

Adaptive Reuse Tour – Convention 2025 – Grand Rapids

There's a New Use for That: Building Conversions That Create Housing

Wednesday, September 17, 10:00am-12:00pm

Grand Rapids is a leader in housing creation — not only through new construction, but also in transforming older buildings into new homes. This tour showcases several projects that created housing units from underutilized sites. We'll visit a few locations (some of which were featured in the League's [House Hacking Policy Brief](#)), including one site in the process of redevelopment. Along the way, our group will discuss current data, why we need a multi-pronged approach to housing, ways to address development costs, and how local officials can champion these housing projects in their own communities.

Adaptive Reuse and Carbon Reduction:

In Michigan, buildings contribute 50% of carbon emissions statewide, according to findings from the Department of Energy, Great Lakes, and the Environment (EGLE) as well as the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance. By reusing existing buildings, and by extension their materials by leaving them in place, carbon already invested in their construction can continue to be sequestered. And these buildings can be made even more energy efficient with deep retrofits for mechanicals, insulation, and windows/doors.

Each project is different, and there is no one right way to approach building reuse or housing creation. It can be an emotional discussion. Putting metrics onto the problem can help. We often use www.caretool.org to develop estimates for the relative cost – in dollars and carbon – for building demolition or conversion. These kinds of stats help change hearts and minds which are reticent to consider the more complex yet more rewarding work of adaptive reuse.

Tour stops:

- 1) **[Clipper Lofts](#) (click through for recent local news spot)**

<https://www.clipperlofts.com/>

974 Front Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Key Learning Points:

Multi-unit loft housing.

Waterfront manufacturing conversion; Historic Tax Credits and several other financing instruments; value of partnership with a non-profit (Michigan Historic Preservation

Network - MHPN) to receive grant and contribute to project thereby eliminating tax penalty (40%) and also allowing for separate tax credit syndication to generate capital at the start of the project.

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2) **The Factory Yards** (click through for the project site)

<https://www.factoryyards.com/>

56 Godfrey, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Key Learning Points:

Transformational Brownfields project.

Coordination of long-range plans and project vision, closing gaps on financing with different instruments for the complex capital stack, multi-layered public private partnerships, challenges such as remediation, decisions for reuse or infill, energy efficiency, and creating a new whole that is connected to non-motorized trails as well as new and upgraded water/sewer/electrical infrastructure.

Transformational Brownfields Legislation has been expanded:

<https://www.miplace.org/programs/transformational-brownfield-plans/>

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3) **ICCF (Inner City Christian Federation) Homes**

<https://iccf.org/2022/07/415-mlk/>

415 MLK Jr SE, Grand Rapids, MI

Key learning points:

Mixed-use multi-family housing and community complex.

Part of a wide-ranging housing portfolio of both historic structures and new construction; value of mission-oriented non-profit development, the pragmatism of adaptive reuse, the changing market for site acquisition for older historic schools and other purpose-built institutional buildings, the constant need to adapt to what building stock is available and supplement with infill to meet targeted needs in the community.

For further research on the broader ICCF programmatic and real estate portfolio, including homebuyer education and community land trusts, visit www.iccf.org

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