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New Lease on Life

McIntosh Poris Architects converts landmarked Detroit assembly plant into loft housing

By Daniel Jonas Roche • April 9, 2026 • Architecture, Midwest, News, Preservation



The building is considered the world's first reinforced-concrete automobile factory, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (John D'Angelo)

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In Detroit, McIntosh Poris Architects (MPA), a local Michigan firm, has converted a former Cadillac assembly plant built in 1905 into Amsterdam Lofts, a housing complex.

Amsterdam Lofts is a short walk from the Detroit Institute of the Arts and Michigan Central Station—two other landmark buildings in the city with a rich automotive history.

City Place Detroit
3.5 (114)
Studio & 1Bed Apartments - City Place Detroit

OPEN 09:00 – 18:00
1600 Antietam Avenue, Detroit

Website

The preserved factory measures 74,000 square feet, rises 3 stories, and houses 90 residential units.

Michael Poris, MPA founding partner and principal, said the adaptive reuse project reflects the office's commitment to "preserving Detroit's architectural legacy" and repurposing "historic buildings for transformative, contemporary purposes."

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The former Cadillac assembly plant was built in 1905. (John D'Angelo)



Courtyards are replete with seating and tables. (John D'Angelo)

Cadillac vacated the facility in 1920 and, until 2022, Westcott Paper Products occupied it.

The building is considered the world's first reinforced-concrete automobile factory. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, so it was necessary for MPA to preserve the facade, and other features.

The reinforced-concrete structure is legible in the brick exterior, punctured by large warehouse-style windows that flood the interiors with daylight.

The brick was restored and repaired, and energy-efficient windows were installed that harken back to the plant's original design. Original glass block encasing an entryway, an art deco touch, was left intact.

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Original glass block encasing an entryway was preserved. (John D'Angelo)

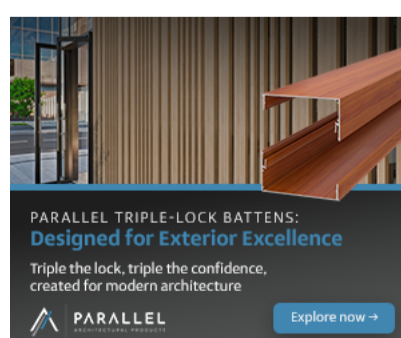


The material and color palette used on the interior finishes in the units takes cues from the masonry and existing architectural features. (John D'Angelo)

Inside, the original column grid layout was also preserved, while partitions were installed to divide residential units. The apartments are a mix of studios, one-, and two-bedrooms with 13-foot ceilings.

The original freight elevator was repurposed into studios on the second and third floors. MPA also refashioned former loading docks into private patios.

The material palette, consisting of beige tile and pale wood, blends with the building's historic character, most notably its exposed masonry walls.



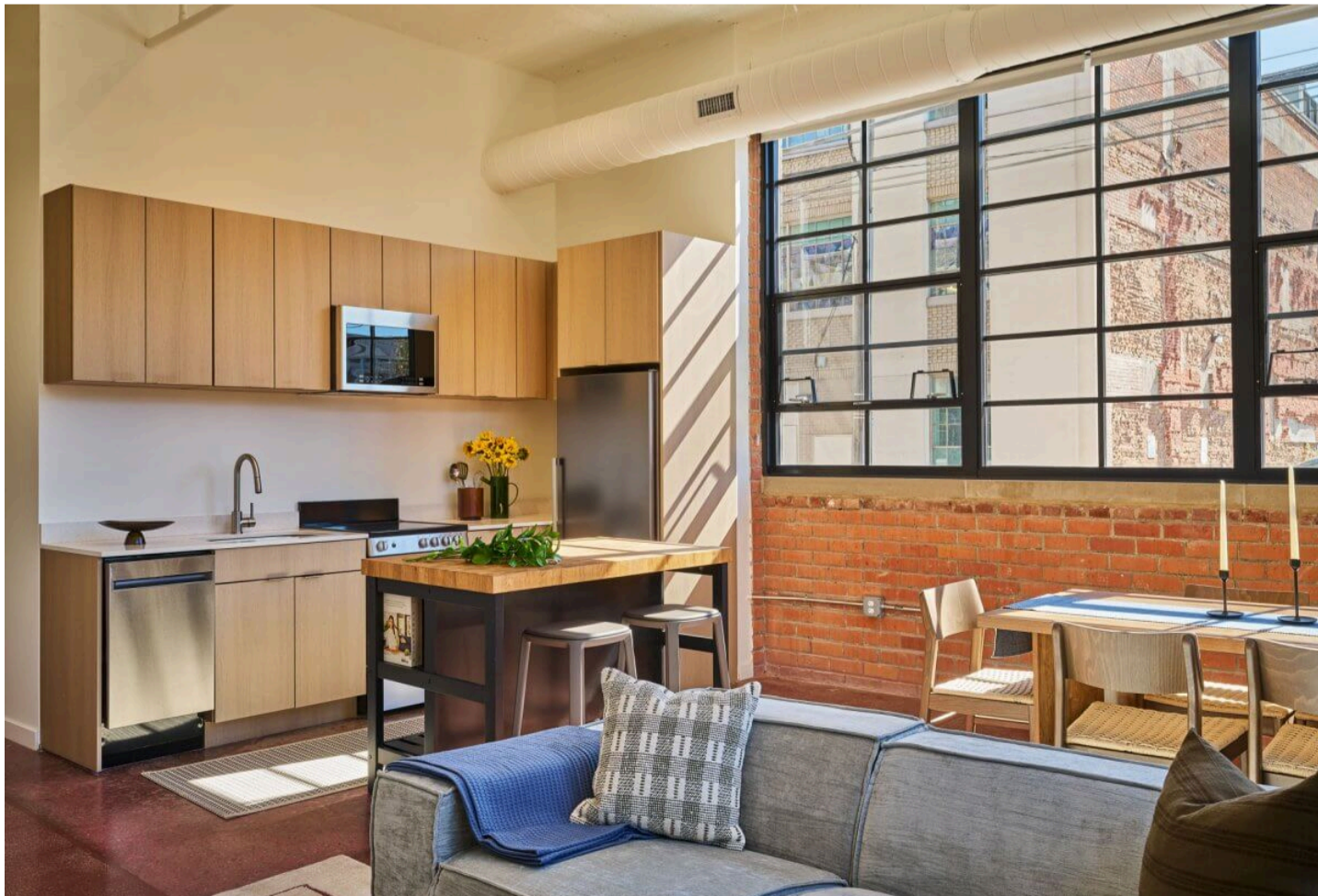
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angled flanges.

The Kahn System allowed for the kinds of large, open spaces industrialists needed for operable factory floors. The factory was built in just 67 days thanks to the method.



The units have large, warehouse-style windows. (John D'Angelo)



Exposed brick lines the perimeter walls. In the kitchen stainless steel appliances are paired with wood cabinetry. (John D'Angelo)

Greatwater Opportunity Capital commissioned MPA to realize Amsterdam Lofts, which comes with ample shared spaces and amenities. Kidorf Preservation and Albert Kahn Legacy Foundation served as consultants.