

New Haven's New Face: The Farwell Tour

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Thumbs Up: 804 Chapel



But there's hope — right across the street.

You might have noticed it. It's a modest, three-story white building with ground floor retail. It stands at the corner of Orange and Chapel.

To Farwell, it's a beacon.

The building's owner, Bill Christian, engaged Studio ABK to design a rehab of the old building. What a great job they did, said Farwell, pointing out the work that's just getting underway.

They're preserving the building's original design, with varied details above the

windows at each floor. Farwell noted how the facade blends into the street. It wraps each of the designs above the windows gracefully around the corner, harkening to an age when "corners were considered the premier spot of downtown buildings."

Those designs become more playful with each story, "inviting you to look at the sky," Farwell noted. Each floor has a different feel. "People look at that," Farwell said, "and say, 'foot, body, head.'"



She motioned to the flattened curves at the building's top, the cleaned and repaired ceramic tile, the custom-cut marble at ground level. The owner is putting in recessed lights there that will illuminate the street not only for the occupants, but also for passersby. In other words, the public.

"Rescuing a building like this isn't easy. This has the same spirit of a building that is jazzy. [The owner] understood this building," Farwell remarked.

"It started off great in life. It was part of New Haven's great downtown era, when people were building to a proper scale."

And it shows that, in 2009, people can still build that way in New Haven.