

# REBUILDING LIVABLE, ENDURING COMMUNITIES

Using Rehabilitation as Framework for Revitalization



Historic



Before



After

## THE ATLANTIC MOTOR COMPANY

1840 West Broad Street / Richmond, VA

### SYNOPSIS

Broad Street in mid-town Richmond, Virginia, was once a bustling center of automobile-related commerce with dozens of car dealerships, car supply shops and service centers. 1840 West Broad Street, built in 1919, served as a busy Nash dealership and was called the Atlantic Motor Company. When customers started moving to the suburbs, the automobile dealerships weren't far behind, leaving storefronts on Broad Street's mid-town blocks increasingly abandoned. The challenge was to rehabilitate this modest building in such a way as to attract new uses, while meeting the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*.

Robert Mills served as Project Principal for the rehabilitation of the former automobile dealership into re-use as office space. A trapezoid-shaped traffic island to the west of the building had been left unoccupied for many years. The City of Richmond wanted to improve the streetscape and it envisioned providing a parking lot to improve access to the main entrance. With Mills' leadership and ability to establish relationships with the city staff, an agreement was negotiated for the surrender of the highly visible lot. Now a parking lot, the once deserted traffic island is no longer a blight on the neighborhood.

Significant rehabilitation of the dilapidated two-story building was required due to the amount of water-infiltration into the building over an extended period of time. Remaining historic materials were retained where possible and all new interventions were made compatible, yet distinct, from the original historic fabric. Exterior work was extensive but did not compromise the historic integrity of the facades. Throughout the process, Mills marshalled community cooperation for a successful outcome for the client and for the city. The Atlantic Motor Company has served as a model and catalyst for additional rehabilitation in mid-town. The project has also served as the centerpiece of a newly created state and federal historic district, the West Broad Street Industrial and Commercial District.

### DESIGN FIRM

COMMONWEALTH ARCHITECTS

### COMPLETION DATE

2006

### ROLE OF NOMINEE

Project Principal

### AWARDS

2009 APVA Presentation Awards – Outstanding Commercial Project Award  
2007 Traditional Buildings Magazine – National Palladio Award, Excellence in Adaptive Reuse  
2006 Alliance to Conserve Old Richmond Neighborhoods – Golden Hammer Award, Best Commercial Renovation

### PUBLICATIONS

2006 Inform Magazine "Midtown Revival"  
2006 Traditional Building Magazine "In Character"

"With the completion of the project at 1840 West Broad Street, Commonwealth Architects has transformed a blighted structure into a catalyst for urban revival and an asset to the recovering cityscape."

Mary Harding Sadler,  
Architectural Historian



