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Upscale Student Housing Rises From Ruins Of Historic Hotel

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A developer has transformed an abandoned, historic downtown hotel into luxury apartments for students and faculty at nearby colleges.

Campus Apartments spent \$21 million to renovate the historic Seneca Hotel from an asbestos-ridden squatters' paradise to 120,000-square-foot of upscale rental housing and 15,000-square-foot of ground-level retail space.

Designed in 1917 by Columbus architect Frank Packard, the 10-story building sat unused from 1987 until it was reopened in August. City officials hope the new renovation will revitalize the district and spur economic growth.

"I expect this to be one of the most sought after addresses for the 30,000 students who come downtown to earn their degrees."

The building is located in the special improvement Discovery District, which includes Columbus State Community College, Columbus College of Art & Design, Capital University Law School, Franklin University and other cultural institutions.

"The Discovery District continues to get hotter with these great new apartments, new investments at Columbus College of Art and Design and the Museum of Art," says Mayor Michael Coleman.

"I expect this to be one of the most sought after addresses for the 30,000 students who come downtown to earn their degrees, as well as the young professionals who are now looking to move downtown," he says.

"After we gutted it out, once all the garbage was gone, it was still a beautiful building."

According to Campus Apartments, 92 percent of the residential apartments are leased. The units rent for \$800 to \$1,400 a month. The building has 77 one- and two-bedroom apartments that are finished with marble bathrooms and cherry-wood kitchens.

Campus Apartments received subsidies from the city, state and federal governments for the project. The developer invested \$3 million to rid the building of asbestos and \$100,000 to restore the lobby of the old hotel.

"Restoring a large residential building is not economically feasible," says Nick

Zaferes, vice president of development and construction for campus apartments. "But we got significant subsidies from the city, state and federal government in the form of tax credits and grants for over \$10 million."

The renovation was also made feasible with sturdy structural systems that were not compromised while the build-

ing was not in use.

"Because it had good bones, so to speak, after we gutted it out, once all the garbage was gone, it was still a beautiful building," he says. "We were able to really bring it back to its grandeur."

The Seneca Hotel was the place to be seen for Columbus socialites when it first

opened with fancy suites, swanky ballrooms and a rooftop garden.

Its historic designation meant the developer had to restore the old structure, but new building principles also made it into the design. The building has reflective roofs, and energy-efficient HVAC systems and appliances.

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