

2nd In New Wave Of Downtown Apartments Seeking Tenants



The new apartments at 179 Allyn St. in Hartford are now available for tenants.

By **Kenneth R. Gosselin**

Hartford apartment developers hope prospective tenants will see the light.

HARTFORD — The developers of the new apartments near the train station on Allyn Street don't have the luxury of pushing views of the state Capitol or Bushnell Park, except for some units that look out on a sliver of the state Capitol dome.

The windows — with views of a typical street scene below — are nonetheless part of the leasing strategy.

"More than anything else, it's about the light," said Roberto Arista, of the project's developer, Dakota Partners in Waltham, Mass.



On a recent morning, light flooded through the windows of the former Professional Building at 179 Allyn, bouncing off the walls, painted white. The building was converted in the past year from office space to 63 one-bedroom rentals.

Whatever the selling point, Arista is confident that the apartments will lease — and quickly — in about six months.

"We're thinking July or August," Arista said.

The Allyn Street apartments are the second project to come online in a new wave of 700 apartments either completed or now under construction. Tenants have started moving into The Grand on nearby Ann Uccello Street; and together with 179 Allyn, the two projects are adding 89 rentals downtown.

The city hopes the addition of more apartments will boost vibrancy downtown beyond the 9-to-5 work week, key to building Hartford's urban fabric. Whether the initial momentum will build on itself still remains to be seen.



CAPTION

179 Allyn Street in Hartford. The building was converted to apartments and will be ready for tenants February 1st. The six story former office building was completely gutted and renovated into one bedroom apartments in downtown Hartford. (MICHAEL McANDREWS / Hartford Courant)

State taxpayers also have a stake in the outcome, helping to finance the \$15 million conversion. The Capital Region Development Authority, which has \$60 million in funds for housing initiatives in and around downtown, has \$6.5 million in a loan and equity investment in the project.

Eight of the Allyn Street apartments have deposits on them, but no leases have been signed yet. Not all the requirements of the lease have been worked out, Arista said. The first tenants would move in by late February, he said.

State and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits required that the conversion preserve the exterior of brick with intricate terra cotta flourishes. In addition, the lobby retains the original marble staircase and brass letterbox.

Arista said the building's architects added space to the each floor by reclaiming space that once was part of an elevator shaft.

Converting the old building meant working around odd spaces, resulting in about two dozen apartment layouts. The apartments use original masonry walls, with kitchens that include stainless steel appliances and laminate countertops that simulate the look of stone. Floors are carpeted wall-to-wall.

On a tour of a model unit, Arista points out the "dovetail joints" of the kitchen cabinetry are of a superior grade.

"So this is not cheap, cheap," Arista said. "This is our building, and we are going to keep it for a long, long time — so we want things to last."

The apartments range in size from 600 to 900 square feet, with market-rate rents from \$963 to \$1,375 a month, plus \$80 to \$90 for a parking space.

Twenty percent of the units are designated for low- and moderate-income families, with rents based on area income. The rents range from \$835 to \$1,010, plus parking.

The building has two commercial tenants on the ground floor: the Nv Nightclub and the Black Bear Saloon.

The second floor has a fitness center and a community room but also has some apartments. To cushion against noise, a foot-thick layer of soundproofing has been sandwiched between the first and second floors.

Arista says those measures should block most of the sound.

"A few people from the Black Bear are interested in the [second floor] apartments," Arista said.

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