

Dilapidated structures transformed into modern, affordable apartments in Grand Rapids

Published: Thursday, October 20, 2011, 5:49 PM Updated: Friday, October 21, 2011, 9:00 AM



By **Cami Reister | The Grand Rapids Press**

Not that long ago, two buildings in the 200 block of South Division Avenue were vacant, rundown structures with sagging ceilings and peeling paint. The same could be said for a warehouse around the corner on Williams Street SW.

Now, after an \$11 million renovation by Midland-based Brookstone Capital, they have been transformed into modern, affordable, energy-efficient apartments ready to lease.

"We displaced a lot of pigeons," said Tim Broilo of Wolverine Building Group, as he gave a tour of the 100-year-old Division Avenue buildings Thursday.



Enlarge

Cory Morse | The Grand Rapids Press

Julie Gorney, owner of Green Cleaning, Grand Rapids, cleans the front window to a live-work unit of the Division Park Avenue Apartments, 209 South Division Ave., in Grand Rapids Thursday, October 20, 2011. (Cory Morse | The Grand Rapids)

Division Park Avenue Apartments gallery (7 photos)

The project, Division Park Avenue, is the fourth in the Grand Rapids Heartside District by Karl Chew, principal of Brookstone Capital. His third, a renovation of the warehouse at 17 Williams St. SW called Serrano Lofts, opened in August and already is full.

They followed **101 S. Division**, which opened in 2009 and Metropolitan Grand Rapids on Ionia Avenue, which opened in 2007. All projects were partnerships with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and are geared toward low- to middle-income tenants who are employed.

A single person cannot make more than about \$25,000 a year, while a four-person household has a limit of around \$36,000.



Courtesy photo

Before and after pictures of an apartment at Serrano Lofts, 17 Williams St. SW in Grand Rapids.

affordable housing here," said Chew, who was hosting a ribbon cutting at the Division Park Avenue site Thursday.

Chew tapped Federal Historic Tax Credits, Michigan State Historic Tax Credits, MSHDA Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and Brownfield Tax Credits for his recent projects. He also received financial support from the Grand Rapids Community Development office and the Downtown Development Authority. PNC Real Estate provided other financing.

Representatives from the Grand Rapids Community Development office and the Downtown Development Authority were on hand for the ceremony as was Mayor George Heartwell.

"This is a good community to work in," Chew said. "The city staff is excellent to work with, and we're glad to be a part of the revitalization of the South Division corridor."

When it was built in 1911, Division Park Avenue was known as the Palantine Building. Erected by John E. Peck, it was a rooming house for traveling furniture buyers.

The renovation preserved as many features as possible, including the woodwork around the stairwells and a three-story atrium.

Architect Gary Breen, of Concept Design Studio, said the large atrium capitalized daylight in older buildings, something new designs are including to be energy efficient.

"It's really fun to see everyone going back to it," he said.

At Serrano, a factory built in 1917, the renovation preserved heavy timber beams and other features to create 15 urban-style loft apartments.

Brookstone officials said it took about three weeks for Serrano fill up after they began accepting applications.

Both Division Park Avenue and Serrano will be LEED certified. Breen said they aimed for a gold rating.

In addition to Wolverine and Concept Design, Brookstone worked with historic consultant Past Perfect and sustainable consultant Catalyst Partners. **Studio Duo** staged the models.