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City Hall Notebook: Former Worcester fire alarm building wins preservation award

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The Massachusetts Historical Commission recently selected the former Fire Alarm & Telegraph Building - now Cornerstone Bank - at 230 Park Ave. for a 2018 Preservation Award. The award is recognition of successful adaptive reuse, rehabilitation and restoration of the property.

It wasn't that long ago when the building, which was built in 1925 and is on the National Register of Historic Places, was identified by Preservation Worcester as one of the city's "Most Endangered Structures."

The building, an English Tudor Revival style with brick, cast stone trim and a steep-pitched slate roof, is opposite Elm Park. It was originally used by the Fire Department, and when it was no longer need for fire purposes it was used by the Worcester School Department and other entities for storage.

In 2011, the city sought bids for the building and brokered a deal with SpencerBank (now Cornerstone Bank) and Preservation Worcester, through a home-rule petition and special legislation, to lease about 3 acres and deliver a deed for the building to the bank, according to Michael E. Traynor, the city's chief development officer.

In return, the bank agreed to renovate the building and work with Preservation Worcester to turn the first floor into a community space. The renovation was completed in 2014.

An award reception was held at the Massachusetts Historical Commission earlier this month.