



Student Housing Company Embraces Sustainability, Renovates Hotel With Energy-Saving Features

By The Staff of Facilities Engineering Journal

Once an eyesore, the 91-year-old Seneca Hotel in Columbus, Ohio has dodged the wrecking ball and become an environmentally friendly facility soon to be home to students and shops.

Campus Apartments Inc. (www.campusapts.com), a student housing company, usually does new construction projects. But when a structure is suitable and available, the company tackles “adaptive re-use” of it, said Nick Zaferes, vice president for development and construction.

“Sustainable development is very important to us,” Zaferes said.

The company, which has more than

\$1 billion worth of assets under management with more than 16,000 beds in 14 states, salvaged the Seneca long after previous owners had given up on it.

The 10-story brick hotel was designed by noted architect Frank Packard. Over the decades, it went from swanky to shabby. In 1990 it was scheduled for demolition. For the past 20 years it was vacant.

“It was a catastrophe,” Zaferes said. “The roof and floors were caving in... This was a blighted corner.”

But the Seneca was essentially sound – and graced with old-time elements the developers valued. The company

saved the original floors, brick facades and glass block throughout the building. About 60% of the project involved new construction; 40% was adaptive re-use.

Now, “it may have another 100 years of life,” Zaferes said.

RENOVATION

Because the building had been declared a “vertical Brownfield”, the company spent about \$3 million in asbestos and lead paint abatement alone.

Other highlights of the project:

- Double paned thermal insulated windows with Low E glass
- R19 insulation systems
- The new roof uses a thermoplastic olefin white reflective roofing system with ISO board insulation. (Zaferes said in his experience, a TPO system is energy efficient and cost effective. He also notes that upcoming Campus Apartments projects, most notably in Philadelphia, will have “green” roofs.)

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- New, high-efficiency 13 SEER HVAC units
- Water-saving fixtures and faucets throughout
- A complete new power plant with building automation systems capable of shutting down unused electrical systems
- A corridor air recovery system. Building air is re-circulated and mixed with fresh air in rooftop units to allow fresh air circulation and reuse of air conditioned heated air to prevent heat loss.
- Existing landscape is being “historically defined and improved on,” Zaferes said.

Financing was provided by the company and state and federal historic renovation and Brownfield funds. The city is subsidizing streetscaping.

MAINTENANCE, GREEN-STYLE

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statement of environmental principles – emphasizing recycling, for example – for managing the building, Zaferes said. Landscape irrigation will be metered separately to save costs, and to raise awareness that this water is not being treated as sewage. Greenery is watered with a closed loop system.

NOW

After \$19 million of work, the Seneca has 120,000 square feet of upscale rental housing (77 luxury one- and two-bedroom units) and 15,000 square feet of ground-level shops and cafés. “New life has been breathed into it,” Zaferes said.

The apartments, ready for move-in on August 1, were designed to cater to

the 32,000 students, faculty and young professionals at Columbus College of Art and Design, Franklin University, Columbus State Community College, Capitol University Law School, and Grant Medical Center. Amenities marble bathrooms and cherry-wood kitchens, modern décor, personal washer/dryers, high-speed internet connections and a fitness center.

Another plus: the downtown hotel is situated for public transit, which the company and its tenants find desirable for economic as well as environmental reasons.

Zaferes said the company hopes to encourage use of the common areas by residents and retail customers. And, also with a nod to energy efficiency, the lighting in those areas have motion sensors.

Because the Seneca had been so neglected for so long and because the goals to make it “green” were so high, this renovation project was one of the toughest he’s handled in 40 years, Zaferes said. But the outcome was worthwhile: “A year from now, this place will be bustling.” AFE

