



ALPHA PHI ALPHA HOMES, INC.

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News Release

As an \$8.2 million renovation of the tallest building in Alliance nears completion, applications are being requested from people interested in moving into the historic former bank building.

The eight-story 1925-26 vintage City Savings Bank & Trust Co. building at 449 East Main Street in downtown Alliance, now known as the Lionel H. Newsom Tower, was converted to apartments by Alpha Phi Alpha Homes, Inc., an Akron non-profit, in 1990. The latest renovation, started last year, adds handicap accessible apartments, improves heating and cooling, updates and reduces the overall number of apartments available from 50 to 42 and makes general improvements throughout the facility.

The building is for seniors age 62 or older who meet low-income guidelines up to \$21,300 per year for one person and up to \$24,350 per year for two people.

Rent is subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and residents typically pay about \$200 per month including utilities, according to Thomas R. Fuller, Executive Director of the Akron non-profit.

Completion of the project is expected in June or July of this year.

The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2016 and was designed in the 1920s by bank building architectural firm of Simons, Brittain & English. Charstean Nicholson, 65, has lived in Newsom Tower for 15 years but worked in the building as an elevator operator and as an office cleaner when she was younger.

And she visited the bank as a child with her grandparents who banked there.

"I call myself the mother of the building," said the mother, grandmother and great grandmother.

"It is a fantastic building for seniors," said Nicholson, who serves as unofficial service coordinator of the building.

Larry Hecky, the architect who designed the renovation said the building "was and still is the architectural focal point and physical heart of the city." The building and where it was located, he said, served "as the business and financial heart of the once great medium size industrial city focused on the steel industry and rail transportation."

The city is now working to designate a historic district in the entire East Main Street area. "One of the keys of successful regeneration of downtowns is people living downtown," said Hecky.

"Hopefully the renovation of Newsom Tower will be an inspiration and catalyst for the area of the East Main Street Historic District as well as all of downtown," he said.

The building, Hecky said, is one of the few in the area that served as both a bank and an office tower in the Neoclassical style.

"The two story Classic Ionic columns flanking the entry into the building are an iconic expression of the style," he said.



The teller windows and original bank first floor remain as a community room and even the historic bank vault accessed by marble stairs into the basement remains intact, said Chris Karickhoff, project superintendent of Tober Building Company, the contractor on the project.

From a dozen to nearly three dozen workers have been busy on the job for more than a year, he said.

The windows on the building are being replaced with energy efficient windows that have the look of windows that would have been installed in 1925, he said.

Alliance Mayor Alan Andreani said the project is the biggest project going on in the city of Alliance this year.

“It is not only the tallest building in the Alliance Downtown Area, it is located as one of the anchors” near Freedom Square, where veterans who have sacrificed for all of us are memorialized, he said.

“We are pleased that with this investment,” he said. “We continue to have a residential focus to downtown, bringing more people to this location.”

Joseph C. Mazzola, the city’s director of the department of planning and development, said old buildings like the former bank building must be taken care of as they age.

“These old buildings need an awful lot of work and a lot of tender, loving care over time,” he said.

“What happens if you don’t take care of these old buildings? Real estate wears out unless there is a demand for it.”

With the huge investment in upgrading the nearly century old building and all of the apartments, Mazzola said, it is like making the building and apartments new again.

“It’s almost like starting over,” he said. “It is wonderful.”

The boost to downtown, he said, is huge.

“This is a major investment in downtown,” he said. “This is substantial.”

To inquire about renting a unit, contact Jennifer McClure at 330-823-4004 or go to www.alphahomes.org.