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## Building owners: These places matter

*Lori Holcomb  
The Enquirer*

The old saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words."

With smiles fixed upon the lawyers' faces and a sign larger than two pizza boxes in their hands, it only took three words to get their point across: "This Place Matters."

Attorneys Daryl Mumford, Jeff Schubel, John Macfarlane, Jim Norlander and David Barnett purchased The Elizabeth Building at 68 E. Michigan Ave. and poured more than \$500,000 into its restoration after it was severely damaged by fire shortly before they moved into it.

The men are among several downtown building owners who posed in front of their historic buildings with signs that read "This Place Matters" for photos to be submitted to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "This Place Matters" campaign.

The nationwide campaign's purpose is to inspire Americans to weigh in on the buildings that are architecturally or culturally significant to them by submitting pictures to the campaign's Web site, [www.preservationnation.org/thisplacematters](http://www.preservationnation.org/thisplacematters). The pictures will then be made into a mural to be placed at the National Trust's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Kathleen Eriksen, director of development for the Downtown Partnership, scurried through downtown's streets this week snapping photos of building owners for the project.

Eriksen has become very familiar with the value of restoring historic structures. Her office is located in the Ratti Building on Michigan Avenue, and the Downtown Partnership was recognized by the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, the National Trust, HGTV and the American Institute of Architects for restoring the building.

The Ratti building also was the first from Battle Creek to be submitted to the "This Place Matters" online site. More than 600 pictures have been submitted since the campaign began in April, according to the National Trust. As of Tuesday afternoon, only 10 Michigan sites had been submitted -- eight more than when local architect Randy Case learned about the project a few weeks ago.

Case has done major work to the Potter Building since purchasing it in 1984. Posing in front of the building for Eriksen's camera with his wife, Sue, and dog, Winston, Case said he believes in the campaign because it sends a message about historic buildings' values.

"In Congress right now, there are issues about funding for preservation and by having a whole series of people weigh in on it; it lets them know they really care," he said.

Simon ter Avest, owner of the John ter Avest Agency, was partially motivated by sentimental memories to restore his building at 9 Capital Ave. NE, which also will be included in the campaign.

"We could have moved, but my dad started out (the business) in downtown Battle Creek. I can remember riding my bike around here as a kid," he said.

Just across the river at Clara's Restaurant, owner Ross Simpson posed for a picture with his wait staff in front of what was once the Michigan Central Railroad Depot.

The building had bats and fire damage, among various other problems, when Simpson purchased it in 1989. But he said it was worth the 15 months and \$2.5 million it took to get the restaurant into working order.

"You can't duplicate the feeling you get in an old building," he said. "It's hard to describe unless you come in and feel it."

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