

**2017 Montana Historic Preservation Award
for Outstanding Historic Preservation Rehabilitation Project to
Arvon Block, Great Falls**

**Presented by Mark Baumler
State Historic Preservation Officer
2017 Preservation Award Ceremony
Myrna Loy Center, Helena
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The 2017 award for Outstanding Historic Preservation Rehabilitation Project goes to the Arvon Block of Great Falls. Accepting the award today are owner Peter Jennings and his parents, Chuck and Gerry Jennings.

The Arvon was originally built by pioneer rancher, Robert Vaughn in 1890 as a combination hotel and livery stable. As one of the first masonry buildings positioned close to the railroad tracks - offering services to travelers and freighters - the Arvon's early commercial success was assured.

But the Arvon Block's stature and economic potential fell soon after the bustling homestead era, with the shift away from rail travel and horse-drawn transport. The Arvon subsequently had several different owners hosting multiple businesses during the 20th century, but in general it's health and stature declined steadily.

By 2010, recognizing that the Arvon was living on borrowed time, the Great Falls Preservation Office in collaboration with the state and local Mainstreet programs, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the National Park Service funded a preservation and feasibility plan for the Arvon. The plan showed a path for developers to take to make the Arvon viable once again.

That developer was Great Falls' own Peter Jennings, who in 2013 embarked on a two-year, \$7.5 million rehabilitation of the 21,000 square foot building. The project was made possible in part by the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit program through SHPO, but was capitalized chiefly by Mr. Jennings's tenacity and resilience.

With historic photos, Jennings was able to reintroduce missing storefront assemblies and the massive livery doors that form the building's identity. The hotel's historic lightwells, corridor re-lites, and open stairwell - retained in the project - prove as necessary as ever for admitting daylight and fresh air into the building core. These energy saving historic features coupled with solar panels perched atop the embodied energy of a million bricks and stones make the Arvon an environmentally responsible building.

Today the 33-room Hotel Arvon and Celtic Cowboy Pub, once slated to become surface parking, is again a destination for travelers. Beyond its historic and aesthetic charms, it has brought a greater human presence to Downtown Great Falls, added 40 new jobs to the economy, and contributes over \$2 million annually to the local tax base.

Because preservation is never inevitable we thank Peter Jennings for his ambition and his parents for raising such a fine son. The rehabilitated Arvon Block demonstrates all the good things that historic preservation and rehabilitation can bring about in Montana's communities.