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Alumnus oversees top Detroit buildings

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Detroit is trying to rebuild and promote growth in the downtown area. OU alumnus Fred Schwark, CAS '89, is part of that. In December, Schwark was named regional manager of The Downtown Collection, which includes the First National Building, the Penobscot Building, the Cadillac Building, Alden Park Towers, Lafayette Towers and a new, \$150 million development recently announced by the city.

After graduating with a degree in political science, Schwark was hoping he'd rise through the corporate ranks, but he didn't know he'd eventually be high enough to look out over the city of Detroit and know he had a stake in the growth of the city.

"After graduation, I went and got my real estate license," Schwark said. "That helped boomerang me into the corporate world."

Schwark sent out his resume to a number of different companies. He got a call from one of the largest security firms and they set up an interview.

"I showed up in my new suit and my real estate license. Little did I know I was going to interview with the CEO of the company," Schwark said. But the interview went well and he was faced with the decision. "I was going to go to law school, but I got the job so I had to make a decision: law school or run corporate real estate in Detroit."

Schwark chose the latter, which has worked out well for him. He also worked with First Industrial and Prentiss Properties before being named regional manager of The Downtown Collection, which is owned by the Northern Group in New York.

"If you look at the history books and you look at Detroit, it was once a bustling city. It was like New York. It's shifted away from that but now it's progressively — slowly but surely — coming back," Schwark said.

Schwark noted Rock Financial is moving to Detroit, the Compuware building has brought many people downtown and the Northern Group's new development will help bring even more people to the city.

In his role as regional manager, Schwark is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the buildings, tenant relations and strategic business development for the buildings. He said his education at OU helped prepared him for the job by teaching him discipline, communication skills, the ability to think under pressure and write intelligently.

"I'm so excited to be a part of The Downtown Collection. I tried living other places, but something keeps drawing me back here. I started my career in Detroit and I knew one day I would come back. Seeing Detroit make a comeback and being part of it really makes me proud," Schwark said.

SUMMARY

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