



The Governor Hotel (left) has avoided the fate of the former Pomeroy's building in downtown Harrisburg. The old hotel is to be renovated by Progressive Investments, the only bidder which did not opt to tear it down.

Business Venture Revisits & Renovates The Past The Governor Hotel transformation gets underway in Harrisburg.

by Rochelle A. Shenk

Historians are always urging us to explore and appreciate the past. Progressive Investments and the group of businesses involved in the \$3.3 million Governor Hotel project in Harrisburg are heeding this advice.

The Governor Hotel is located on the corner of Fourth and Market Streets, in the heart of Harrisburg. Until a few months ago, this forlorn building, vacant for about 15 years, was a neglected eyesore. "This is an exciting and productive reuse of what's been a vacant landmark in our downtown district," said Harrisburg Mayor Stephen Reed. In early May, the first steps were taken to transform the building into the Governor Hotel Apartments, housing for the elderly. The 46 apartments, which should be completed in May 1993, will each have 650 to 700 square feet of living space and will rent for \$320 to low-to-moderate income persons age 55 and up. "This is an important project that will bring many more residential units to downtown Harrisburg. Having people live downtown is essential for any city," said Ben Bamford of Progressive Investments, Inc.

Bamford explained the project's origination. "We received an RFP (Request for Proposal) from the City of Harrisburg about the former Governor Hotel at Fourth and Market streets. We did market research and feasibility studies, and everything indi-

cated that this was an excellent location for elderly housing. We were the only one of the three responding developers to suggest keeping the building, not tearing it down."

Progressive Investments received approval of their project from the City of Harrisburg and purchased the building for \$300,000. "We were notified that our proposal was accepted and had settlement less than 24 hours later," Bamford commented. He also noted that this amount of notice is typical in commercial projects so it's important to be organized and ready to proceed with the project. Progressive Investments' organization included a wide variety of outside sources; financing, architectural consultants, a general contractor, and a management company.

"Progressive Investments has an excellent reputation for managing projects, which is important when you're dealing with a project like this," said Mayor Reed. Progressive Investments, Inc. and Barry Newhart are the general partners in this project. Both Progressive Investments and Barry Newhart are Lancaster-based developers. Barry Newhart is affiliated with GN Associates. Progressive Investments has been involved in other adaptive reuse projects in Lancaster such as the development of the former King Theater on E. King St. into apartments, renovating the former General

Cigar Building on S. Lime St. for offices, and converting the former Farmers Supply Co. building on E. Fulton St. into 42 apartments.

The general partners are responsible for the day-to-day operation. "Since we are the owners of the building, we will have a vested interest in the project and in the city of Harrisburg. We want the tenants of the apartments to be satisfied so they remain with us," Bamford said.

Other Lancaster companies will be working on the project; Maule & Tucker Architects and E.G. Stoltzfus, Inc.

"It was important to save the structure and renovate it to fit this use if feasibly possible," commented David Maule of Maule & Tucker. Maule & Tucker have been investigating some of the building's history. The 85-year old structure was once two buildings. One of these buildings, which was on the corner of Fourth and Market, was originally a railroad hotel in which railroad workers or travelers could break their journey. The two buildings were joined together in the '30's to become the 94-room Governor Hotel. The Hotel was renovated in the '50's. During this time a seventh floor, a third floor on the southside, and a restaurant were added.

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The Governor Hotel Apartments will have a facade which is reminiscent of the '30's look of the building. David Maule explained that the photographs of the Governor Hotel before the '50's renovation and the fronts of other more traditional buildings in the area provided inspiration for this endeavor. Using the photos, it was decided to reinstall the main entrance off of Market Street. A marquis with a canopy will be over the entrance, and bay windows—an original feature of the building—will look out over the marquis. These large bay windows will actually be of curved glass, which will have to be specially made. Cornice work around the first and seventh floors has been added. Another item which was added that was not originally part of the building—but is in keeping with the architecture of the '30's—is the turret on the seventh floor. This turret will be lighted and, since it will be visible from both Fourth and Market streets, will be the building's signature piece. "I commend the developers for spending a few dol-

lars extra to create an accent point. This building will become a piece of public art," said Maule.

Maule commented that the building should fit in with the rest of the area so, in keeping with the commercial flavor of the area, large storefront-type windows will be placed throughout the first floor area. This first floor area will be a lobby and have an activity area and house the management office in addition to apartments. A plaque will commemorate the building's former use as a hotel and there will be a display of hotel memorabilia.

Carving 46 apartments from this 94-room hotel was a challenge, one that was not made easier by the fact that one of the original buildings was U-shaped (a light well ran down the center). Maule & Tucker overcame that obstacle by utilizing this dead space in the light well to run piping. Most of the existing window openings were used and most of the doors become doors to other rooms in the apartments.

When his firm designs projects, David Maule noted "we try to put ourselves in the

shoes of the user." Each one-bedroom apartment has a window looking onto either Market or Fourth street. Each apartment also has its own washer and dryer. Each floor has a recycling area and a trash chute for non-recyclable materials. The trash will be picked up as frequently as once a day.

Six units have been specifically fitted to be wheelchair accessible. These units are located within the circular window areas which are the closest apartments to the elevator. The dining area is in the window area. The kitchen areas were specially designed with counters that are set low and are adjustable. The laundry and linen area has wider doors to accommodate the wheelchair.

One of the attractions of this project is its proximity to transportation. Some tenants may have cars and want to have a garage area. Right beside this building is a parking facility, the Walnut Street garage. The Governor Hotel Apartments has an agreement for a certain number of spaces for its tenants. A door will be placed so that tenants may have access to the garage but people on the garage side cannot enter the apartments.

Other security and emergency measures include sprinklers and smoke detectors (the firehouse is three blocks away), two emergency call stations (one in the bathroom and one in the bedroom) in each apartment, and some apartments will be equipped with fire alarms that flash a light (for the hearing impaired). A security system will allow visitors to enter the building only by being "buzzed in" by tenants. The management office in the lobby will be placed near the main entrance so that management staff can be aware of any suspicious activity. The units on the first floor will have special locks on the windows and wooden shutters across the windows which will allow ventilation and privacy.

These plans will be carried out by the project's general contractor, E.G. Stoltzfus, Inc. This firm, which originated in 1968, is known in the Lancaster area for high quality residential housing projects. However, Brent Stoltzfus noted that the firm has been involved with commercial projects for at least three years. This is their largest adaptive reuse project to date. "It's not that different from what we've been doing. We've been building quality residences for a long time," said Paul Lewandowski, E.G. Stoltzfus' project manager for the Governor Hotel project.

"My main interest in this project is in taking an old building and restoring it rather than building a new one on fertile ground," Lewandowski said. He is not only knowledgeable about commercial construction, but is familiar with remodeling old commercial buildings. He noted the concern with reusing the light well, adding that it was solving this problem that made the project economically feasible.



Representatives of Progressive Investments, Fulton Bank, Dauphin Deposit Bank, and the City of Harrisburg stand in front of the Governor Hotel.