



Bon Air Hotel

Downtown Bainbridge is centered around Willis Park, a typical small town square. The Bon Air Hotel occupies the majority of the northern side of the square. The rehabilitation of the Bon Air is a prime example of a downtown development project and a public-private partnership.

The 1901 structure has undergone an extensive rehabilitation. In July 1999, Hal Carter, a developer from nearby



Sylvester, purchased the condemned Bon Air building from the Georgia Trust, rescuing it from demolition. First, Mr. Carter began repair of the back wall, which collapsed the day before he signed the contract to purchase the Bon Air from the Georgia Trust. Next he repaired the roof structural system, opened the atrium space, rebuilt the grand staircase, repaired windows, installed a sprinkler system and reconstructed the front balcony and porticos.

Mr. Carter and his wife, Priscilla, have made great strides in rehabilitating the 39,000 square-foot building into a mixed-use building for downtown shopping and living. In 1901 the Bon Air was a three-story hotel that utilized the first floor as commercial spaces and the upper floor as guestrooms. The hotel rooms were used until 1964, after which only the six commercial spaces

on the first floor were occupied. These spaces gradually declined due to deferred maintenance and the last two tenants left when the building was condemned in February of 1999.

The hotel originally had a full height wooden porch on the front, with balconies on the second and third floors. This structure was removed during the 1950's, presumably due to deterioration. Since the mid-1960's when the hotel closed, the windows had been boarded up, and routine maintenance had been neglected.

The City of Bainbridge received a grant from the OneGeorgia Authority, in the amount of



\$80,000, to reconstruct the balcony and porticos on the façade. Carter received design assistance for the balcony from the Georgia Trust Design Coordinator, Paul Simo. Mr. Carter also applied for and received a Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund from the Department of Community Affairs to assist with permanent financing of the project. In addition, Carter has been diligent in his rehabilitation to adhere to the guidelines of the tax incentive program through the Historic Preservation Division.

The Bon Air project was chosen as one of seven national success stories told at the Preservation Partners Luncheon in Rhode Island during the National Preservation Conference in October 2001. Carter has rehabilitated the building for use as five commercial storefronts on the first floor and eight apartments on the second floor. The ground level retail space is 100% occupied and all eight of the upscale apartments are rented.

Cost of Rehabilitation: \$1.4 million

Funding Sources:

\$80,000 OneGeorgia Authority for reconstruction of balcony

\$250,000 DCA's Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund

\$1.2 million Financing through owner's home bank