

# Restored Hotel John Marshall Reopens as Living/Retail Project

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The first residents move next week into apartments in the former Hotel John Marshall, now called the Residences at the John Marshall.

And the first weddings in possibly decades at the landmark building will be this weekend.

"Finally, we will be in the John Marshall this weekend for our first events — two weddings — one in each ballroom," said Suzanne Wolstenholme, owner of The Colony Club and Colony Catering and Homemades by Suzanne.

"We have a New Year's event planned and also a Valentine dinner/dance and then a Mothers' Day Sweet & Savory Tea."

The first phase of the \$70 million apartment/retail project, after five years in the making, was nearing completion Thursday with carpeting being installed and painting touched up on the first nine floors.

Floors nine through 16 will be completed and ready for occupancy at the end of January or beginning of February, said Michael Campbell, principal of Dominion Realty Partners LLC, the Raleigh, N.C.-based developer.

In all, 51 of the building's 238 apartments are pre-leased, and at least 65 events were booked before the building opened, Campbell said.

"The unprecedented interest in the revitalization of the building from the first day of construction proves the importance of the landmark to the city and our hope is that this building continues the resurgence of downtown Richmond into the next decade and beyond," he said.

The apartments range from studios to one- and two-bedroom units that will rent from \$755 a month to \$2,900 a month, "in line with the downtown market," Campbell said. The average size is 705 square feet.

Each unit features granite countertops, high ceilings, carpet paired with hardwood flooring, and optional city views. Residents will have access to a fitness room and club room. The ground floor is made up of 20,000 square feet of retail space.

The John Marshall Barber Shop, in temporary quarters across the street, will move back into the building in the next couple of weeks. The Colony Club is leasing kitchen and office space to manage the John Marshall and The Virginia ballrooms.

No other retail tenants have signed on at this time, Campbell said. "We have received interest from higher-end restaurants, which is our target. I think people needed to see the barricades come down and the storefronts and the finished lobby."

The lobby, Campbell said, almost always elicits the same response: "Wow."

The entryway off North Fifth Street was opened up to its former glory with two- to three-story high ceilings and a grand marble staircase.

At some point in its 82-year history, it had been closed in. The ceilings were lowered. The room was dark with mirrors on the walls and red shag carpeting on the floor — "1970ish," Campbell said.

Some of the ornate molding is original, some was matched. The same is true for a terrazzo floor. Three original crystal chandeliers hang in The Virginia Room. All the electrical and mechanical systems were replaced.

"We took it back to the bones," Campbell said.

The building, at North Fifth and Franklin streets, opened in 1929 as the country slipped into the Great Depression.

For decades, it was the political and celebrity hotspot, with guests including Elvis Presley, Elizabeth Taylor and Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter. It has been closed essentially since 1988 except for a few starts and stops as a hotel.

Construction has been going on for the past two years, generating more than 1,100 jobs. Planning was done three years prior. The contractor is Atlanta-based Choate Construction Co., and the architect is Rule, Joy Trammell + Rubio, also of Atlanta.

Dominion Realty used federal and state historic tax credits to offset the cost of the renovation and secured \$40 million in financing from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"What we are most proud of is just restoring this landmark building," Campbell said.

