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CREATING NEW LIFE WITHIN HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Northeast developers are adapting historic properties.

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In a day and age where the words "newer and better" have become synonymous, our nation's historic landmarks often are overlooked or destroyed to make way for the ubiquitous "future." Of course, bringing new ideas to the commercial real estate market is an important part of the industry's progression, but in doing so, the past need not be forgotten or demolished. Thus, developers across the Northeast are recognizing the opportunities inherent in adapting dilapidated historic sites. With land becoming more and more scarce throughout the region, reusing these historic properties is imperative not only in the scheme of practical commercial real estate business, but more importantly, in maintaining the landscape our country's rich and diverse history. *Northeast Real Estate Business* recently spoke with four developers and architects regarding their specific adaptive re-use projects, gaining insight into this significant trend.

WARWICK CONDOMINIUM PHILADELPHIA

The Warwick Hotel, located at 1701 Locust Street in Philadelphia, is a significant historic structure situated in the heart of the city just one block off Rittenhouse Square. The hotel is undertaking a \$20 million update and renovation of its 290 rooms, fixtures and lobby furniture, but the top eight floors are being converted to condominiums. Allan Domb Real Estate is developing the new studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom condo units, which will be ready for occupancy in April 2007. The cost of the renovation, which will result



Allan Domb Real Estate is converting the top floors of the historic Warwick Hotel in Philadelphia to 110 luxury condominium units.

in 110 new residential units, is approximately \$60 million.

"The Warwick Hotel was constructed in 1929, and from Frank Sinatra to Muhammad Ali, most every celebrity that has come through Philadelphia has stayed at this historic landmark," says Allan Domb, president of Allan Domb Real Estate. "The baby boomer population in Philadelphia especially has a connection with this structure, and that demographic is seeking housing of this sort in the city."

The condominium conversion includes completely gutting the top floors, providing all new interiors. The façade is undergoing minor work, yet contrary to many re-use projects, the building has been kept relatively well over the years. The main amenity of the residences is that occupants will have all the features of a luxury boutique hotel such as a 24-hour doorman, 18-

hour concierge, valet parking, room service and maid service. "It's like checking into a hotel and never having to check out," says Domb.

Other features of the project include a gym on the fourth floor, three restaurants — a steakhouse, a coffee shop and the hotel-run restaurant — and of course, location. With all the amenities of Center City Philadelphia within three or four blocks, living at the Warwick Condominium is like living in a village.

"The location of the Warwick and the important history behind this structure provide an excellent living opportunity in Philadelphia," Domb says. "We've already received reservations for all the units just through word of mouth, which is incredible; the quality of the finishes and the amenities we're able to provide really set this project apart."