



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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The Renaissance of One Idea

Tighe Bullock, President
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Tighe Bullock is a young entrepreneur in Charleston, West Virginia. As president of Crawford Holdings LLC, he focuses on historic preservation of vacant and dilapidated buildings. He has been a city councilman in his hometown of Thurmond, West Virginia, since 2009, and will be up for his third term in summer 2017.

He is the secretary of Fairness West Virginia, and is a member of the board of advisors for the West Virginia Small Business Development Center.

Bullock earned undergraduate degrees, *magna cum laude*, in accounting and business, and a law degree, from West Virginia University.

I was born to a small town in the southern coal fields of West Virginia. I credit my ghost town home, Thurmond, West Virginia, with my fascination in preserving the old. As a child, I watched the buildings in my town become vacant and dilapidated and couldn't understand why nothing was being done. I started working on a construction crew when I was 14 and discovered I had a talent and a passion for creating new things while preserving the old. The company I worked for specialized in historic preservation, and by the time I was 18 and running the crew, I knew I had found my calling.

Although I never considered myself the scholastic type, I knew I had to go to college if I wanted to be an effective business person. So, I got my accounting and management degrees from West Virginia University. While in school, I sold my truck to fund my first business, a real estate development company that specializes in historic preservation. Finding myself limited in my knowledge of property law, contracts, bankruptcy and other necessary aspects of

business, I went back to school and got my Juris Doctor from the West Virginia College of Law in May 2016.

A common question I was asked, in both accounting and law school, was, "What firm are you going to work for?" I didn't quite know how to answer this question because I never intended to work for a firm. I admire and respect my colleagues who are pursuing very successful careers in the fields of law and accounting, but historic preservation has become my muse.

Between law, accounting, business management and personal experiences in construction, I have been able to develop creative financial models that leverage projects into fruition that conventional thinking had deemed infeasible or imprudent. Not having any real money to speak of, and little credit, was definitely an obstacle. I started my second company in 2014 while still in law school, focusing on historic preservation through public-private partnerships. That same year, I purchased the historic Staats Building



in Charleston's newly emerging Elk City Historic District. A year later, I purchased two other empty historic buildings in the neighborhood.

I believe a major driving force in revitalizing a neighborhood is a fostering of the arts. Drawing artists and creators to a district has been a common theme I have noticed in other revitalized communities throughout the country. Looking at the pool of local artists in Charleston, our company commissioned Charly Hamilton's "West Side Wonder Mural" in 2013 on the side of one of our buildings, and has recently commissioned the restoration of historic signage on a building down the street. In May 2016, we had the grand opening of Kin Ship Goods and Base Camp Printing, two locally-owned design and printing companies. In January 2017, we will cut the ribbon on Elk City Records, a vinyl shop with a special interest in early jazz. Although the fine arts are a key component to urban revitalization, the financial arrangements are just as important. By negotiating low-interest, interest-only terms with nonprofit lenders, I have been able to build out space for new tenants, at cost, and treat the capital expenditures as prepaid rent. This allows an empty building to be filled, a business to start and a community to grow. When coupled with the 20 percent federal and 10 percent state historic tax credit allocations, these projects become lucrative and sustainable.

As I grow my company (we currently have another historic property under contract), I am creating a model I believe may be used in other downtown districts throughout the state. It is no secret that West Virginia has some tough times ahead. With young, ambitious people leaving the state in droves, the problem compounds. Yet, I believe that by preserving our historic buildings, we can not only restore our economy, but retain talent and a piece of our cultural inheritance as well. A renaissance starts with one idea. A neighborhood renaissance can start with one building. ♪



From top: Restoration on the facade of the building; Ribbon cutting ceremony with (from left) Tighe Bullock, Mayor Danny Jones, John Bullock and Ellen Bullock; a finished loft apartment from inside the building

Opposite page: A view of the 30' x 60' "West Side Wonder Mural" painted by Charly Jupiter Hamilton