



2021



Florida Redevelopment Award

Outstanding Rehabilitation Renovation or Reuse Project

MAKINSON HARDWARE RENOVATION

The Makinson Hardware Renovation is St. Cloud CRA's first vertical, public-private partnership, acquisition, and renovation project. In 2019, the CRA purchased the historic, dilapidated property, formerly known as Makinson Hardware. Vacant for over seven years and in dire need of redevelopment, the CRA approached this project with a simple goal in mind — to create a full-service restaurant and entertainment destination for visitors and locals.

Each brick contained in this building's facade holds a wealth of history and character and helps to reinforce St. Cloud's main street personality while capitalizing on the public streetscape improvements in our Downtown District.



MAKINSON'S HARDWARE STORE. N.Y. AVE.

INNOVATION

Initially founded in the early 1900s by the Grand Republic Army as a colony to house Civil War veterans, St. Clouds' imprudent city planning had contributed to redevelopment constraints, infrastructure deterioration, and blight felt today.

Further issues faced by the CRA surrounding downtown CRA include its lack of diversity in mixed-use development and businesses, commerce, walkability, and inconsistent store hours—all of which compound the redevelopment challenges.

St. Cloud did, however, have two compelling attributes that the CRA could take advantage of when planning the future of the downtown district—its history and diverse architecture. By enhancing the newly improved New York Avenue's "Old Florida" character and providing for new construction, St. Cloud's downtown has become a social gathering place and vibrant collection of shops, restaurants, and large events.

Pursuant to our master plan, new key infill construction within downtown and renovation and rehabilitation supports existing business improvement, satisfies additional space demands, reinforces a critical mass of activity, and provides renewed investment.



The coordinated efforts of the downtown redevelopment included several components:

1. The streetscape improvement project titled Downtown Revitalization Project, which incorporated widened sidewalks to increase pedestrian walkability, decorative street lighting, landscaping and street furniture.
2. Street murals painted on the exterior of several downtown buildings, paying homage to the St. Cloud of yesteryear and part of Florida's statewide trail system connecting mural cities.
3. New, creative event programming such as scavenger hunts, culinary bicycle tour, and haunted walking tours.

Historically, motorists did not perceive New York Avenue as the primary gateway to downtown, even though its north end is anchored by the commanding and heavily visited City Hall building.

However, it provided the greatest potential for both public and private development investment opportunities contributing to a bustling retail experience.

Through a combination of infrastructure, land use planning, public and private redevelopment, and streetscape improvements, New York Avenue has become a natural corridor between downtown and the US 192 commercial corridor economy.



Like most, our downtown serves as a civic hub providing essential public services to our residents. But what sets St. Cloud apart is its dynamic mixed-use area rich with charm, small specialty retail shops, historic hotels, and neighborhood restaurants.

On the edge of this diverse community of local businesses stood the Makinson Building — dormant, aging, and unutilized. Abutting City Hall and adjacent to the Veterans of Foreign Wars meeting hall, it was imperative that the CRA take action to restore this historically significant building.

In 2018, the property had a tax-assessed value of \$159,300. Evidence of mold, a collapsing roof, overgrown vegetation along the building exterior, and removal of A/C units were just some of the outstanding issues that plagued the building. The CRA purchased the building in 2019 and poured more than \$35,000 into improvements, including roof repair, removal of the derelict awning and overgrown vegetation, pressure washing the exterior, mold remediation, electrical repair, and the demolition and removal of a non-ADA compliant porch.

Once improvements were completed and the CRA had reviewed several offers for the property, a buyer whose plan was to create a restaurant/entertainment anchor for downtown aligned with the City's vision.

During negotiations, several items were agreed upon between the CRA and developer: (1) the reuse must include an entertainment component, (2) a strict timeline for its grand opening, (3) a reverter clause that would allow the CRA to recapture the property at cost if the deadline and its requirements were not fulfilled, and (4) the CRA will provide financial assistance toward exterior improvements including the creation of a patio style section for outdoor dining.

In 2020, the developer began their building improvements, which included resurfacing the floors, walls, and ceilings and beautifying the back room (former bar). They added an HVAC system, repaired the roof, and created a new pavilion on the 10th Street side of the property for an outdoor dining experience. The expansion of the New York Avenue side of the property brought a much-needed larger dining area, and the addition of the south side pavilion offered an open-air beach-like atmosphere, injecting the downtown nightlife with an entertainment venue for all to enjoy.

In 2020, the tax assessed value was \$243,700—an astounding 32% increase!



COMMUNITY IMPACT

St. Cloud is a city rich with history, and taking a walk through the area is akin to taking a trip back in time. And while offering an abundance of charm and nostalgia, our downtown provided little in the way of economic impact through growth and development opportunities.

St. Cloud has a strong historical preservation spirit that serves to increase the public's awareness of the City's rich cultural heritage and pay homage to the pioneers of its creation.

Several programs were developed to accomplish this, including the Florida Historical Marker Program (St. Cloud currently has been awarded 11 grants), Florida Mural Trail Program (St. Cloud has 7), and the Building & Site Improvement Program (the CRA has awarded and programming events such as the Battle of Narcoossee).

Communities experience many challenges when balancing the impact of new development, redevelopment, and the preservation of historic properties. The City of St. Cloud is no different. In 2018 when the CRA realized that one of the most historic buildings in our downtown was at risk it stepped in to reclaim the property. And, as CRAs are designed to breathe new life into areas in need of revitalization and economic development, choosing to purchase a blighted property in the middle downtown only made sense.

Built in 1926, the Makinson Building is located at 918 New York Avenue and was one of St. Cloud's original hardware stores and a critical partner in the creation of the City. If left without intervention, there would have been an imminent loss of the building and to the fabric of St. Cloud's history.

The CRA devised a plan to purchase the property, stabilize the building, and place the property back on the market as a redevelopment project.



The approach to preserving this distressed historic property was challenging—weighing the upfront cost versus potential revenue and return on investment. However, with the support of the CRA Board and the cooperation of the public-private partnership, a successful acquisition and sale were accomplished.

The purchaser, 226 Broadway, Kissimmee LLC., is a local developer with several prominent projects across the county. Their vision of a restaurant and bar with a historical feel was in line with the CRA's. And it worked! The property gained a 32% tax assessed value increase in just two years.

The building design is a perfect mix of Old Florida with modern elements. The existing structure maintained its brick-and-mortar veneer with large bay windows, while the interior décor design elements such as antique light fixtures, stained wood floors, vintage mirrors, and wall moldings offered an atmosphere reminiscent of a speakeasy. The new patio area offers sleek, minimalist elements such as clean lines that create the illusion of space, color planters, and scenic overlooks of downtown St. Cloud.

The CRA provided \$53,587 in financial assistance to the developer in the form of a 50/50 matching commercial façade grant. The renovations included internal and external repairs such as exterior upgrades, plumbing improvements and additions, electrical repairs and upgrades, HVAC repairs and replacement, refrigeration system repair and replacement, and external signage. These improvements, coupled with the developer's investment, spurred new and renewed interest by patrons and visitors to St. Cloud.

An unrealized issue was the lack of outdoor cafe seating. Upon the completion of the Downtown Revitalization Phase I improvements, access for pedestrians to sit and enjoy the refurbished project was limited. The CRA provided grant funding for the construction of a patio-style outdoor seating area, called Breezes St. Cloud. Breezes St. Cloud is a hip outpost with a tropic vibe. The lounge is physically connected to the Makinson building and shares its kitchen. While it serves as a bar, patrons can order food from the neighboring restaurants.

The Makinson Hardware Renovation is of considerable significance—it is St. Cloud CRA's first vertical, first public-private partnership, and first acquisition project.

Choosing to redevelop a blighted property in the middle of downtown can be challenging; however, using strategies like these can help the City stabilize and revitalize areas, stimulate economic recovery and growth, and manage decline in ways that improve the quality of life for the City as a whole.

