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Luxury project being built

By Dave Melchior
Courier Editor

Downtown is going upscale – at least when it comes to 200 through 208 W. Michigan.

A group of owners and developers have combined their efforts to put 20 luxury apartments into the upper floors of the buildings and attract tenants to vacant first floors.

That part of the plan has been public for a long time, but the pace of the project has been accelerated because of the interest of prospective tenants, said Stewart Beal, project superintendent for J.C. Beal, one of the building owners and the contractor renovating the buildings.

Beal said last week deposits on three of the apartments already have been received, even though the units will not be finished until late February or March, and the developers held an open house Saturday to generate even more interest.

And, Beal said, the developers have decided to locate the community's first-ever sushi bar in the first-floor space of 208.

Beal said the sushi bar fits the upscale atmosphere the developers are trying to achieve, and, he said, he believes filling the other first-floor vacancies will be easier once the front of 208 is restored and the rest of the apartments are rented.

Frank's Drugs will remain in 204, he said, but that still

leaves vacant space, including the largest and most visible, the corner space at 200.

"We can't really call the project a total success until we lease the first floors," said Beal

Beal said originally, the developers had considered putting a coffee shop into the space, but decided on a sushi bar after other coffee shops opened in city.

He said the sushi bar is modeled on a successful sushi bar in downtown Detroit.

"We always thought we would do our own thing in that space," said Beal, and the developers decided a sushi bar was the kind of unique business that would attract people to the development.

He also said he believed the sushi bar would encourage another business to make an investment in locating in 200.

While Beal said the developers still are seeking first-floor tenants, they were surprised by the level of interest in the apartment project, and that prompted the developers to go ahead and build all of the apartments at once instead of staggering the construction as units were leased.

The upper floors of all of the buildings are being linked through a main entrance off the pedestrian walkway at the rear of the buildings, and an elevator has been installed to service the 20 apartments on the upper two floors.

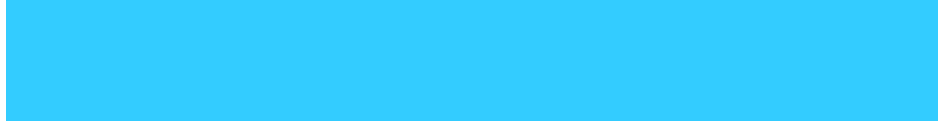
Beal said \$2 million is being spent to build 10 loft apartments on the top floor and 10 more apartments on the second floor.

He said they will range in size from 600-square-foot efficiencies up to 1,300-square-foot, two-bedroom apartments. Eight of the units will have lofts and the development also includes skylights in some units.

He termed them "luxury" apartments that will include in-unit washers and dryers and luxury kitchens with all the appliances.

Beal said the units would rent for approximately \$1.10 per square foot, per month.

"We think the uniqueness will bring out the people," said Beal.



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