

The Times

Making Trenton

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We told you stories last week about Trenton's potential in the form of two movers and shakers who are putting it all on the line for the city they love.

Monique King-Viehlund remembers the city as it was while she was growing up: her tidy, well-kept neighborhood of row houses and apartments in the Wilbur section of Trenton, a working-class enclave in the East Ward where people looked out for one another.

Roland Pott has a present-day perspective: pigeons flying in and out of the abandoned downtown building he was determined to revive.

But both see a prosperous future for the city.

After years of schooling and employment elsewhere, King-Viehlund has returned home as executive director of the Capital City Redevelopment Corp., a nonprofit state agency dedicated to the economic revitalization of Trenton.

And Pott, who has finished renovating that building on South Warren Street into space for a cafe and offices, now hopes to refurbish another building at the corner of South Warren and Front streets.

Not only do they work in Trenton, they live here too. Their investment in the city goes beyond dollars and cents. It's much more than bricks and mortar. They are investing themselves. Such a commitment is immeasurable, and it will mean the difference between a fading, failing urban area and a robust and vibrant capital city.

So many times over the years, Trenton officials have been presented with grand and glorious proposals for the city. Bright, shining visions launched like balloons by out-of-towners, eager for an assist from municipal coffers, to whom Trenton is the next project on a to-do list. When gravity grounds the plans to a spluttering end, they move on. They have no stake in our city; they have no cohesion with the community -- they are looking merely at the bottom line.

Pott and King-Viehlund are among the city's champions who are looking up.

Among the CCRC's joint projects with the city administration are revitalizing the train station and its neighborhood, and transforming Route 29 with its state-owned parking lots into a revenue-generating source.

"That is prime real estate in the city of Trenton," says King-Viehlund.

And Pott, who has a number of downtown ventures in the works, believes "The story of Trenton as a comeback story makes sense."

Of course, the story will continue only with characters such as Pott and King-Viehlund, and all the other citizens who live and work in Trenton, who care about the city and are interested in making it here, not taking from it.

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