

■ HARRISBURG

Historic building reopens

Hotel now is apartments for elderly

By Mike Feeley
Patriot-News

The Governor Hotel, a once popular downtown Harrisburg gathering place which has sat vacant for a decade, has again opened its doors, this time as an apartment complex for the elderly.

The 84-year-old brick building at Fourth and Market streets underwent \$3.5 million in renovations and is now a 46-unit complex for low-to moderate - income elderly. The rent, for those who qualify, is \$320 a month and includes heat and air conditioning. Tenants, who must be 55 years of age or older, must pay basic electricity, phone, and cable television bills.

Lancaster-based Progressive Investments Real Estate Association, the developer, purchased the property from the city last May after four other developers tried to raise funds to turn the building into a luxury hotel or high-price apartment complex.

Progressive Investments has renovated several buildings in the Lancaster area, but this is the first in Harrisburg, said Ben Bamford, spokesman for the firm.

The firm paid the city \$300,000 for the building after the city Redevelopment Authority bought the building for \$1.4 million in 1975 from Alexander Realty Co. Progressive was one of three developers who bid for the chance to renovate the building last year. Two others wanted to tear the building down.

"This building is something the whole community looks at and has memories of and we'd rather not demolish something like that," said Bamford. "We want to preserve as much of the history that we can."

The grand opening for the complex is Tuesday, but 20 percent of the rooms have already been rented. Bamford said he expects the hotel to be fully occupied within six months.

Mayor Stephen R. Reed said the hotel helps solve a regional need for affordable housing for the elderly. He said most of the housing needs for low - to moderate - income people are handled by the city.

"Most of their applications have come from outside the city," said Reed. "Harrisburg almost always becomes the only place where such projects are based and takes care of a regional need."

The apartments are designed with the needs of the elderly in mind. Bedrooms and bathrooms are equipped with devices that allow tenants to contact emergency services with just the pull of a string. Lights flash on outside an apartment when the emergency cord is pulled making it easier for management, police, or other emergency crews to aid people.

Several of the apartments are designed to make life easier to people in wheelchairs.



APARTMENTS - The Governor Hotel now offers apartment space for elderly midstaters.

ACCESS - Several apartments feature kitchens accessible to people in wheelchairs.