

# Kessler Building Renovation

L A P O R T E



## Kessler Lofts

### Kessler Lofts combines historic charm with modern technology

BY TERRI ANNE GREIG  
for *The News-Dispatch*

LA PORTE — For months, the anticipation has been building in downtown LaPorte as the old Kessler Furniture building at 824 Lincolnway has been transformed into Kessler Lofts. The grand opening of this charming building will take place this spring.

The rebirth of the Kessler building is thanks to the efforts of Sharon Goodman, a LaPorte native, who before this tremendous project, had never been involved in the rehabbing of any building, let alone one that is 107 years old.

Goodman divides her time between LaPorte and Chicago, where she is a busy and much in demand commercial photographer.

"I had been looking for an investment property for several years and just couldn't find the right building," Goodman explained. "Two years ago or so, I was walking past the Kessler store, looked up and saw the tin ceilings. Right then, I knew this was the one. When it went on the market, I called my Realtor, practically ran over to Kessler's, and bought it on the spot."

The history of this LaPorte landmark dates to 1900 when it was originally constructed. Goodman says it had elegant touches of the Art Nouveau period including high ceilings decorated with ornate tin, tall windows that captured the daylight and huge display windows that showed off the business's furniture.

The architecture was of the Prairie style, which was a part of architect Frank Lloyd Wright's building revolution. But, by the 1960s, much of the beauty of the building was covered in modern, maintenance-free aluminum, which while practical, was certainly not as elegant. Even the lovely tin ceilings were covered with energy efficient fiberglass panels.

In the spring of 2007, Goodman began the slow process of rehabbing this century-old gem. "I remember thinking at the time that with just a little TLC, the building would be fabulous," she said.

"And then we started opening things up and I saw it would be just a bit more complicated. What looked OK when it was covered up did not look OK once it was uncovered," she said.

Goodman said she got a quick education in what it takes to rehab a building. The building has been fixed from top to bottom including all new wiring that

brought it into the 21st century, new furnaces and air conditioning units on each floor, new roof, new windows and new insulation.

Much of the building's early 20th century charm has been retained but now it's in a 21st century package. Much of the original glass on the third floor has been kept, as well as the original tin ceilings and woodwork.

"My main goal was to keep the industrial city loft look and I believe we achieved just that," Goodman says.

In fact, the first new tenant of this commercial building will move in this month to the first floor. The second and third floor each have 1800 square feet and are still available for lease.

Goodman is especially proud of the second floor which has a panoramic view of the courthouse, Indiana Avenue, and Lincolnway. "It's just breathtaking," she said.

The treetop loft, or the third floor, features 18 large, light-filled windows and original wood floors.

Goodman sees much opportunity for the commercial future of LaPorte. She explained that Kessler Lofts hopes to introduce a concept that is very successful in larger cities called vertical retail spaces.



"Chicago's trendiest neighborhoods have shops on several floors, obviously due to the density issues of a big city," she says. "I hope LaPorte adopts that concept, too. It's fun to wander around an area and discover neat stores not only side by side but also upstairs and downstairs! We have so many beautiful historic buildings along Lincolnway."

This new developer hopes Kessler Lofts will spark other business owners to see the possibilities of not only using the ground floors of their buildings but also their upstairs spaces.

"The new Kessler Lofts is cozy and artsy," Goodman said. "It's a gorgeous city kind of look that fits very well into the surroundings. I think LaPorte is ready for a more upscale, sophisticated look."

For panoramic views of the Kessler Lofts restoration, visit the website at [www.giraffedevelopment.com](http://www.giraffedevelopment.com).

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