

## MetroClub Project Breathes Life Into an Old Hospital

**With Philadelphia's Center City** experiencing renewed residential activity, Philadelphia Management and Cos. saw promise in an abandoned, 1960's era hospital and has converted the curvaceous, glass-clad building into the luxurious MetroClub Condominiums.

"We took a building that was just sitting here and useless, and we made a new, unique building out of it," said Ron Davis, project superintendent for Philadelphia Management. "It has changed the whole outlook of the building and the area." The 216,000 square foot building sat empty for more than a decade after it was shut down following years of financial problems. Following the announcement of its conversion to condos, most of the units sold on the first day the company placed them on the market. Davis expects the project to wrap up in the spring.



The Metro Club

MetroClub represents Philadelphia Management's first foray into condo development, although the firm has an extensive track record in adaptive reuse for apartment housing in Philadelphia, along the East Coast and in California. In conjunction with partners Ira Lubert and Dean Adler of Lubert Adler Partners of Philadelphia, it will invest \$30 million converting the Metropolitan Hospital into 129 one and two bedroom condos that will range in cost from \$250,000 to more than \$1 million.

MetroClub joins other residential living spaces populating Center City. The condos overlook Franklin Square, the Ben Franklin Bridge and Delaware River and are expected to breathe new life into the area.

"It's a beautiful building, in a great location, with parking and access to Interstate 95 and New Jersey and major highways," said Mark Yocum, field superintendent for Fastrack Construction Inc. of Fort Washington, Pa., which handled the metal stud work, drywall, millwork, doors and hardware.

A 1997 10-year tax abatement program has fueled downtown projects. During the past two years, 93 Center City buildings have been converted to residential use, adding 5,433 units. On top of that, new construction added 6,436 units between 1998 and 2004.

# Mid-Atlantic Construction

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The Central Philadelphia Development Corp. estimates that another 3,900 may come on the market between 2005 and 2008.

**Thrown a curve.** Matthew Koenig, AIA, a principal with JK Roller Architects, LLC of Philadelphia, designed the MetroClub conversion. His company had completed a prior renovation of the building and was familiar with its structure. Over the years, other developers had tried to find a use for it, but each found difficulty and inefficiencies related to the building's unique curving shape.

Patient rooms sat on the exterior of the curved building, with circular nursing stations and small pie-shaped exam rooms in the center. Few rooms had 90-degree corners, in part to assist with cleaning and the walls were tiled.



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"It was overbuilt because it was built for a hospital," Koenig said. "We were able to open up the space a lot more than we might have with a typical building. That's one of the benefits of the building - the open spaces in the apartments."

Koenig placed a hall through the center of each floor, branching off 90-degrees from the stair tower. Contractors built off of that straight wall. He positioned the units' kitchens, closets and bathrooms off the center hall and kept living areas and bedrooms toward the exterior.

"Some units have over 40 feet of glass," Koenig said. "It's pretty phenomenal to have large open expanses with wonderful views in every direction."

The converted building will feature 88 one-bedroom units ranging in size from 850 to 2,300 square feet; 27 two-bedroom units ranging in size from 1,000 to 2,225 square feet; and 14 penthouses ranging in size from 800 to 1,800 square feet.

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Marquerite Rodgers, Ltd. of Philadelphia designed the common areas and developed three interior design styles. She kept the hospital's white marble walls and terrazzo flooring in the lobby, created a Zen garden and added library-style leather sofas. She carried the international theme to the pool and gym areas.

"For the public spaces, we took cues from the building itself," Rodgers said. "What we were trying to accomplish is when you walk in the door you have a sense of calm and energy at the same time, so you could walk in the door and leave the day-to-day hustle-bustle. And you would feel like you were home."



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Philadelphia Management serves as its own general contractor. Crews began gutting the interior of the original eight-story, poured-in-place concrete structure in mid-2003. They demolished three of the six elevator shafts to make room for more units. The company is adding 14 steel-frame and concrete bi-level penthouse units with outdoor decks on the roof.

Because the building sat vacant without proper maintenance for so many years, there was roof damage. Also, water had seeped in behind the curtain wall on floors four through eight, and the exterior began to fail.

**Pretty in Pink.** Koenig found a new pink-toned, insulated glass curtain wall that cost about the same as a repair but would change the look of the building and give it a warmer, more home-like appearance. He placed new windows in the brick exterior on the first two floors.

Colory Metal & Glass of Bensalem, Pa., installed the curtain wall. Lower levels of the first floor units will occupy the former morgue and radiology departments. Cutting the concrete slab required precise measurements to ensure the structural integrity of the building.

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"We had to watch the layout, so when we cut through we didn't cut any beams," project superintendant Davis said. "The engineer gave us a detailed area where we could go through."

New HVAC units, specific to each condo, as well as new electrical, plumbing and data lines have been installed. The utilities enter through a central closet in each unit.

Between 60 and 100 craftsman worked onsite daily. Most of the subcontractors have participated in multiple projects with David and Philadelphia Management. JK Roller Architects has completed 30 projects with Philadelphia Management during the past 10 year and find its unconventional approach quite effective. Ron Caplan, owner of Philadelphia Management and Cos., not only envisioned the project, he also has a very hands-on role in its construction.



The Metro Club

"It works, because there are expectations, everyone has their own responsibilities and there is no finger pointing," Koenig said. "On this job everyone works directly for Ron. Ron will come in and tell the guys what they need to be doing. He gets everyone to buy into it."