



FIRST LOOK

Downtown Abbey

WHEN A CALAMITOUS 1984 FIRE ripped through First Baptist Church in downtown Phoenix, it was almost a death knell for the 1929 building. But former Phoenix Mayor Terry Goddard couldn't stand to see the Italian Gothic Revival-style structure leveled. He secured a \$40,000 loan from the National Trust in 1992 to purchase the property through a nonprofit he founded, saving it from demolition.

For years, the building's future remained uncertain—until landscape architect Chris Winters of Chris Winters & Associates, architect Eddie Jones of Jones Studio, and architect Michael P. Johnson toured the space in early 2010. The fire destroyed the sanctuary's roof, and after years of exposure to the elements, Jones

says, “nature had planted a garden inside.” The three came up with a vision: Rather than restore the building to its original look, it could be stabilized and preserved.

After plenty of false starts and hurdles, things ramped up in 2022, when Goddard secured the capital he needed. The \$6 million preservation project, funded in part by federal historic tax credits, was led by Jones Studio and Chris Winters & Associates. EverGreene Architectural Arts helped stabilize historic materials while maintaining the building's ruin-like state. Unveiled in May and now dubbed the Monroe Street Abbey, the structure will soon be occupied by tenants, and the open-air former sanctuary space will serve as an event venue. —Malea Martin