

well. We know the Schelde family, who is from the Old Mission Peninsula. When Greg and I went to the Old Mission School with Amy Schelde, we never imagined we'd all end up working together.

What exactly is 2Mission's role in Vinology, besides owning the building that will house it?

GL: We are investors in the restaurant and the Jonna family is the operating/managing owner. Kristin Jonna also owns Vinoteca with Jon. Kristin's father, John Jonna, founded Merchant of Vino and she knows a great deal about wine. Vinology evolved from Vinoteca but will be larger with a full-service restaurant and retail wine section below ground. It also will have a wine bar that we hope will be as successful as the one in Royal Oak.

The building itself is owned by Retro LLC, which is comprised of 2Mission and other investors. Jon and I are the managing partners of that entity and manage the development process.

What is it you like about developing projects in Ann Arbor?

JC: We think it's a great place to do our type of work. There are some higher costs of doing development here, such as tap fees, but we feel the city has been fantastic overall and processes paperwork quickly. The Downtown Development Authority has been the best part of the experience for us. In fact, we develop only in cities that have strong DDAs. They give you the strength of a business organization that makes for a better city to operate in. Ann Arbor's has served as a model for other areas of the state.

I think we're following the DDA's lead in how they've laid out development goals of historical preservation and increased density. I'm glad Ann Arbor was aggressive in the 1990s and had the wisdom to hire Susan Polley who has really strengthened the organization. She came from San Francisco and has a strong feel for urban density.

GL: Since moving back here, I've really enjoyed the challenges of developing in this city. Many of them help make Ann Arbor the place that it is. So many people here are interested in preserving the quality of both their urban and rural environments. At Columbia, I was a member of the Center for High Density Development so it's exciting to be able to work with people who understand the benefits of preserving green space. At Columbia, I learned that too many communities are not taking that approach.

The tricky part for us is knowing that some of the rules are changing and that we need to be prepared to adapt. Nothing is static around here.

What's the timetable for completion and occupation of the Mayer Schairer Building?

GL: February 1 is our target date for opening Vinology. We're hoping to have the office space open by mid to late December. Levels two and three of the building will include more than 7,000 square feet of loft office space with brick walls and high ceilings. We hope it will go quickly. The office areas have elevator and stair access from both Main Street and the alley behind. We plan to take one floor for our own office use but will remain flexible. If an interested party comes along, we will lease as much space as they want. The downtown office market has slipped a bit but we feel that the quality of a downtown location will attract people.

Fred Beal and his wife will be living in the residential loft on the top floor. Beal Construction Company is our builder. The top loft unit also has two-way access, a two-car garage and amazing view of the west side of town.

What are some of the challenges of rehabilitating this historic building?

GL: We're working toward a historic designation. The building has undergone many uses and transformations since Jon purchased it in 2002. In the 1950s or early 60s, the store front was torn off and rebuilt in 1950s modern. We're reconstructing it in the character of the 1906 original. Historical restoration of the windows has been very tricky because at the same time, we're working to reduce energy consumption. While we want windows to operate as they did when originally installed, we also want to reduce heat loss in the winter and achieve solar gain in the summer. We contract with an excellent engineering firm, System Solutions Consultant, which has been very valuable to the effort.

2Mission is undertaking projects like Mayer Schairer with the goal of attracting more residents, businesses and services to the downtown area. Do you think that goal is achievable in the near future?

JC: I hope so. I think it will take a couple more big loft projects for that to happen. At some point, I would like to see some basic services return—at least a drugstore, hardware store, and

grocery store. That's not asking a lot—I think those three business groups would be enough to service downtown Ann Arbor. We could also use another office supply store. We bought everything for our office from Mayer Schairer while it was in business. And we built a lot of our 1990s projects with tools and materials from Schlenker Hardware.

There are still many opportunities here. Our big focus is on planning the same things we've been doing—higher density projects, historical redevelopment and maybe some new construction. We definitely will continue developing residential lofts and maybe another restaurant. People have asked if some of our lofts that were designed for residential use could be rented as office space. That's an exciting sign that the downtown office market could turn around if we offer alternative spaces.



Mayer-Schairer Building in 1906.

Mayer-Schairer Building Undergoing Historic Renovation

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Greg Lobdell with partner Jon Carlson of 2Mission Design and Development LLC, overlooking downtown from a balcony on the Mayer-Schairer building.