

COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

Filling a condo gap

Spectrum spending \$11M on third project

By Brian R. Ball – Business First - Jan 10, 2005

A building that once housed a shoe factory will become the latest downtown Columbus condo conversion by the developers behind the nearby Connexions and Eclention lofts condominiums.

William Shelby and Jack Hoopes, principals of Spectrum Properties Inc., plan to transform the six-story building at 78 E. Chestnut St. into 48 condos. The residences, many of which would be priced under \$265,000, could be completed by spring 2006 after a \$9 million renovation.

Spectrum bought the 86,000-square-foot building Dec. 27 for \$1.9 million from Nationwide Mutual Insurance Co.

Shelby likes the building's location. Though Chestnut Street isn't heavily traveled, he said, the building's location near North Third Street puts it at a "gateway" to downtown.

"The nice thing is, you have tons of support services along Nationwide Boulevard," he said. "And it's within walking distance to Capitol Square, the Arena District and the Short North."

The project also is less than three blocks from the developers' first downtown condo conversion, the Connexions Lofts at 104 N. Third St., and their most recent project, the Eclention Lofts at 221 N. Front St.

It's also around the corner from JDS Cos.' Sixty East Spring project, an apartment and condo complex on East Spring between Third and North High streets.

Hoopes expects the Chestnut project to complement Eclection Lofts, which has 55 units mostly priced between \$165,000 and \$225,000, though some sell for more than \$275,000.

"We don't have anything at Eclection between \$225,000 and \$275,000," Hoopes said. "We're hoping this project fills that void."

Spectrum picked Mary Raysa and Helen Nilsson of HER Realtors, marketers of Connexions and Eclection Lofts, to sell the Chestnut condos.

Extended history

Huntington National Bank is providing a \$7.56 million loan to redevelop of the Chestnut building, which was built between 1910 and 1920.

Developer Robert J. Weiler, whose family once owned the property, said the building once was a shoe factory but has been used for offices in recent years.

Abel Corp., a tire producer, had its corporate offices in the building in the mid-1950s, when Weiler joined his father's real estate company. At the same time, slipper producer R.G. Barry Corp., now based in Pickerington, had its headquarters and a sewing operation in the building.

The Weilers' involvement with the property ended in the 1970s.

An affiliate of Columbus developer Taggart Marryott Reardon owned the property for much of the 1980s. Documents also show the lender to the affiliate took control of the property at a sheriff's sale in November 1991 after bidding \$3.3 million. The lender sold the property in 1994 for \$2 million to an affiliate of Dublin-based Stavroff Venture Corp., which leased the property to state and federal agencies.

Nationwide bought the building in December 1999 for \$5 million. Terry Mathews and Scott Pickett of CB Richard Ellis marketed the property last year for Nationwide.

Spectrum's acquisition includes access to 65 parking spots at a neighboring Nationwide parking garage. The developer also has several parking spots in a two-story annex to the property, as well as a two-car garage planned for a 2,000-square-foot, ground-floor condo.

Shelby said the building should be more easily redeveloped than the Eclection and Connexions properties. The Chestnut structure has a sprinkler system

and better electrical system than the other properties, which should mean less interior demolition. Shelby said the plywood floors likely will need reinforced with a layer of concrete.

Beyond that, specific plans for the project remain in flux.

"We have a lot to do," Shelby said.