



**UNEARTHING TREASURES:** Cynthia Smith, education and outreach coordinator for Element Care, and Brian Auger, supervisor with Chapman Construction, look at writings dating back to the 1920s on the wall of a bank vault in the former Appleton National Bank. The Lowell building, a long-neglected gem, is undergoing a major transformation to provide elder-care services. **See a video at [lowellsun.com](http://lowellsun.com).**

SUN / RYAN MCBRIDE

# New life for a long-faded gem

## Former Lowell bank building will house senior-care company

By Grant Welker  
[gwelker@lowellsun.com](mailto:gwelker@lowellsun.com)

LOWELL — For years, the former Appleton National Bank was just another dilapidated once-grand downtown building that had fallen on hard times. Built in 1879, the four-story building had not been fully utilized for more

### Projects promise vitality/5

than three decades. A dental office and a café took up some space on the ground floor, but that was it. Now, the building is being completely renovated — and could do for

Central Street what the Lowell Community Health Center did for Jackson Street, transforming an eyesore into a gem of a building, and bringing jobs and people downtown. Crews have been returning the High Please see **REVIVAL/5**

# Ratings hinting at school site split

## Divide between workers, residents on build board

By Rick Sobey  
[rsobey@lowellsun.com](mailto:rsobey@lowellsun.com)

**BILLERICA** — Is there a division growing between town employees and residents when it comes to the site of a new high school? The site scores that High School Building Committee members gave last week may reveal a split between employees and those on the committee representing Billerica residents. Each member recently filled out an evaluation matrix for the three high school options, giving scores for 15 categories including delivery of the educational program, traffic, impact to neighbors, cost effective/value and pedestrian access. Please see **SCHOOL/2**

**INSIDE**  
How each committee member rated the two sites.  
— Page 2

## LOWELL SUPERINTENDENT FINALISTS

# Pope: I have tools to build up city schools

*Fifth in a five-part series profiling the finalists for the Lowell School Department superintendent's job.*  
By Amelia Pak-Harvey  
[apak-harvey@lowellsun.com](mailto:apak-harvey@lowellsun.com)

LOWELL — Former Marlboro superintendent Anthony Pope is struck by Lowell's strong sense of pride. That's important when trying to build great schools, he said, and that pride attracts him to the position of Lowell superintendent. The other attraction is the city's diverse, urban setting. "One thing that's going to be important for me if I

### Anthony Pope

**Age:** 49  
**Hometown:** Houston  
**Family:** Wife, three sons aged 9, 10 and 12  
**Mentor:** Robert Peterkin, former director of Urban Superintendents Program at Harvard University  
**Favorite book:** "Good to Great" by Jim Collins  
**Education:** B.S., Houston Baptist University; Master of Education, Houston Baptist University, Master of Education, Harvard University, Doctor of Education, Harvard University



in and learn as much as you can, and learn more about the community, learn more about what's working, what's not working." As a consultant for the Panasonic Education Foundation, Pope works to break down barriers of race and poverty in education. The group works in low-income, diverse districts across the country, he said. "We want to target those districts that are really trying to do the work and support kids that are traditionally neglected," he said. Please see **POPE/2**

## Calls for justice in Baltimore



Marcus Mulberry, of Steelton, Pa., joins crowds demonstrating in Baltimore Saturday, a day after charges were announced against police officers in Freddie Gray's death. **See story, Page 3, and two views of the city's struggle in Focus, Page B1.**

JAMES ROBINSON / PENNLIVE.COM VIA AP

SPORTS



Lions refuse to fold

Despite costly errors, Chelmsford High gets the win over Lowell. **Page 21**

ON THE WEB



TODAY'S QUESTION

What do you admire most about new UMass President Marty Meehan?

Vision

Dedication

Fundraising prowess

Work ethic

Student devotion

All of the above

Vote at [lowellsun.com](http://lowellsun.com)

SUNDAY STYLE



She's out to star

Mikayla Campbell, a Fitchburg native, is seeing her hard work pay off in Hollywood. **Page 15**

LOCAL

Wilmington OKs rec plan

Voters at Town Meeting overwhelmingly approve a \$4.8 million plan to build a recreation facility on Cross Street. **Page 7**

TODAY'S WEATHER

 Mostly sunny; high of 75°  
DETAILS ON **PAGE 28**

INDEX

Autos/A1-A4, A8	People/B3
Business/18-20	Real Estate/A5- A7
Crossword/16	Schools/B4-B6
Focus/B1-B2	Sports/21-27
Help Wanted/A3	Sudoku/2
Local News/7-11	Sunday Style/15-16
Obituaries/13	TV/B3

A :  MediaNews Group PUBLICATION



6 40092 00200 3





Installed in as little as

ONE DAY

NOW THROUGH MAY 31, 2015 GET \$450 OFF

A FULL TUB/SHOWER REMODEL OR NO INTEREST FOR 25 MONTHS!

\*Orders must be placed before May 31, 2015. Valid at Billerica office

BATH FITTER®

Call Today 978-528-4180

16 Esquire Rd. North Billerica, MA 01862

[www.bathfitterma.com](http://www.bathfitterma.com) 



# Long-neglected, a city treasure revived

REVIVAL/From Page 1

Victorian Gothic style to its glory since last fall. First, more than 1.5 million pounds of debris — including more than 300 radiators, 20,000 nails and more — had to be removed. Haphazard additions over the decades had added new floors on top of old ones, or drop ceilings below higher ones, and that all had to be stripped away.

From the basement, about 15,000 bricks that were piled up in spots had to be carried out up a staircase.

“This was the level of commitment you’re talking about,” said Arthur “Chip” Gonsalves, a Lowell resident and vascular surgeon who bought the building two years ago without any particular use in mind.

Element Care, a senior services company, came upon the

property listing for 166 Central St. last year, but by the time the company contacted the agent, it had just been sold. That turned out not to be a hurdle at all. Gonsalves liked the idea of working with a company that provided services to seniors.

Lynn-based Element Care preferred to be in the city and in such a building, even if it meant higher construction costs than simply starting construction from scratch elsewhere.

“The bones of the building are really pretty incredible,” said project manager Cynthia Jalbert, as she led a tour of the site last week.

The building’s historical value was not always recognized.

Gables, cresting, and a plate-glass and cast-iron storefront were all stripped away in the early 20th century. Lower ceilings brought the first floor’s 16-foot-high ceilings down so low that the top several feet of the first-floor windows had to be covered over. A black metal screen that covered part of the second and third floors in the 1970s was an ill-fated attempt to make the building look newer.

“That’s pretty objectionable these days,” architect Jay Mason of Lowell-based Architectural Consulting Services said. “But back then, it was all the rage to try to make a building look more modern.”

Now, the brick exterior has been touched up, a colonnade on

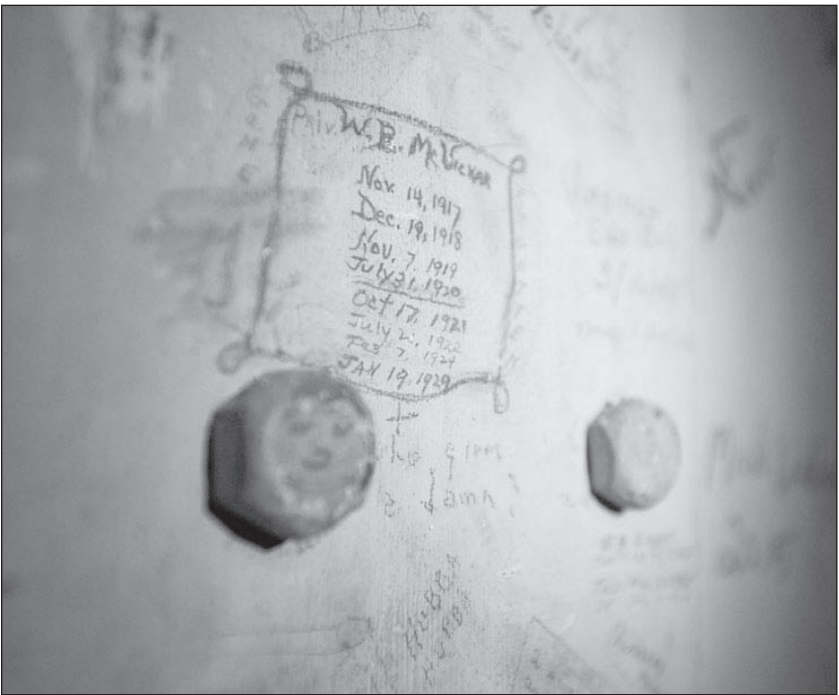


Neglected for decades, the former Appleton National Bank is a beehive of activity these days as construction crews transform the once-grand building on Lowell’s Central Street for Element Care, a senior-services company.

SUN PHOTOS / RYAN MCBRIDE



“The bones of the building are really pretty incredible,” said Cynthia Jalbert, project manager for Element Care, showing prototype designs for the exterior of the former Appleton National Bank. It will be used as an outpatient medical-care center for senior citizens. At right, writing in an bank vault dates to the 1920s.



the first floor is being restored, and more than 200 windows will be replaced.

“We tried to keep as much as we could,” said Robert Wakefield, the executive director of Element Care, which is building a center with senior day programs, medical offices and other services.

Many massive wooden beams remain, and the construction crew has been able to carve openings in walls in some places

to expose the brick behind it — a clever touch that keeps as much of the feeling of a 19th century building as possible.

There were three vaults from the old Appleton National Bank: one in the basement will remain, one in the first floor was taken out, and another was kept in place except for the door. Even removing the door was a major undertaking. It weighed six tons and was 18 inches thick.

A 35,000-pound forklift had to be brought in to put the door on a flatbed to be carried away.

“You figure that getting that door in was just as hard as taking it out,” said Brian Auger, the supervisor for Chapman Construction.

Gonsalves bought the building without a plan for how to use it other than restoring a building he had always appreciated for its brick and masonry, and to create construction jobs.

“It really had some serious deficits,” he said. “It had been let go for 100 years, really.”

Nearly everyone he spoke to advised him not to buy the building, Gonsalves said. But he saw the potential and went for it. He’ll never turn a profit, he said, but that wasn’t the purpose.

“I began to feel like I was a steward for the building,” he said.

Investment in bringing the building back will likely surpass \$10 million, Gonsalves said.

Element Care plans to open

by the fall.

The first floor of the old bank, which will retain its molded ceiling, will be turned into a main room for Bingo, crafts, music, dancing or any other large activity. The second floor will have an exercise room, behavioral health and social work centers, and an occupational therapy area that will teach the basics of living at home while aging.

The third floor will have a second large activity room, a kitchen, an area for those with Alzheimer’s or dementia, and, in one of the best features, a roof deck and garden area on the Hurd Street side.

“We thought it was important

to get outdoor space, so we’re fortunate to be able to do it,” Wakefield said.

The fourth floor is in some ways the most impressive, with 15-foot ceilings, exposed wooden beams and several skylights. The exact use of that space is yet to be determined.

Element Care provides what’s called all-inclusive care for the elderly, known as PACE, which includes in-home care. The company has seven existing centers like what’s planned in Lowell, in Beverly, Lynn, Gloucester and Methuen.

Follow Grant Welker on Twitter and Tout @SunGrantWelker.



Element Care Marketing Director Rachel Kestner, left, and Cynthia Smith, education and outreach coordinator, take a look outside the fourth floor on a part of the roof that will become an outdoor sitting area.



Workers tackle a job on the exterior of the former Appleton National Bank, built in 1879. Crews have been returning the High Victorian Gothic style to its glory since last fall.

## Across downtown, a host of projects promise new vitality

By Grant Welker  
gwelker@lowellsun.com

LOWELL — More than \$10 million in private investment, as has been poured into Appleton National Bank, is something the city’s Department of Planning and Development is constantly striving to see in the city, particularly downtown.

The new Element Care space, expected to open this fall, may also be the most notable of several downtown developments underway or expected to be soon.

Just up the street, at 226 Central St., four new market-rate condominiums are planned. A few blocks away, 40 units of market-rate rentals are being built at a cost of \$2.6 million in a five-story building at 24 Merrimack St.

Down the other side of Central Street, the Boston & Maine building will soon become a performing-arts center for Middlesex Community College. Also known as the Rialto building, it was built only

years apart from the Appleton National Bank building and in the same High Victorian Gothic style.

Middlesex Community College is scheduled to begin an 18-month renovation and construction process in June and spend more than \$18 million on the project.

Diane Tradd, the city’s planning and development director, called the Element Care and Middlesex Community College projects “great additions to the downtown.”

Having the 62,000 square-foot Appleton National Bank building fully occupied will significantly boost downtown’s occupancy rate. A report by City Hall in earlier this year showed downtown to have a vacancy rate for ground-floor

spaces of about 10 percent — around the national retail average.

But the upper floors of downtown buildings are much more likely to sit vacant.

***The Boston & Maine building will soon become a performing-arts center for Middlesex Community College.***

The largest vacancy, at 15-17 Kearney Square, the former *Sun* newspaper headquarters, contains more than 48,000 square feet of available space. The owner is working with the Department of Planning and Development to convert that space into market-rate housing, the report said.

Another 34,000 square feet of space at

116 John St. may have two potential tenants, according to the report.

While the first-floor vacancies are fewer, and total less than half the total square-footage as the upper-floor vacancies, they are the ones most visible to passerby. The Department of Planning and Development is also working with property owners to fill those spaces.

Most notably, the city was able to quickly attract a new restaurant, Bishop’s Legacy Restaurant, to the former La Boniche space on Merrimack Street. The sandwich chain Jimmy John’s is moving into the former Giovanni’s Trends space across the street.

The city is also helping property owners find leases for the largest ground-floor vacancy, 15,000 square feet at 40 Church St., and a high-visibility vacancy at the former Chantilly Place storefront on Merrimack Street.

Follow Grant Welker on Twitter and Tout @SunGrantWelker.