



COMMERCIAL:

Reviving Spirit of Place

STORY BY ELISABETH KORB

DESIGN TEAM: MIKE MASON, MWA, INC.;
GERRY RODRIGUEZ
BUILDER: GENEY CASSIOT
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: LJM DESIGN GROUP
SQUARE FEET: 4,190
YEAR COMPLETED: 2004





Retaining the dimensions and corrugated metal siding of the former structure (inset image), the updated design preserves the past and enlivens Jibboom Street. Main photos by Tom Zikas; inset photo courtesy MWA, Inc.



The site's transformation not only pleases its owner and designers, but tenants, patrons and the local historical society. Photo by Mulberry Photography

Ten years ago, downtown Truckee visitors rarely strayed from Commercial Row's thin strip. But in the past decade, downtown's boundaries have expanded well toward the river and to the west along Donner Pass Road. Due in part to recent development near its west corner, historic Jibboom Street, with its rich past and unusual name, has been imbued with new life. Both locals and visitors have embraced this exceptional space, home to Joe Coffee and Truckee Mountain Rug company.

Originally the sole road through the Truckee Basin, an extension of the Dutch Flat and Donner Lake Wagon Road, Jibboom Street is the town's most historic street. Truckee's first building, Gray's Cabin, stood here, and the street later gained notoriety as one of the largest red-light districts in the mountain West. In the early 1900s, Jibboom Street's several tin garages stored those fabulous new machines — automobiles. Over the years, the buildings fell into disrepair. But with the turn of the twenty-first century, the property's newest owner, John McManus, thought it was time to spruce up the building and, in turn, the street.

"With a two-by-four frame, the old structure had the structural integrity of a chicken coop," says Tom Watson of Truckee River Associates, the firm that oversaw the building's renovation based on McManus'

ideas. "It never could have been improved upon. But it had a historical significance that John wanted to emulate."

Using the U.S. Department of the Interior's criteria for historical renovation, designer Gerry Rodriguez and architect Mike Mason of MWA created a design that would function for modern-day Truckee while preserving the historic nature of the site. The result

burrowing into the adjacent slope and adding on a two-story, wood-sided annex, creating the impression of two separate structures. In the end, the architects were able to expand the original 1,900 square foot structure to 3,050 square feet downstairs and an additional 1,140 square feet on a second floor.

The finished product is a pleasing design that tenants also appreciate for its

A ONCE-DECREPIT LOT HAS BECOME PART OF THE HEARTBEAT OF DOWNTOWN TRUCKEE.

was a "new structure skinned with old material," says Kurt Reinkens of MWA. The building incorporates the original corrugated galvanized metal for siding, a portion retaining the "Garage for Rent" lettering that originally graced the structure's exterior. The original structure's dimensions were retained, even down to the pitch of the roof. Metal garage doors were replaced with large windows, the failed roof with COR-TEN steel and the dirt floor with slab.

To create a commercially viable building, additional square footage was required, but had to be done so in compliance with Truckee's Historic Preservation Advisory Council. MWA expanded the structure by

spaciousness and energy-saving orientation. "It's a beautiful building, and our customers love it," says Cass Rodriguez, owner of Joe Coffee, the recently relocated café whose devoted clientele now flocks to Jibboom. "We have great sun exposure, a spacious patio and more retail space."

"For a solar gain, it's probably the best in town," agrees Michael Kent Murphey, an architect and owner of Truckee Mountain Rug. Indeed, the L-shaped structure's inherited south and west orientation is one of its greatest pluses.

"There's a time in the day when the building, with its windows and concrete floors, becomes passive solar," says > 103



Photo by Mulberry Photography

SOLAR ORIENTATION KEEPS THE PATIO OPEN DURING MUCH OF THE YEAR.

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Reinkens. And for the summer months, when the building may warm, landscape architect LJM Design Group planted deciduous crabapple trees in the front courtyard to help mitigate the heat. “We really played up the outdoors space because of the southern exposure,” states Laura Mello of LJM. “We added benches, bike racks and a perennial bed to show off year-round color, and the courtyard’s pavers are designed to stand up to the harsh conditions of winter.”

“Very commonly, old funky buildings are torn down to put more traditional buildings up,” says Reinkens. “Here, it’s a very successful adaptive reuse — transforming a garage to office and retail space.”

The project has provided increased foot traffic and renewed energy to Truckee’s less-traveled back street, all while recapturing the spirit of its past, and the town couldn’t be more pleased. “It’s a great example of the deconstruction-reconstruction preservation process for historical buildings in Truckee,” says Gordon Richards of the Truckee-Donner Historical Society.

In an effort to preserve its past, Jibboom Street — previously known as Back, Second and West Main — reverted to its historic name in 1984. Now, through the efforts of property owners like John McManus, and his team, the street is also reclaiming its historic pulse. [IG](#)



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