

2008 BERGEN COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMENDATION AWARD

Category: ADAPTIVE USE

This category of preservation is for the successful rehabilitation of a building for a changed use while maintaining the original architectural integrity.

**THE 1908 PARIAN JEWELERS BUILDING, 99 WESTWOOD AVENUE,
WESTWOOD**

Project Team: William J. Martin, AIA; Michael Viola; Roy J. Parian

American downtowns exist not only in memory, but as living experiences wherever a convenient mix of specialty shops, good eateries, personable services and other attractions draw neighbors to a thriving central business district. Westwood boasts one of Bergen County's most exciting downtowns, wedged between Kinderkamack Road and the train station, where shoppers find a five-and-dime store, movie theatre, fresh coffee, great scones, bagels, cakes, and relaxed dining, amidst an inviting assortment of gems, books, clothing, artwork, cameras, chocolate, pet supplies, pharmaceuticals and much more—all within easy walking distance.

The old First National Bank anchors the busy intersection of Westwood and Center Avenues, cater-corner to the Post Office. Its imposing façade stands tall, its strategic presence offering quiet assurance of solidity, prosperity and pride of place. Built in 1908 of Closter stone, steel and brick, it was raised another story in 1922. A double jewelry store replaced the bank in 1954.

Not only have the present owners and architect rehabilitated the exterior in a manner consistent with the original design, but also the interior restoration raises the ceiling to expose a mezzanine enclosure wall, opening up the salesroom and again making the antique bank vault a prominent feature of the layout. The renovation is sympathetic to significant historic fabric and wonderfully adaptive to the building's present and long-term commercial viability. The workmanship preserves or replicates historic materials and design elements, improves ventilation, adds insulation, and brings the building up to code requirements, improving its safety and use, while successfully incorporating handicapped accessibility.

For these and other good reasons, we commend Michael Viola and Roy J. Parian, owners of Parian Jewelers, and architect William J. Martin for their historically sensitive and commercially productive restoration of the First National Bank, marking the centennial of this great community landmark.

