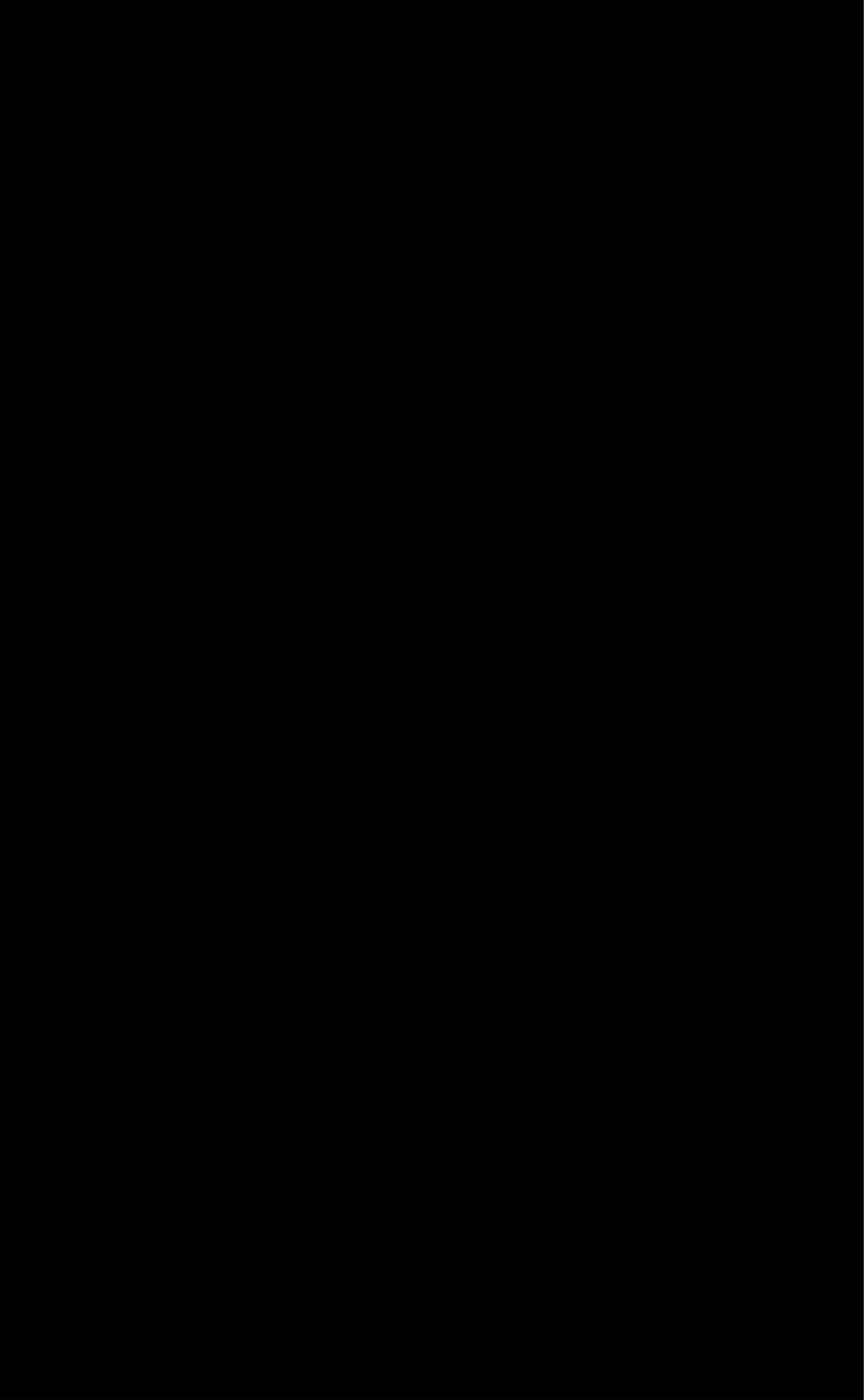


Old lantern factory in Syracuse to become upscale apartments













4 / 57

An early view of the R.E. Dietz Co. lantern factory overlooking Leavenworth Park in Syracuse. Dietz took over the factory from Steam Gauge & Lantern Co. in 1897 and built the first of several additions in 1913. (Courtesy of Onondaga Historical Association)
Onondaga Historical Association

PrintEmail



By Rick Moriarty | rmoriarty@syracuse.com

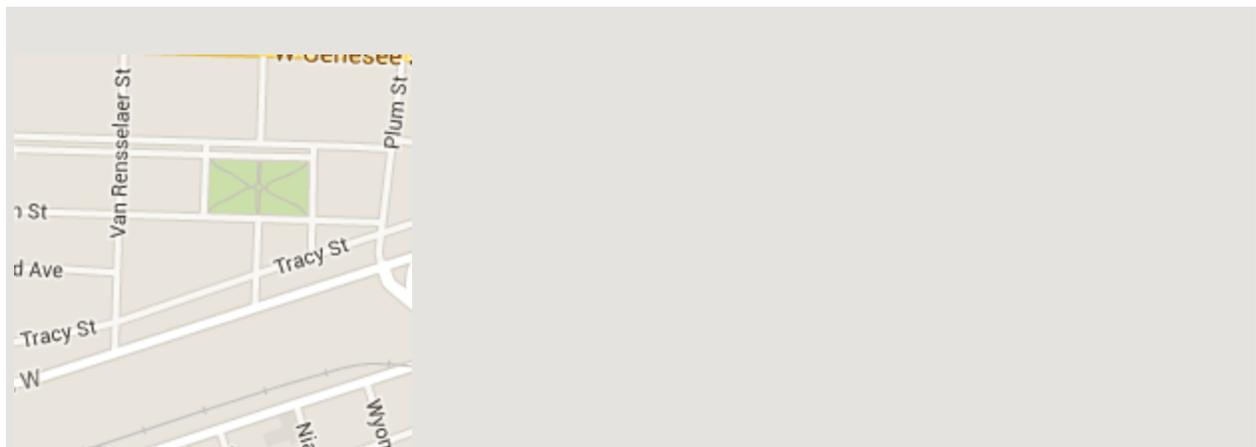
Follow on Twitter

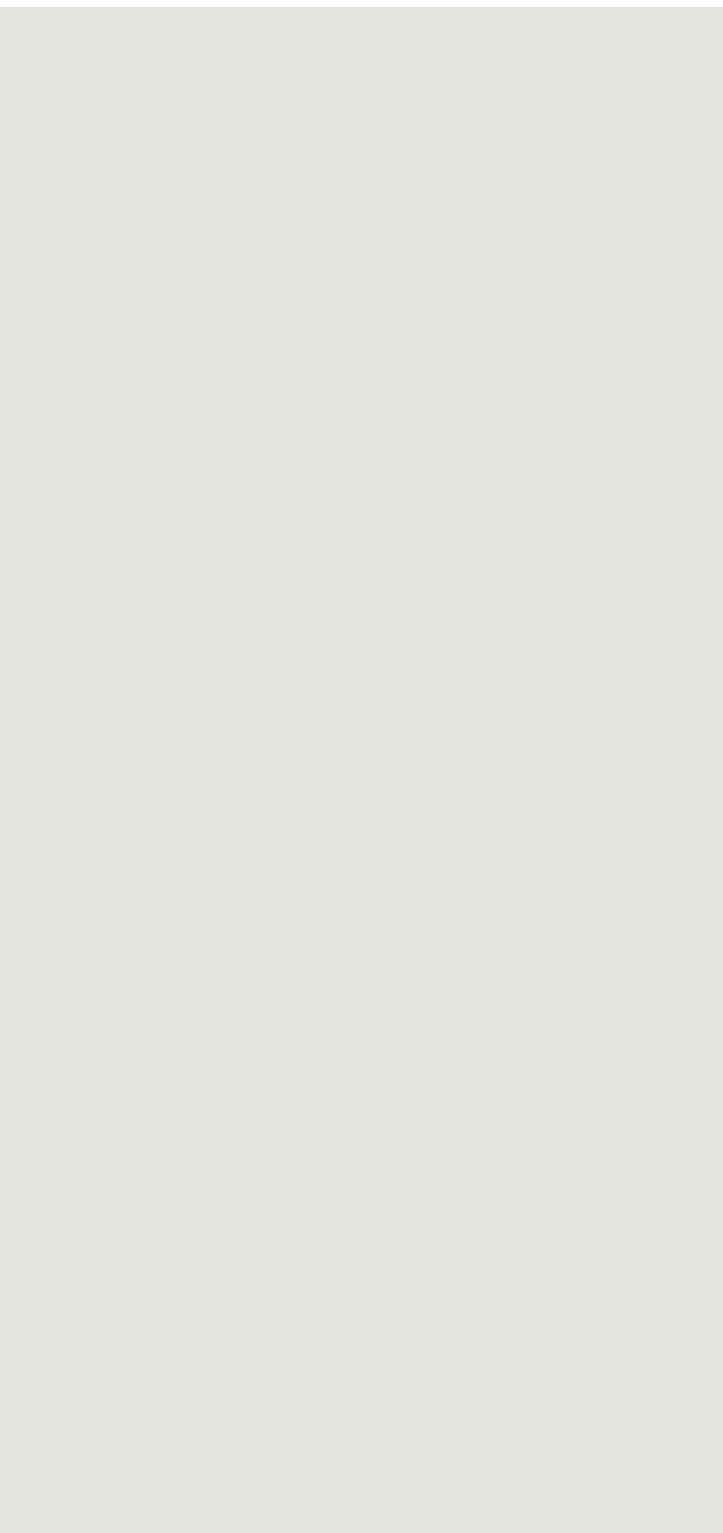
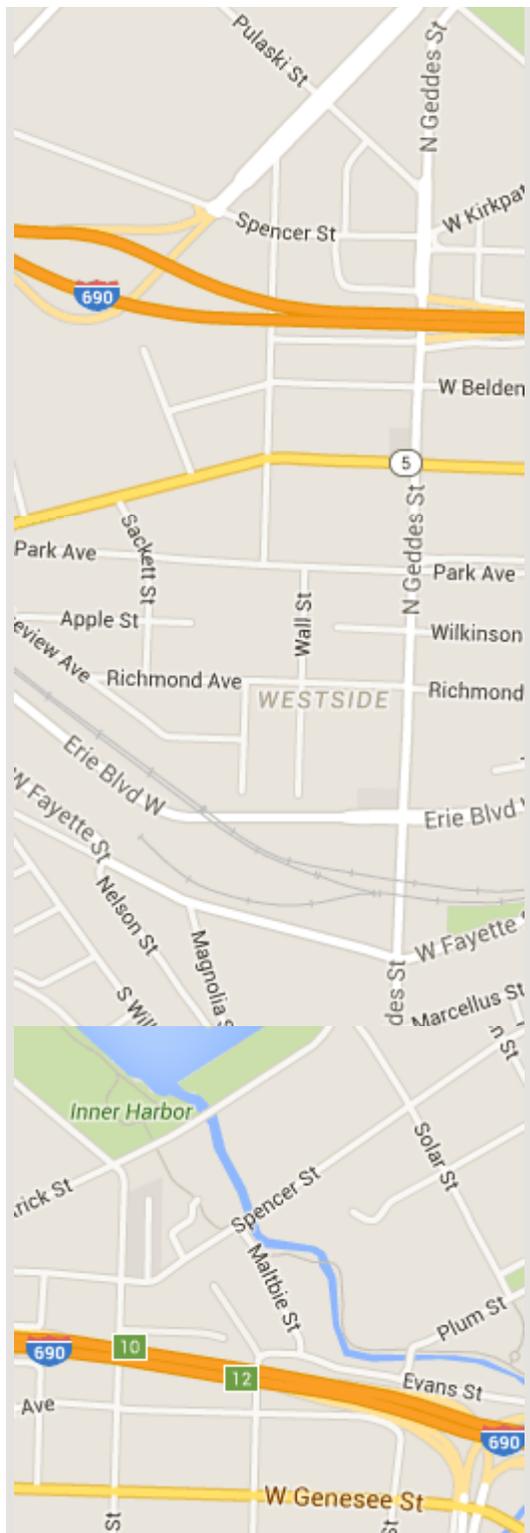
on February 24, 2016 at 9:02 AM, updated February 24, 2016 at 9:16 AM

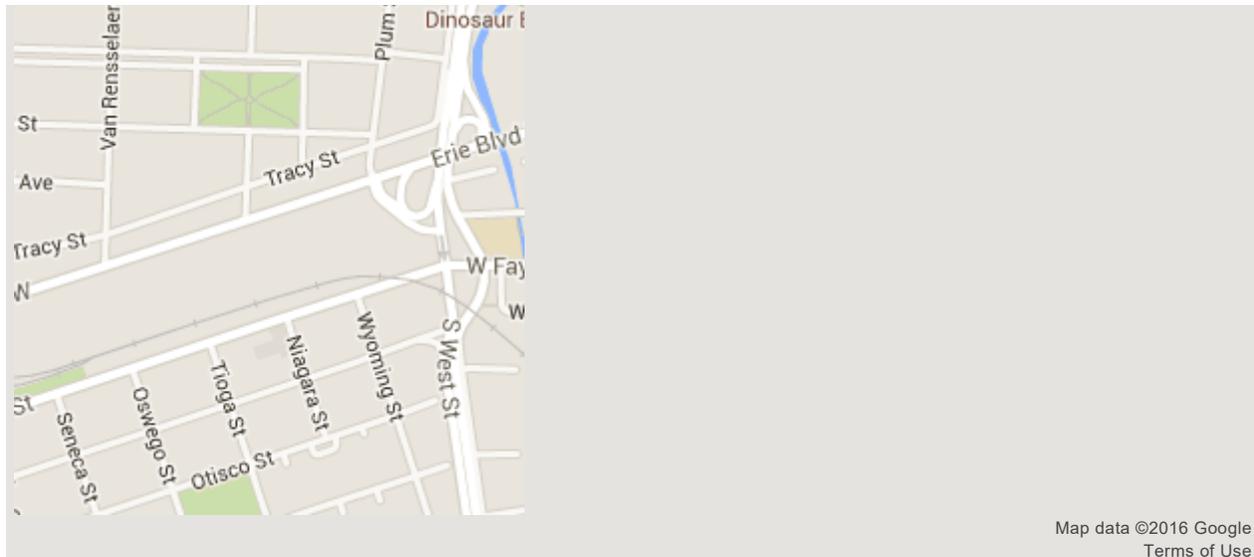
Syracuse, N.Y. — The owners of the former R.E. Dietz Co. building on Syracuse's Westside plan to turn the old lantern factory into a mix of apartments and commercial space.

Larry Losty Jr. and his son-in-law, Matthew Paulus, said they expect to begin work soon to build 89 market-rate apartments on the building's top three floors and 36,000 square feet of commercial space on its first floor. The building will also have 106 enclosed parking spaces, they said.

They estimate the total cost of the project at \$19.42 million. They have applied to the Syracuse Industrial Development Agency for an exemption, valued at \$825,000, from sales taxes on construction materials and an exemption from the state mortgage recording tax, valued at \$152,000.

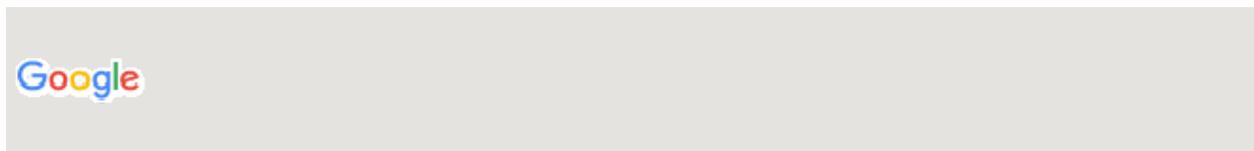






Map

Satellite



The project looks to extend a hot trend in Syracuse toward the redevelopment of long-vacant or underutilized former industrial buildings into mixed-use facilities with a strong residential component. The trend only recently began moving west of downtown.

The 208,082-square-foot Dietz building at 225 Wilkinson St. overlooks Leavenworth Park. On the opposite side of the park are Syracuse famed "[Five Sisters](#)," — five beautifully restored Victorian homes built in 1893 and 1894.

Paulus, a former leasing agent with the Pyramid Cos., said the apartments should appeal to people who want on-site indoor parking, a location overlooking a park and quick access to Interstates 81 and 690.

"We've got a park and parking," said Losty.

Monthly rents will start at \$1,100 and go up to \$2,400, with the average around \$1,600. Utilities will be extra.

The apartments will range in size from 800 to 1,400 square feet and will consist of 65 one-bedroom units and 24 two-bedroom units. The project's general contractor, Syracuse-based Hueber-Breuer Construction Co., is scheduled to start construction by this summer.

The apartments will feature 9-foot-tall windows, 14-foot-tall ceilings, hardwood floors and the factory's original timber support beams and purlins. Tenants will have access to a rooftop patio.

The Steam Gauge and Lantern Co. operated on the site from 1888 to 1897. Prior to that, it was home to a cabinet maker's shop.

Dietz took it over in 1897. It built a large addition, designed by prominent local architect Albert L. Brockway, in 1904 when it obtained a major contract to supply lanterns for the construction of the Panama Canal. The building was expanded again in 1913, 1915 and in the 1930s.

The two electric lanterns at the Wilkinson Street entrance to the red-brick building were made by Dietz. Losty and Paulus plan to keep them.

Founded in Brooklyn in 1840 by Robert Edwin Dietz, the company started out making candle lanterns and oil lamps. It eventually expanded into making other lighting products, including automotive lighting equipment. By 1969, the company employed 545 people at the factory.

Dietz shut down in 1992 following an extended labor dispute. In 1994, the Dietz family sold the building to Losty, owner of furniture retailer Superior Office Interiors, for \$35,000. Losty said he had to invest more than \$500,000 into the building for roof repairs, a new sprinkler system and other needed upgrades.

Losty renamed the building the Syracuse Business Center. (That's what the big "S" painted on the roof stands for.) A wind storm on Labor Day in 1998 caused heavy damage to parts of the building. Fortunately for Losty, insurance covered the cost of repairs.

He has housed his office furniture company on the first floor for the past 22 years. Other first-floor tenants of the building are Jacobsen Oriental Rugs, Walton Architectural Group and Daniel Manning Architect.

Since Dietz closed, the upper floors of the building have had little use, except for the storage of office furniture. Losty has been thinking about converting the upper floors to apartments since at least 2008 but held off until market conditions improved.

For years, developers have been turning the upper floors of old office, factory and other buildings in and around downtown Syracuse into upscale apartments targeted at young professionals. They have filled up fast.

Recently, the trend has started to move west.

[Creekwalk Commons](#), a 75-unit apartment building geared toward college students, opened in 2014 in a converted office building at 324 W. Water St., four blocks from the Dietz building.

Work is underway to build 30 apartments in the former [C.G. Meaker Food Co. warehouse](#) at 538 Erie Blvd. W., a block from the Dietz building.

"The timing is perfect for us," Losty said.

Contact Rick Moriarty anytime: [Email](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | 315-470-3148