



## Downtown upgrades attract retailers

**Columbus Dispatch, The (OH)** - Sunday, September 25, 2011

**Author:** Marla Matzer Rose, *THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH*

Architects Sara Purcell and John Reagan know one way to keep busy is to buy and renovate your own buildings.

The duo behind Reagan Purcell Architects just bought its fifth investment property, and plans to move to the E. Gay Street building from its Short North building in the spring.

Through their Mohawk Properties, the pair bought 34-38 E. Gay St. for \$550,000 at the end of August, according to property records. They now plan to invest \$250,000 in a renovation of the three-story brick building that was originally built as a hotel in 1905.

"We're kind of excited about what the city's been doing Downtown," Reagan said. "We really like what's been done on East Gay Street and along the riverfront, and this is right in the heart of that whole area."

Reagan and Purcell plan to go before the Downtown Commission on Tuesday to present their plans for the exterior, which include the addition of large windows and a canopy. The building has sat empty for a few years.

Reagan says that as they've done with other properties, the plan is for the 25-year-old architecture firm to occupy the upper floors and lease out the ground floor, possibly to local retailers. Tenants haven't been signed. Ohio Equities is the leasing agent.

Mohawk will lease out its current space on Brickel Street in the Short North after it moves. In addition to that building and the Gay Street building, Mohawk owns two German Village properties and one in Cincinnati.

### Capitol Square retail revival

Columbus Commons' opening this year is beginning to spark retail interest. Stores are opening in the Shops on Capitol Square in the Capitol Square office tower, where most storefronts went dark after the Columbus City Center mall closed.

"The removal of City Center and the addition of Columbus Commons has been an excellent addition to the demand for retail here," said Bob Black, the Columbus-based senior adviser for building owner Hertz Investment Group.

The stores are in the hallway between the 495,000-square-foot office building and the new Sheraton Capitol Square -- formerly known as the Hyatt -- across State Street from the Statehouse. The hallway was once a connector to the mall. After it closed, the walkway became a dead end.

Columbus Commons developer Capitol South has created an entrance that opens up to the 6-acre park. A coffee shop called Capitol Cup is set to go into the glass-walled space facing the park by the end of October, where a florist once was. A newsstand has opened near the entrance to the Sheraton, and the recently opened Market 65 salad restaurant facing the building's plaza is doing "unbelievably well," Black said.

Hertz has invested in new lighting and paint in the hallway and has taken down paper on the windows to showcase the last few remaining spaces. Lee's Chinese Kitchen and a shoe repair shop have remained there for years.

Black said demand is also picking up slightly for the office space, which is occupied mainly by lawyers and other professionals. He said when Hertz took over the building in September 2007, it was 77 percent occupied. Occupancy is now 10 percentage points higher and should be more than 90 percent by mid-2012, he said.

### Parking for the FBI

Nationwide Realty Investors has purchased an additional parcel next to its planned office building at 425 Nationwide Blvd. and is seeking approval to add 113 surface parking spaces for its planned \$10 million, 51,000-square-foot office building there.

The FBI has signed as the anchor tenant.

In a filing with the Downtown Commission, Nationwide said the city of Columbus had "abandoned most of Fletcher Street," and that it had purchased the land between Fletcher and the railroad tracks.

The cost of the land acquisition and parking addition is pegged at \$250,000.

#### LeVeque renovation

The new owners of the historic LeVeque Tower on W. Broad Street, once Columbus' tallest building, will present details to the Downtown Commission this week of their \$1.5 million first phase of renovations on the building.

The investors, led by Bob Meyers, plan an extensive overhaul of the first three floors of the 46-story building, including new doors, windows and granite pavers at the building's entrance. They also plan to restore "neglected portions" of the terra cotta facade, along with flagpoles above the entrances.

Construction Zone appears monthly. Information intended for this column may be sent to the attention of the author at [mrose@dispatch.com](mailto:mrose@dispatch.com).

**Caption:** Photo and Map Mohawk Properties Reagan Purcell Architects just bought property on E. Gay Street. It plans to invest \$250,000 in renovation.

**Edition:** Home Final

**Section:** Business

**Page:** 1D

**Column:** Construction Zone

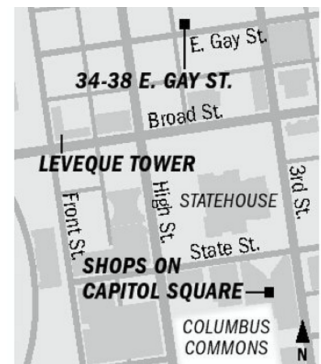
**Record Number:** 20162693

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH Copyright (c) 2011 The Dispatch Printing Co.



MOHAWK PROPERTIES

Reagan Purcell Architects just bought property on E. Gay Street. It plans to invest \$250,000 in renovation.



THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH