

Business First of Columbus - October 18, 2004  
[/columbus/stories/2004/10/18/story1.html](http://columbus/stories/2004/10/18/story1.html)

## COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

Friday, October 15, 2004

# Apartments on the way to Seneca

Former hotel acquired

Business First of Columbus - by [Brian R. Ball](#) Business First

#### Sponsored Links

##### [Live Longer, Look Better](#)

Report on how to reverse the aging process. Study results include tighter skin, weight loss, more energy.  
[www.KTV16News.com](http://www.KTV16News.com)

##### [Mom Loses 36 lbs Obeying 1 Rule](#)

I Dropped 3 lbs of Body Fat Per Week by Obeying this 1 Ancient Rule!  
[JilliansDietJournal.com](http://JilliansDietJournal.com)

[Buy a link here](#)

An historic downtown property headed for demolition just eight years ago could soon enjoy a renaissance as an apartment building targeting college students and young professionals.

The **Seneca Hotel**, at the corner of East Broad Street and Grant Avenue, will undergo a \$12 million renovation into 90 to 100 apartments under plans to be unveiled by **Campus Apartments Inc.** Oct. 15, when the Philadelphia developer closes on its purchase of the property.

David Adelman, Campus Apartments' president and chief executive officer, said the building's location near four downtown college campuses and other institutions makes it a natural opportunity for their target market.

"What really attracts us is we like markets with strong university and institutional presence to support our base of tenants," Adelman said. "... We believe these apartments can serve Capital (University) Law School students, doctors and nurses at Grant Medical Center and young professionals who want to be in a hip apartment building downtown."

In addition to Capital, the Seneca could serve students attending Columbus State Community College, Franklin University and the Columbus College of Art & Design.

Campus Apartments has redeveloped more than 200 properties comprising 2 million square feet and 3,000 apartments in the University City District that surrounds the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University in Philadelphia.

While experienced in urban development, Campus Apartments does not create low-end student housing. Adelman described its tenant base as "fairly affluent, educated consumers who expect a quality product."

Campus Apartments has not finalized the planned rental fees for the Seneca apartments.

#### A long history

Adelman would not reveal how much they're paying for the Seneca to seller Robert N. Shamansky, a Columbus attorney. He did say they will seek federal tax credits available for historic structures for the 87-year-old Seneca, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The property will qualify for the city's 10-year, 100-percent real property tax abatements on its construction investment under an incentive package championed by Mayor Michael B. Coleman two years ago. Officials also expect Campus Apartments to seek short- and mid-term financing through the Tandem Funds administered by the city's nonprofit development affiliates, the **Columbus Downtown Development Corp.** and the Capitol South Community Urban Redevelopment Corp.

Adelman said extensive work to shore up the Seneca will begin by year's end. That work will include a new roof and windows to allow interior demolition and other work.

Still, the developer has yet to set a formal timetable for delivering the property to the market.

"It all depends how long it takes us to work through the design," Adelman said. "We're still refining the plan."

The 10-story Seneca, designed by renowned Ohio architect Frank Packard, opened in 1917 as a hotel and later served as dormitories for a beauty school and other trade schools. The property had served as offices for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for 15 years before the state agency vacated it in 1987.

The building has stood vacant ever since.

Shamansky and his now-deceased brother, Samuel C. Shamansky, bought the building in 1994.

In late 1996, they tried but failed to get a city permit to demolish the 10-story section of the building at 361 E. Broad St. to create a parking lot to service the four-story section at 371 E. Broad St., which would have been redeveloped as offices.

Instead, the city of Columbus took the Shamanskys to Franklin County Environmental Court, which in 1999 approved a plan to preserve the property for its eventual rehabilitation.

At the time, the Shamanskys were litigating the division of their joint real estate holdings in Franklin County Common Pleas Court.

A dispute over the Seneca's value prompted the sale of the property at sheriff's auction in May 2002. Robert Shamansky gained full control of the property during that auction for \$510,000.

He had expected to redevelop the Seneca as market-rate apartments through a joint venture with Casto Communities, but those efforts ended earlier this year.

Adelman said Campus Apartment's extensive experience at redeveloping properties makes it well-suited to make the Seneca conversion work where others have failed.

"We've gone through this before," he said. "We understand what's involved here."

#### **The missing link**

Bob McLaughlin, Columbus' downtown development administrator, said Adelman has already shown an ability to take a fresh look at the downtown Columbus market by not insisting the Seneca needs structured parking nearby for redevelopment to occur. McLaughlin said Campus Apartments' narrow focus on students and those working in the immediate neighborhood allows the tenants to find their own parking solutions in lots and parking garages within a few blocks of the Seneca.

Adelman "brings the perspective that a property like the Seneca, properly positioned and properly marketed, can be successful without the absolute requirement that you have on-site parking," McLaughlin said.

Columbus developer Don Devere demonstrated the concept on a smaller scale, McLaughlin said, with his recent redevelopment of 12 apartments on East Gay Street just east of North High Street. Tenants either walk a few blocks to their cars or have learned to function without access to a vehicle, he said.

McLaughlin called residential development "the missing link" in the redevelopment of the Discovery District despite continued expansion of Columbus State and Grant Medical Center, as well as commercial office projects by the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio and the School Employees Retirement System during the last several years.

"Housing is the cornerstone to any great neighborhood," he said. "It brings an energy and a sense of credibility to a viable redevelopment area."

*All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.*

ShareThis

## CONSTRUCTION ZONE

# Landmark out of retirement

## Long-shut Seneca Hotel to reopen as apartments focused on students

Monday, June 9, 2008 3:01 AM

**BY MIKE PRAMIK**

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Chalk one up for history.

More than two decades after the Seneca Hotel was sealed tight, a developer is preparing to take the wraps off a \$21 million renovation of the historic building in the Discovery District Downtown.

This week, Campus Apartments of Philadelphia is offering a first look at the results of three years of work to convert the former hotel into apartments. The result: 77 apartment units and some flashy public spaces -- \$100,000 was spent restoring the lobby -- that could bring vitality back to the corner of E. Broad Street and Grant Avenue.

"The common-area spaces are something you don't see every day," said Campus Partners Chief Executive David Adelman. "We're bringing back that historical lure of the building.

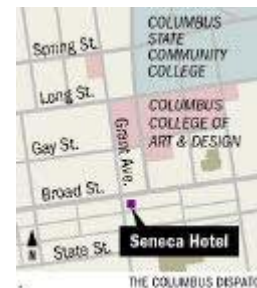
"We think the units are very generously sized and have finishes on par with condominium finishes. That's what differentiates this building: Old World design with New World amenities and finishes."

Designed by architect Frank Packard, the Seneca was built in 1917 and soon became one of the city's grand Downtown hotels. It was once the home of the Ohio State University Faculty Club and later was converted to office space for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.



JEFF HINCKLEY | DISPATCH PHOTOS

**The three-year redevelopment of the former Seneca Hotel at E. Broad Street and Grant Avenue included spending \$100,000 to make the lobby impressive.**



But after the Ohio EPA moved out in 1987, the hotel was closed until Campus Apartments, which rents out 16,000 apartment beds in 14 states, acquired the property and began to plan its rebirth. Adelman, an Ohio State University graduate, said he had been aware of the Seneca for a decade. He knew tackling the project would not be easy.

The first step was to clean the large amount of asbestos out of the walls.

Campus Apartments applied for a \$1.9 million Clean Ohio Revitalization Fund grant but was denied. However, it later secured a \$750,000 Clean Ohio Assistance Fund grant, and the city agreed to make up most of the difference to pay for asbestos remediation.

John Meegan, a principal with project architect WSA Studio, called the Seneca "the worst building I've ever seen."

"Twenty years of being unoccupied really took its toll," he said.

The Seneca actually is three buildings: a 10-story tower, a four-story building and a two-story building. About 15,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space is planned, although only leasing offices are a sure bet.

Nick Zafares, Campus Apartments' vice president of development and construction, said the company is negotiating with retail tenants, including a coffee shop for the main lobby.

It's hoped that other shops will open around the Seneca.

"In two months, this whole Broad Street side will come to life," he said.

Campus Apartments is counting on brisk business from the 32,000 students and faculty and staff members at nearby colleges and universities, including Capital University Law School, Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus State Community College and Franklin University.

"This is clearly going to be one of Columbus' next great neighborhoods," said Columbus Mayor Michael B. Coleman.

Zafares said Campus Apartments' goal is to lease 70 percent of the units to students, but that could change based on demand, perhaps from Grant Medical Center employees or other Downtown professionals.

"We think this product will have a little bit more of a conventional vocabulary than some of our other products," Zafares said.



**Left: This kitchen and living room are in a two-bedroom unit with cherry kitchen cabinets and stainless-steel appliances.**



The units are generously sized for student use. A combination of studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom spaces is available, and units range from 427 square feet to 1,437 square feet. They offer marble-floored bathrooms, cherry kitchen cabinets and stainless-steel appliances.

All the windows are new, and the wood windows on the lower floors have been detailed to match the original building architecture.

Monthly rents will be \$800 to \$1,400.

Campus Apartments is considering what to do with a 5,000-square-foot space that fronts Grant Avenue south of the main lobby. Zafares said ideally a restaurant operator would lease it, but for now it will remain closed.

The space has a mezzanine overlooking the first floor and will be among the final pieces of the building to be renovated.

Campus Apartments also owns the old Ohio Deaf School, just down Grant Avenue. Zafares said financial arrangements to convert the school into apartments are not set.

"We'd like to revitalize the whole Grant Avenue corridor," he said. "That's why we bought the Seneca and the Deaf School. We feel we can make this area a part of the Downtown."

Mike Pramik covers development for The Dispatch. Contact him at [mpramik @dispatch.com](mailto:mpramik@dispatch.com) or by fax at 614-461-5107.

- 
- Construction Zone is a weekly look at construction, development and real-estate news in central Ohio.

Type in your comments to post to the forum

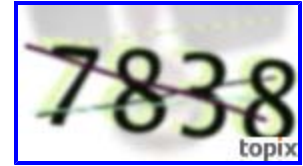
**Name**  
**(appears**  
**on your**  
**post)**

**Comments**



Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:

**Post Comment**



*Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the [Terms of Service](#) and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. **Be polite.** Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. [Send us your feedback](#) .*

## **Ads by Yahoo!**

### **The Seneca Hotel, Chicago**

A European-style boutique hotel in downtown Chicago. Book today.

([www.senecahotel.com](http://www.senecahotel.com))

### **Flowerama Ohio**

Flowers delivered from four locations in Columbus, Ohio.

([floweramacolumbus.com](http://floweramacolumbus.com))

### **Live Forex Practice Account**

Practice Forex Trading in Real Market Conditions with a Free Trial.

([www.GFTforex.com](http://www.GFTforex.com))

---

©2009, The Columbus Dispatch, Reproduction prohibited