Building: Engaging the Past | Exploring the Future

## Introduction

This study is being carried out to explore the possible re-development opportunities for the Skinner Building and strategize for the renovation and preservation of this Holyoke landmark. By combining historic research and preliminary design concepts with an analysis of the potential fiscal strategies and user profiles we hope to outline a plan that will allow this important structure to play a key role in the economic revitalization and cultural development of South Holyoke.

Graduate and Undergraduate students from the UMass Architecture + Design Program and the UMass Department of History, in conjunction with the HUD sponsored COPC (Community Outreach Partnership Center) for Holyoke have been the primary researchers for this project. The work will be coordinated and compiled by Professor Joseph Krupczynski of UMass Architecture + Design Program.

## Executive Summary

This research regarding the development, renovation and re-use of the Skinner building has involved the following research and analysis:

### 1. Analyzing and Promoting the Skinner Building's Historic Significance

Originally a hotel that catered to businessmen, the Skinner Coffee House was converted into a community center in 1916 by Isabella Skinner and Katherine Skinner Kilbourne. The building was donated to the city of Holyoke in 1941, but retained its original purpose. The Skinner Coffee House served the community of South Holyoke for almost a century, largely depending upon the labor of volunteers to staff its programs.

An analysis of the building's past has identified key areas of historic interest. Locally, the building is important because of its role in the community of South Holyoke as well as its connection to the Skinner family. The building is the site of one of the largest community centers of its time in the region. The building would be a key interpretive tool to any discussion of community development, the movement to create these types of spaces, and the movement's effect on Holyoke and New England in general. Following are some of the areas of the building's history that could be exploited for cultural tourism.

- Women's Studies: The building's original role as a "working man's club" for women was progressive for the period. It was also an early example of a modern women's shelter.
- Immigrant Studies: South Holyoke has always been an immigrant neighborhood. The building has served successive waves of immigrants, including Poles, Germans, Italians, and Puerto Ricans. These ethnic groups shared this common space, creating a space of racial egalitarianism not often seen during this time period.
- Urban Development: The building's history portrays a continuous dedication to urban development, starting with the charitable work of William Skinner, through the continuation of this tradition by his children and the city of Holyoke, and ending with the current mission of Nueva Esperanza. The consistency of this movement through successive generations combined with the massive number of residents served make the building a unique case study.

The Skinner Coffee House tells a key story in the history of Holyoke and would be draw for cultural tourists from a range of interest areas. Its multiple areas of national significance should make the acquisition of federal recognition easy. Once the building is on the National Register, it will be highly competitive in historic grant competitions.

## **2. Identifying Potential Funding Sources and Building Users**

In an effort to provide a broad base of information about the options for the future of the Skinner Building, we have compiled and detailed the options that exist for funding the renovation of the building. Funding types can be assigned to one of three major categories: grants, loans & tax credits, and individual donations. Grants can be provided by both public and private sources, require application and are usually only awarded to non-profit organizations. Loans and tax credits are available from public (state and federal) entities as well as private organizations such as banks. Individual donations are donations of time, money, and services that can be acquired through fundraising or private donation.

In the case of a building renovation project, the historic significance of the building can potentially qualify it for historic renovation funding that is not available for other buildings. Historic renovation funding can take the form of grants, loans or tax credits and can come from both private and public sources. For the Skinner building, we are exploring all options for funding a building renovation project, including historical and non-historical sources. By combining funding from a variety of sources, we have created several potential funding packages that are each based on a different new use. The three proposed new uses that we have identified for this project are:

- Community/Cultural based User(s)
- College/University based organization(s)
- Private/Business/Residential User

All user profiles emphasize mixed-use and economic development. The user of the building should be an important part of economic growth and stimulation within the community. We have created a series of written descriptions and tables organized around particular funding sources that would be available for specific end uses.

## **3. Evaluating and Exploring the Potential for Re-use**

In order to better recognize the potential of the spaces contained within the Skinner Building, a working three dimensional model and drawings have been developed. By allowing for digital access to the building, the spaces can be better understood and evaluated for their aesthetic qualities as well as their compliance with established regulations. The model contains the basic elements of the building placed accurately according to previously developed plans, as well as the site conditions and the most important details, allowing for a better understanding of the unique characteristics of the Skinner Building.

In order to resolve the Skinner Building's lack of compliance with current building codes, some minor modifications have been proposed. By removing the central stairwell that is currently not in compliance with fire safety standards, the building is provided with an open vertical core that would, with minor structural reinforcement, accommodate the elevator necessary for providing proper handicap access. Alongside the elevator core, two handicap accessible bathrooms would be installed on each floor in order to provide for the expected building occupancy load.

A 1995 Feasibility Study of renovating the Skinner Building included a construction cost estimate of approximately \$1.17 million for the necessary work to bring the building back to fully functional condition. Given cost inflation (The inflation rate from 1995 to 2005 is 26.88%) and additional damage sustained over the last ten years that estimate would likely increase to approximately \$1.62 million.

## History of the Skinner Coffee House

### Historical Location of the Skinner Coffee House Nationally

The Skinner Coffee House came out of the Settlement house movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Starting with the founding of Toynbee hall in London in 1884, settlement houses began emerging in major cities all across the UK and United States. By 1911 the *Handbook of Settlements* includes four hundred and thirteen settlements from over much of Western Europe and every state in the union, up from seventy-four in 1897. Massachusetts alone had forty-six settlements<sup>i</sup>.

in the programs offered by the settlements. The majority of those who worked in settlement houses lived in them or in the community they served. Due the personal knowledge that settlement workers gained of the problems those they worked with faced, the settlement workers became loud advocates for better legislation that would benefit the poor. Much of the anti-poverty and workers rights legislation that we take for granted today came out of the settlement movement. The community based organizations that we see today are direct descendents of this movement.



Settlement houses were a radical development in the history of aiding the poor. Previous to their existence, most aid to the poor had come through the wealthy giving charity around the holidays through churches and social functions but not through a sustained involvement in the community<sup>ii</sup>. Settlement houses were physical structures where poor and working class communities could go for skills and recreation.

Settlement houses recruited college graduates to work with the poor and teach

The preservation of these settlement homes has begun to be seen as vital in preserving the social history of the United States.

### Historical Location of the Skinner Coffee House within Holyoke

The history of the Skinner Coffee House is the history of the people who used it. It is impossible to understand the building's past without studying the community it served. For more than a century the building catered to the needs of the

residents of South Holyoke. Supported by local volunteers, the Skinner Coffee House embodied Holyoke's spirit of philanthropy and community.

In a way, the story of the Skinner Coffee House begins with the Mill River Flood of 1874. Caused by a failed dam, the flood destroyed communities and industry along the valley. One of the hardest hit towns was Skinnerville. William Skinner, the head of the local mill who effectively ran the community, decided the damage was too extensive to justify rebuilding and moved his operation to Holyoke.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Holyoke was one of the region's great industrial centers. The city claims to be the first planned industrial community, centralizing industry along a pair of canals.<sup>iii</sup> At this time, the building now known as the Skinner Coffee House was a hotel. Likely built in 1882, it catered to traffic generated by the canals and the nearby railroad. The building originally opened as the Palatine Hotel, but was frequently renamed as it passed through the hands of several owners.<sup>iv</sup>

Though Holyoke became better known for paper manufacturing, William Skinner's silk mill was one of the most successful companies in the city. Skinner's wealth distinguished him as one of the elites of the community. Along with other prominent citizens, he led an informal campaign to promote culture and civilization in Holyoke. Dr. E. A. Reed summarized the philosophy of this movement:

Holyoke is pre-eminently a business city, but its beautiful, almost unrivaled setting, should point to the higher and finer values. Mere business prosperity, mere money getting as an end, is a vulgar and degrading thing; and the curse of our modern commercial life is that it is so intense and exacting that it endangers thought and culture.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "William and Joseph A. Skinner in Memory of Father Give Huge Sum to Institution." Skinner Coffee House Folder. Holyoke Public Library.

Privately, Skinner organized a small literary circle which studied and discussed a wide array of academic issues, from world history to social conditions.<sup>v</sup> Publicly, Skinner donated his wealth freely, investing in public institutions. Amongst his most important contributions was made to Holyoke City Hospital. Skinner championed the establishment of this institution and served as its first president. He also donated to the public library and local YMCA. Skinner showed his dedication to education by supporting several schools, including Vasser, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and Moody School of Northfield. Identifying religion as an important pillar of society, he also donated to almost every church of every faith in Holyoke.<sup>vi</sup>



Figure 3: The Skinner Hotel in the mid-1910's

### **Birth of the Skinner Coffee House**

After William Skinner's death, his children honored his memory by continuing his tradition of philanthropy. Skinner's daughters, Isabella and Katherine, opened a small women's center in November of 1902 at the corner of Main and Sargent. This humble two-room storefront was the original incarnation of the Skinner Coffee House. It was established in order to provide affordable meals to women who worked in the mills. It was also a place for women to relax and socialize. The Skinner

sisters established the center in part as a feminine answer to the great number of exclusively male clubs that dotted the city.<sup>vii</sup>



Figure 3: The Skinner Coffee House in the 1960's

### Expansion

The program proved very popular and quickly out-grew its two-room house. In 1916, the sisters moved the Skinner Coffee House a block down the street to its current location. They decided to expand the program to encompass the whole community, opening the building to men and women from all social and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>viii</sup>

The program was run by the Skinner sisters until 1941. At this point, the city of Holyoke accepted the building under the condition that they would continue William Skinner's legacy of philanthropy and "use and maintain [the building]...as a social and recreational center for the benefit of the people of Holyoke."<sup>ix</sup> The program was originally managed by the Hampden County Trustees for Aid to Agriculture, but the city later took full responsibility in 1952.<sup>x</sup>

### Modern History

Due to a budget crisis, the Skinner Coffee House closed in 1989. A community outcry caused the building to be reopened

in 1991 under the management of Nueva Esperanza. Though there was adequate interest to keep the center running, it could no longer physically serve the community. Deterioration of the roofs made the building a health risk. The City Council's decision not to fund the restoration in 1994 led to the closing of the community center.<sup>xi</sup>

### Immigration and Cultural Diversity and the Skinner Coffee House

During the Skinner Coffee House's tenure of operation, the neighborhood of South Holyoke changed greatly. Due to shifts beyond the control of residents in Holyoke many of the mills closed, leaving behind abandoned mills and warehouses. The city became home to a growing Puerto Rican population who began migrating to the area in large numbers in the early starting in the later half of the twentieth century.<sup>xii</sup> Though the appearance of the neighborhood changed greatly from the time when the Skinner sisters first started their community center, the needs of the community remained largely the same.



Figure 4: The Skinner Building Meeting Room

South Holyoke has always been a neighborhood of immigrants. Whether from Europe or Puerto Rico, new comers to the community have found similar treatment at the Skinner Coffee House. One of the primary programs offered at the center was tutoring in English. Italians, Polish, Germans, and Puerto Ricans have all studied the language at the center during its history.<sup>xiii</sup> The Skinner Coffee House also provided opportunities for

immigrants to maintain their own ethnic traditions and communities. French-Canadians, Italians, and Poles all formed women's clubs during the early days of the institution. The various groups shared the building, creating a center of racial egalitarianism not often seen in the country at that time. The Skinner Coffee House was also an early example of racial integration. The Negro Women's Club was in operation at the community center as early as 1937.<sup>xiv</sup>



Figure 6: A Women's Cooking Class at the Skinner Community Center

### Women and the Skinner Coffee House

The Skinner Coffee House also has a long tradition of meeting women's needs. The center's original purpose of being a working women's club was surprisingly progressive for the time. The tradition of women's clubs continued throughout the building's history. Several women's groups met at the building and held various social events, such as sewing classes and card games. The Skinner Coffee House was also a safe haven for women. Those who ran the center would allow women to stay at the center over night if the need arose.<sup>xv</sup>

### Other Primary Uses of the Building

The arts have also been a constant staple of the Coffee House. For a time, the center was home to the Holyoke Symphonette. There are also references to classes that seemed to be offered on a whim by interested volunteers, such as mandolin lessons and Polish folk dancing. The center was also home to the visual arts. The last art program to operate from

the building, Arcoiris, offered painting and photography classes in addition to the center's music and theater program.<sup>xvi</sup>



Figure 7: Girls showing off their dresses made in a sewing class at the Community Center

Another main concern of the Skinner Coffee House was children. The most popular children's activity was evening dances. Though these seemed to wane in popularity in modern times, they were the hallmark of the building's early social programs. These dances kept children off the street and gave them a chance to socialize. The Girl Scouts have also been a staple at the building. Troop 17 operated at the building as early as 1937 and was so popular that organizers complained that they would either have to turn girls away or organize another group.<sup>xvii</sup>

The building also catered to the elderly. The Coffee House was always a place where they could socialize, at one time even providing a smoking room in the basement. In modern times, the center has provided essential services to seniors, such as blood pressure testing and hot meals.<sup>xviii</sup>

### Legacy of the Skinner Coffee House

Through its history, the Skinner Coffee House has truly been a center for the community. The building averaged 20,000-25,000 guests per year.<sup>xix</sup> In 1950, the center attracted 31,279 people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds<sup>xx</sup>. This level of interest remained until the center's very

end. Even as American culture was becoming more individual and isolated, the Skinner Coffee House served 25,400 people ranging in age from seven to 92 in 1988.<sup>xxi</sup>

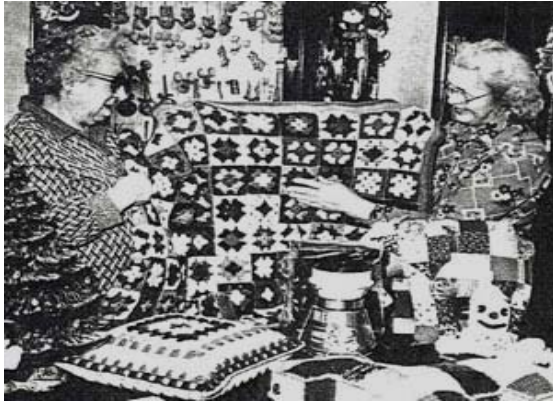


Figure 8: Two women preparing to sell homemade quilts

The Skinner Coffee House was once the heart of South Holyoke, and it easily could be again. If the area is to recover, it needs a community center to organize social events, promote education, and provide children with a positive environment. Though the building is closed, the legacy of William Skinner is still alive. The generations of volunteers who have worked in the building, from the Skinner sisters to Nueva Esperanza, show that the residents of Holyoke are still devoted to the spread of education, culture, and prosperity. The city's culture of philanthropy can flourish again; it only needs a place to start.

### **The Case for Preservation of the Skinner Coffee House: A Case Study of Hull House**

#### **Parallels between Hull House and the Skinner Coffee House:**

The Skinner Coffee House is one of the other community centers that were founded following Jane Addams's lead. It mirrors many of the key components of Hull House, from the coffee house and auditorium to the types of clubs and programs that were offered. Both the Skinner Coffee House and Hull House paid particular attention to the needs of poor women in the communities surrounding them.

The involvement of the University of Illinois at Chicago is an example of a university becoming directly involved in a historic site's preservation and creating the potential for deeper involvement. It must be said that much of the Hull House site's ability to survive is based on its connection to one of the most famous reformers in American history, Jane Addams, yet the uses of the Skinner house that we have proposed are not directly focused on the site's history as Hull House is. We look to use remembering the history as a guild and an influence but not as the primary use. Hull House proves that a university's influence, particularly a state land-grant university, is an option that can work. Hull House also shows that the history of community centers is valued and their preservation opens the gate for university involvement in a community.

#### **History of Hull House**

In 1889 Jane Addams founded Hull House for the purpose of providing educational, health care, and recreational opportunities for the immigrant community of Chicago's Near West Side. Hull House offered free classes in almost anything a person can imagine and free lectures as well as a day care center, public baths, a coffee house/club for working girls,

nurses and services for the homeless (including an employment bureau) and a plethora of clubs for community members. Hull House remained a vital community center until its closing in 1963.



The Hull House Coffee Room



A Cooking Class at Hull House

### **Preservation of Hull House**

In 1963 the University of Illinois at Chicago gained control of all thirteen buildings in the Hull House complex and began demolition. Two buildings were saved due to a public outcry against the demolition of a site so important to the improvement of the lives of the working class and the backbone of community. The original Hull House building is now a National Historic Landmark and the Dining Hall is a Chicago Historic Landmark. The Hull building, or “The Mansion”, as the original building is called, was all but gutted and has been transformed into exhibition space where the history of Hull House is told. The dining hall is used for public events as well as events for the benefit of the university and museum.

### **Connection with the University of Illinois at Chicago**

Aside from ownership of what is left of Hull House the museums are considered a unit of [College of Architecture and the Arts](#) university and thus available for professors and students who wish to use them as teaching tools or for research. The use of the site by faculty and students has been limited in the past but effort is currently being made to increase the ways and frequency that students and faculty become involved in the site.

### **Hull House Today**

Today the Jane Addams Hull House Museum consists of exhibit space that discusses the history and influence of Jane Addams and Hull house. It also has space for university events and conferences to take place. The mission statement of the Hull House Museum includes the “continuation of the historic settlement house vision, linking research education and social engagement.” The fulfillment of this mission is clear in the list of past and present programs including: [Talk to Strangers: A National Conversation on Democracy as a Process; Using the Past to Shape the Future: Addressing Civic Issues at Historic Sites, Museums; and Cultural Centers](#), [Performing the People, The People Performing: Theatre and Dance at Hull-House](#). The museum receives many visitors including large numbers of schoolchildren each year who come to learn about the impact that Hull House had on the community around it, as well as about Jane Addam’s work for social justice.

## Potential Funding Sources and Proposed New Uses for the Skinner Building

### Funding the Renovations

Funding types can be designated to one of three major categories: grants, loans & tax credits, and individual donations. Grants can be awarded from either public or private funding sources. Loans and tax credits can be provided by public entities such as state or federal organizations, or by private entities such as banks and small business development organizations. Individual donations are donations of time, money or services that can be acquired through fundraising or a variety of other means.

In the case of a building renovation project, the historic significance of the building can potentially qualify it for historic renovation funding that is not available for other buildings. Historic renovation funding can take the form of grants, loans or tax credits and can come from both private and public sources. For the Skinner building, we are exploring all options for funding a building renovation project, including historical and non-historical sources.

Grants are funds that are awarded to the recipient and do not need to be paid back. Private foundations, trusts and other grant-granting organizations can be run by a small group of people, a large organization, a corporation that has designated a portion of its profits to charitable work, or a government agency. Each grant-giving organization has its own regulations and guidelines regarding who can apply for a grant, how much money can be requested, and which types of activities will be considered. All grants require an application and many require that the applicant has been invited to submit a proposal. Many grants are awarded only to non-profit organizations.

Loans and tax credits can be provided by public (state and Federal) or private organizations. Low-interest loans do need

to be paid back, but they are much more affordable than market-rate loans. Applications for low-interest loans and tax credits are normally required. Many loans and tax credits are offered by public sources. The most applicable public sources of funding include HUD, the Massachusetts DHCD, The Office of University Partnerships, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Department of Commerce. Private Banks and small business organizations also can provide loans to qualified applicants.

Certain loan and tax credit programs, such as the HUD's Renewal Community and Empowerment Zone Programs, require that the geographical area for which the funding is to be provided be designated as an eligible area. To qualify for these programs, the area around the Skinner Building (either the South Holyoke neighborhood or the entire city) would have to be designated by HUD as either an Urban Renewal Community or an Empowerment Zone. In Massachusetts, both Lowell and Lawrence are listed as Urban Renewal Communities.

Loans and tax credits from both public and private sources can be combined with private funding to help pay for the Skinner building renovation. Appendix C contains a table listing many grants, loans and tax credit programs that may help fund the Skinner Building renovation. A description of each funding source is included, as well as speculation as to which proposed new use of the building the grant would be best suited.

The third major type of funding for a project of this nature is individual donations. Individual donations can encompass a wide variety of gifts. There are monetary donations or donations of time, materials, skills or services. Some ideas that could

help fund the Skinner Building's renovation include holding fundraisers to collect monetary donations from individuals; selling a promotional product and put the profits towards the renovation project; asking professionals (such as architects, general contractors and subcontractors) to donate their services; involving students and faculty from the University of Massachusetts and the other five colleges in the project; having professors donate their time to organizing and directing these students; and having community members donate their time and skills to the project. Specific community organizations, such as YouthBuild, have specific skill sets that could be utilized during particular phases of the renovation work. Donations of both money and services can also be used as a basis to acquire matching funds from some grant-giving organizations.

Certain funding sources within each of the categories described above are available exclusively for the restoration of historic properties. These funds are available in the form of grants, low interest loans, and tax credits. Most of the funding sources require that the building be owned by the city or town or be owned by a nonprofit organization. In addition, the building should be historically significant. The funding from many of these sources is contingent upon the building's listing on the local, state or National Register of Historic Places. In order to have the greatest opportunity for funding, the Skinner building should be placed on the National Register. Some sources will cover a small portion of the funding needed to restore the building while others will be able to provide anywhere from 50% matching funds up to the entire cost of the project. Funds can cover activities such as conservation research and building studies and construction.

While no single funding source is necessarily going to provide all of the money needed for the Skinner building renovation, a combination of funding from private, public and individual sources may

be able to provide the majority of what is needed. Depending on use of the building after renovation, certain sources of funding may be more applicable than others. To help outline potential funding sources for each of our three proposed uses of the Skinner building, we have created funding packages using private, public and individual source for each use. Because each funding package is dependent on the building's end use, it will be helpful to briefly describe each of these potential uses.

### **Proposed New Uses**

The Skinner Building could function in a number of different capacities once it is renovated. For the purposes of our research, we have narrowed down these possible uses to three major categories:

- College/University-based organizations
- Community/Cultural users
- Private business users

If the building were to be used by a College or University-based organization, the most likely use of the building would be as a Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC). If the building were used by one or more social service/community-based or cultural organization, potential users could be any number of the community-based organizations or museums already located in Holyoke that might be looking to move to an upgraded facility, to expand their services, or to share a building with other community organizations. If the building were to be used by a private business user who owned the building, many uses could arise, including housing, commercial space, or rental space to either one or more of the College/University groups or community-based organizations.

Although specific users are not designated at the moment, interest from all three types of these new users has been expressed over the last few months.

### **Funding Packages**

Regardless of which end use is chosen for the Skinner building, a combination of funding from a variety of sources could be made available for the building's renovation. The following are three charts that outline potential funding packages for each of the three uses we have proposed for the Skinner building and one chart that outlines historic renovation funding sources.

While these funding packages are the result of a good deal of research, and include many potential funding sources, there may be additional funding sources that can be added to these packages in the future. In addition, not all of the outlined sources may become available (many are grants, which may or may not be awarded). Nonetheless, these packages still provide a sense of the many opportunities available for funding the renovation of the Skinner building.

## **Proposed Use 1 – The Skinner Building as a Community/Cultural Center:**

**Proposed Use 1 – The Skinner Building as a Community Organization:** Should it be determined that the best new use for the Skinner Building would be either a Community Center or the offices for one or more Community-Based organizations, there would be many potential opportunities for funding.

Among these are HUD funds, which would be applicable if the building was turned partially into housing or if it was designated as a Community Center for another building that had housing. In addition to loans and grants from HUD, there are many private grants that could become available.

Many of these grants are awarded to organizations doing very specific work, so which types of community-based organizations were going to use the building would be important. Non-profit, community-based organizations are particularly well-qualified for many of these public and private grants because they require that applying organizations have non-profit status according the United States IRS.

The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, the Mabel Louise Riley Foundation, the Charles Hayden Foundation and the Beveridge Foundation are all private, grant-giving organizations that fund non-profit groups in this region of the country. HUD's State-administered Community Based Action Grant (CBAG) is a public grant that awards up to \$1,000,000 to several Massachusetts community-based organizations.

In addition to the many private and public grants that could be made available to a non-profit, community-based organization, loans and tax credits could also be made available from organizations such as MassDevelopment and Citizens Bank.

Fundraising and individual donations of time, money and services could also contribute to the total potential funds for a renovation of the building for use as a Community Center or offices for on or more community-based organization. The following tables further outline the possible source of funding for such a use.

<b>Proposed Use 1: The Skinner Building as a Community/Cultural Center:</b>		
<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Type of Funding</b>	<b>Amount Available (If Awarded)</b>
CDBG (HUD/Mass DHCD)	Public Grant	Determined by City
Section 108 Loans (HUD)	Public Grant	Up to several million (Not typically pursued in Holyoke - Administered by City)
CDAG (Mass DHCD)	Public Grant	\$500,000-\$1,000,000
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts	Private Grant	\$50,000-\$500,000
Mabel Louise Riley Foundation	Private Grant	\$50,000-\$100,000
The Charles Hayden Foundation	Private Grant	\$25,000-\$100,000
The Beveridge Foundation, Inc.	Private Grant	\$1,500-\$400,000
Historic Renovation Grants & Loans	Grants, Loans	\$5,000 - \$1,000,000
MassDevelopment Loans & Assistance	Loans, Guarantees	Up to \$3,000,000
Citizens Job Bank or Other Banks	Low Interest Loans	To be determined once other funding is established
Donated Services and Materials	Individual Donation	Valued at \$0 - \$100,000
Monetary Donations	Individual Donation	Potentially \$1,000-\$100,000
<p><b>Our analysis suggests as much as 40% (and possibly more) of the estimated \$1.6 million construction cost could be covered by foundation, state &amp; local grants. The additional funding could come through donated monetary funds, services and low interest loans.</b></p>		

**Proposed Use 2 – The Skinner Building as a COPC Center:**

**Proposed Use 2 – The Skinner Building as a COPC Center:**

Should it be determined that the best new use for the Skinner Building would be Five College, University or COPC organization-sponsored community outreach center, there would be several opportunities specific to that use.

Among these is the COPC New Directions Grant, which awards COPC centers \$200,000 to pursue a new project once their initial COPC grant work has been completed. In addition to this grant, there is at least one other regionally-focused organization that specifically awards grants

to Universities and small colleges, often times for building renovation projects. This organization, the George I Alden Trust is outlined with other grant and loan programs in the table below.

In addition to these private and public grants that may become available to a University or small college in the area, it would be possible for the academic institution to provide money from its own

funds as well. Fundraising and individual donations of time, money and services could contribute to the total available funds for a renovation of the building for use as a COPC Center or something similar, and the institutions own student and professor base may be able to contribute significantly. The following tables further outline the possible source of funding for such a use.

<b>Proposed Use 2: The Skinner Building as a COPC Center</b>		
<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Type of Funding</b>	<b>Amount Available (If Awarded)</b>
CDBG (HUD/Mass DHCD)	Public Grant	Determined by City
CDAG (Mass DHCD)	Public Grant	\$500,000-\$1,000,000
COPC New Direction Grant (OUP)	Public Grant	Up to \$200,000 (average as well)
Learn and Serve America Grant	Public Grant	\$350,000-\$500,000 (up to 3 years)
Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts	Private Grant	\$50,000 - \$500,000
The George I. Alden Trust	Private Grant	\$50,000 - \$350,000
The Beveridge Foundation, Inc.	Private Grant	\$1,500 - \$400,000
Historic Renovation Grants & Loans	Grants, Loans	\$5,000 - \$1,000,000
Mass Development Loans & Assistance	Loans, Guarantees	Up to \$3,000,000
Citizens Job Bank or Other Banks	Low Interest Loans	To be determined once other funding is established
Donated Services and Materials	Individual Donation	Valued at \$0 - \$100,000
Monetary Donations	Individual Donation	Potentially \$1,000-\$100,000
<p><b>Our analysis suggests as much as 40% (and possibly more) of the estimated \$1.6 million construction cost could be covered by foundation, state &amp; local grants. The additional funding could come through donated monetary funds, services and low interest loans.</b></p>		

**Proposed Use 3 – The Skinner Building as a Privately-Owned Building:**

**Proposed Use 3 – The Skinner Building as a Privately-Owned Building:**

Should it be determined that the best new use for the Skinner Building would be for the building to be owned and operated privately, there would still be many potential opportunities for funding. Among these are HUD funds, some of which would be available to a private owner if the building was turned partially into housing. In addition to loans from HUD, private

owners would also have the opportunity to apply for a wide range of loans at the regional, state or local level. Among the organizations that have low interest, grant giving, or tax bond programs that could be tapped by a private owner are MassDevelopment, Citizen’s Job Bank, the Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund, and the Small Business Administration. The following tables further outline the possible source of funding for such a use.

<b>Proposed Use 3: The Skinner Building as a Privately-Owned Building</b>		
<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Type of Funding</b>	<b>Amount Available (If Awarded)</b>
MassDevelopment Real Estate Loan	Loan	Up to \$3,000,000
MassDevelopment Guarantees	Private Loan	To be determined as other funding is established
MassDevelopment Pre-Development Assistance	Grant	\$25,000-\$25,000
Greater Holyoke Community Development Corporation - Loan through the Western Massachusetts Enterprise Fund	Loan	\$1,000 - \$50,000
Citizens Job Bank or Other Banks	Low Interest Loans	To be determined once other funding is established
Historic Renovation Grants & Loans	Grants, Loans	To be determined by the amount of historic renovation pursued
Private Investment	Private Investment	To be determined based on use
Donated Services and Materials	Individual Donation	Valued at \$0 - \$100,000
Monetary Donations	Individual Donation	Potentially \$1,000-\$100,000

**Historic Renovation Funding Sources:**

<b>Summary of Historic Renovation Funding Sources</b>		
<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Type of Funding</b>	<b>Amount Available (If Awarded)</b>
The Getty Foundation – Architectural Conservation Planning Grants	Private Grant	Up to \$75,000
The Getty Foundation – Conservation Implementation Grants	Private Grant	Up to \$250,000
The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund – MHC	Public Grant	\$5,000 - \$100,000
Preservation Services Fund – Natl. Trust	Private Grant	\$500 - \$5,000
The Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation – Natl. Trust	Private Grant	\$500 - \$5,000
The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors	Private Grant	\$2,500 - \$10,000
Save America’s Treasures Grants	Public Grant	\$250,000 - \$1,000,000
HGTV’s Restore America Grants	Private Grant	Up to \$100,000
Save our History Grants	Private Grant	Up to \$10,000
Tourism Cares for Tomorrow Grants	Private Grant	\$5,000 - \$20,000
National Trust Inner-City Ventures Fund	Loan	Up to \$350,000
National Preservation Loan Fund	Loan	Up to \$350,000

## The Building and Its Condition

### Building Description

The Skinner Building is located on the corner of Main and Hamilton Streets in the neighborhood of South Holyoke, Holyoke Massachusetts. It has four stories and a basement, each floor is approx. 3000 sq. for a total above ground square footage of 12,000 square feet. The building stretches thirty-three feet across the main street face and one-hundred across its Hamilton side. This brick building has a powerful corner-lot presence on South Holyoke's main corridor, and possessing many stone and brick details --including a rooftop parapet wall-- the Skinner Building is unique in its architectural character.

Entry to the building is available from two Hamilton Street entries and a rear fire exit. A rear and central stair currently connect the floors from basement to fourth. The basement has a few utility rooms, but is mostly usable space. The first floor is made up of two gathering spaces, one formerly a front 'living room' the other formerly a coffee shop dining room, as well as a few other office sized spaces and what was formerly a kitchen. The second floor contains the auditorium space and stage as well as a number of other spaces of varying sizes. The third floor is half consumed by the balcony above the auditorium, but contains a few dorm-style rooms on the other half. The fourth floor contains about eight dorms-style rooms.

### Documenting the Building

In order to better recognize the potential of the spaces contained within the Skinner Building, a working three dimensional model and drawings were developed. By allowing for digital access to the building, the spaces can be better understood and evaluated for their aesthetic qualities as well as their compliance with established regulations. The model contains the basic elements of the building placed accurately according to previously developed plans, as well as the site conditions and the most important details, allowing for a better

understanding of the unique characteristics of the Skinner Building.

### Building Conditions

According to the feasibility study conducted by Stephen Jablonski in 1995 the Skinner Building was in "serviceable condition" and "there were no issues discovered during the course of the study that would indicate that the building is not safe for occupancy." This statement was made under the condition that the few major, but serviceable, issues be attended to immediately. The major issues being: "parapet walls need rebuilding in two places," and "leaking of the parapet capstones has caused some severe damage to the upper brick walls."

Assuming these issues were not addressed at the time, and estimating that ten years of weathering has furthered the urgency of these issues it can be assumed that in addition to these problems with the parapet, the roof and some floor structures have sustained water damage that would require assessment and repair. Due to some of the floor conditions "which are irregular from a structural point of view," it would be reasonable to assume that though they were "adequate for the load requirements of a community center" in 1995, they would need to be thoroughly examined in the near future.

### Proposed Renovations

In order to resolve the Skinner Building's lack of compliance with current codes some minor modifications have been proposed. By removing the central stairwell that is currently not in compliance with fire safety standards, the building is provided with an open vertical core that would, with minor structural reinforcement in the basement, accommodate the elevator necessary for providing proper handicap access. Alongside the elevator core, two handicap accessible bathrooms would be installed on each floor in order to provide for the expected building occupancy load.

Adjacent to the elevator in the courtyard, and constructed outside of the building's current envelope, would be constructed a hall and stairwell that would provide the building with a properly fire-rated second means of egress. This hall and stair hugs the side of the building, and is reminiscent of traditional exterior fire escapes which often provide urban environments with a means of socially bridging the interior-exterior boundary. By constructing this portion outside the building envelope, and placing the bathrooms and elevator in a condensed core, minimal structural or aesthetic disruption can occur, thereby

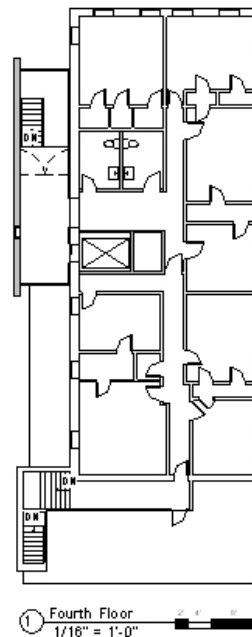
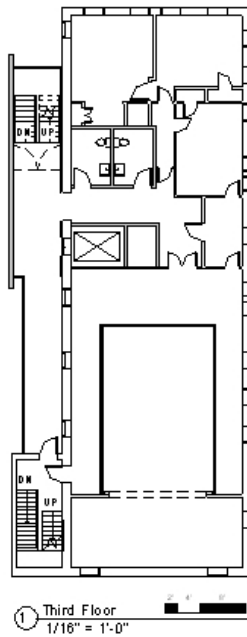
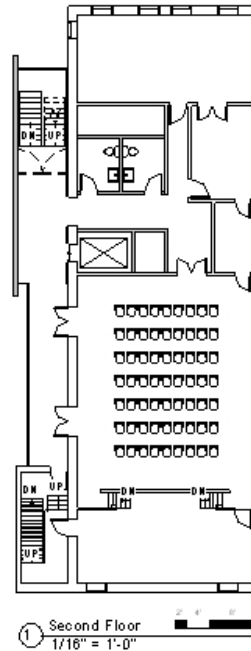
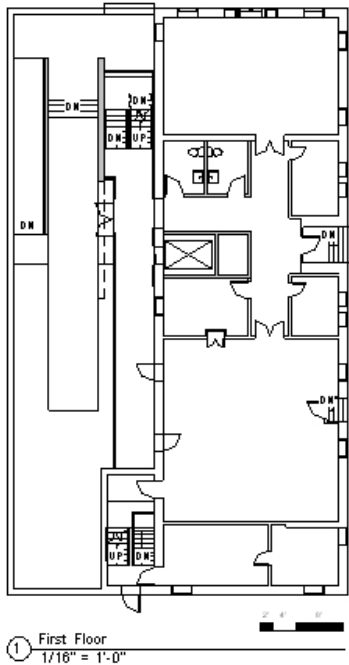
preserving the building's valuable historic qualities.

### **Construction Costs**

The 1995 Feasibility Study also included a cost estimate that evaluated what would be necessary to bring the Skinner Building back to fully functional condition. That estimate totaled approximately \$1.17 million, and given cost inflation (calculated with an inflation rate of 26.88% from 1995 to 2005) and additional damage sustained over the last ten years cost estimate would increase to about \$1.62 million.



**A RENOVATED SKINNER BUILDING**



**SKINNER BUILDING FLOOR PLANS (Not to scale)**

## FOOTNOTES:

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<sup>i</sup> Ed. Woods, Robert A. and Albert J. Kennedy. *Handbook of Settlements*. New York: Charities Publication, 1911

<sup>ii</sup> [Ginzberg, Lori D.](#) *Women and the work of benevolence : morality, politics, and class in the nineteenth-century United States*. New Haven : Yale University Press, 1990.

<sup>iii</sup> Dicarlo, Ella Merkel. *Holyoke-Chicopee: A Perspective*. Holyoke: Transcript-Telegram, 1982.

<sup>iv</sup> Dicarlo, Ella Merkel. "Changing Scenes." Skinner Coffee House Folder. Holyoke Public Library.

<sup>v</sup> Daily Transcript. November 15, 1923.

<sup>vi</sup> "Huge Sum to Institution."

<sup>vii</sup> "Coffee House Opens with Reception to Girls." Holyoke Evening Telegram. November 15, 1902.

<sup>viii</sup> "Coffee House Formally Opened." Holyoke Daily Transcript. November 15, 1916.

<sup>ix</sup> "Skinner Coffee House Deed, 1941." Registrar of Deeds, Hampden County.

<sup>x</sup> "Changing Scenes"

<sup>xi</sup> "Vote on Skinner Center Labeled Racist." Union News. April 26, 1994., "Crisis May End Program." Union News. May 17, 1989.

<sup>xii</sup> Dicarlo. *Holyoke-Chicopee*.

<sup>xiii</sup> "Relatives Reminisce, part 2." Hello Holyoke. March 15, 1995.

<sup>xiv</sup> "Skinner Coffee House Minutes, 1937." Skinner Coffee House Papers. Wistariahurst Museum

<sup>xv</sup> "Coffee House Minutes." "Coffee House Opens."

<sup>xvi</sup> "Skinner Community Center has 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Women's Club." Skinner Coffee House Folder. Holyoke Public Library. "Teen Center Provides Art, Opportunities." Holyoke Transcript-Telegram. December 14, 1989.

<sup>xvii</sup> "Skinner Minutes, 1937." "Relative Reminisces."

<sup>xviii</sup> "Crisis."

<sup>xix</sup> "55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary." "

<sup>xx</sup> Clipping, January 31, 1950." Skinner Coffee House Folder. Holyoke Public Library.

<sup>xxi</sup> "Crisis."