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# Westport Commons Project Garner's National Historic Rehabilitation Award

OCTOBER 26, 2017 | NEWS

Spencer Fane congratulates Westport Commons Project for being honored in the [2017 Historic Rehabilitation Awards](#) by *Novogradac Journal of Tax Credits*. The transformation of the Westport Middle School building in Kansas City into the world's largest coworking facility – [Plexpod Westport Commons](#) — was recognized nationally in two categories; as the award winner for the top “Historic Non-Residential Development That Overcame Significant Obstacles” and honorable mention for “Non-Residential Major Community Impact.”

Financing was one of the main obstacles the project faced. Spencer Fane represented HP Development Partners LLP who utilized a combination of historic and new market tax credits to finance the adaptive reuse of the project.

“We are extremely proud to be a part of the revitalization efforts for this community,” said Spencer Fane Partner [Shawn Whitney](#), who led the team that facilitated the complex financing transaction that funded the project. Westport Commons is a perfect example of how layered financing can bring new life to both a historic building and its neighboring community. “Without the historic and new market tax credit programs, the redevelopment of the middle school would not have happened, and the building would have provided virtually no economic benefit to the community. Instead Westport Commons is now the catalyst which is fueling the redevelopment of this vital area in Kansas City.”

Originally opened in 1923, the Westport Middle School will now house one of Plexpod's three campuses with 160,000 square feet of co-working and business incubator space. Plexpod's progressive co-working model features innovative working spaces and inviting communities to help businesses thrive. Once phase two is completed with the rehabilitation of the former Westport High School, the redevelopment project will provide 360,000 square feet of commercial space.

By using a combination of historic and new market tax credits, HP Development Partners LLP was able to rehabilitate the near 100-year-old middle school. Former classroom spaces are still identifiable in their historic layout, but have been updated with elements such as glass walls, soffit systems to house new mechanical and improved lighting systems. Additionally, group gathering places such as the three-level school auditorium theater and the girl's gymnasium have been restored to show their original character. Outside, the old sports field is being redeveloped to address storm water management needs, overflow parking, but 40% of the green space will be utilized for a community garden and urban farming.

“Shawn and his team at Spencer Fane were a pleasure to work with,” said E.F. Chip Walsh, a partner of [HP Development Partners LLC](#). “With his team's technical expertise, we are able to bring life back to this school, which will continue to be used for education and development of people of all ages.”

Said Walsh, “Westport Commons is positively impacting Kansas City by giving entrepreneurs, early stage companies, nonprofits and other businesses a place to collaborate with one another with the opportunity to operate more efficiently than in a traditional office setting.”

Financing historic rehabilitation projects often involves multiple layers of debt and equity, leading to challenging business, tax and legal issues. Shawn, who chairs the Spencer Fane Tax Credits, Housing and Development Incentives team, has been instrumental in shepherding many developers through the process. He focuses his practice on representing developers, tax credit syndicators/investors and lenders, and on the adaptive reuse of historic buildings using state and federal tax credit programs along with other incentives.

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