



Bridge to Windsor, ON, Canada | Marvin Shaouni

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Thompson Block restoration in Ypsilanti's Depot Town set to begin this fall

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A building that once housed civil war soldiers in Ypsilanti's [Depot Town](#) is on its way to becoming a home for yuppies and hipsters.

[Beal Group](#) is hoping to start restoration of the Thompson Block building by this fall. It plans to turn the historic three-story structure at the corner of Cross and River streets into 16 luxury lofts and 10,000 square feet of ground floor retail space.



Some preliminary demo work to secure the building and make architectural drawings has already begun. Once full construction starts, the project is set to be finished by September of 2008. So far two of the lofts have been reserved and leases for retail space are being negotiated.

"We are in talks with four or five commercial tenants but we could use some more to come to the table," says Stewart Beal, the developer behind the project.

The building has varied historic past. It was built in 1861 and turned into a Civil War army barracks. Since then it became the first [Dodge Brothers](#) car dealership and the city's first fire station. It's best known as the Thompson Hardware Store which, among other things, became the first place to sell bicycles in the area.

"There are probably four or five reasons why it's historic," Beal says.

The building fell on hard times in recent decades. The owners began neglecting it in the 1960s and became largely vacant soon after except by some people who used it without going through proper channels, according to Beal and a city official. Beal took it over a couple years ago and started the renovation process.

The plans call for creating lofts between 800 and 1,200 square feet, renting for between \$800 and \$1,300 a month. The refurbished structure will feature amenities, such as wood floors and balconies. Once finished the Thompson Block will join a cadre of other restored historic buildings in Depot Town, which surrounds train tracks to Detroit and the old Ypsilanti train station.

Source: Stewart Beal, developer of the Thompson Block building

Writer: Jon Zemke

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