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Adaptive reuse projects make the old new again

by Julie Bennett

Buildings that once housed hotel guests in the swinging 1920s or the entire war department of the British Empire are being repurposed into residences for high-profile buyers. The adaptive reuse of such older buildings may be an environmental necessity, but it also adds a certain cachet to luxury projects.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, it takes the environment 65 years to recover whenever an old building is demolished to make way for a new one. The demolition of existing structures, the clearing away of building debris and the transporting it to landfills creates carbon-intensive damage that lingers for decades.

On the flip side, the restoration of an historic building can revitalize a neighborhood, conserve building materials and, in some cases, save developers money. David Gromet, vice president of marketing for Corcoran Sunshine Marketing Group in New York, reports that the developers of 720 West End Avenue on the Upper West Side purchased the landmark building after its interiors had already been demolished, which provided a blank canvas for a complete interior transformation. "While they may not be saving money, the developers are preserving a facade that would be nearly impossible to reproduce today given the level of detail and craftsmanship."

RICH HISTORY

720 West End Avenue began its life in 1927 as the Hotel Marcy. "It was designed by Emery Roth, one of the foremost architects in New York then," Gromet reports. "He was something of a legend."

Gromet says the 17-story building's exterior was known for its classic renaissance revival architectural style, with stone marquee lights and intricate hand-carved terracotta designs. "All of that has been lovingly restored," he announces. The hotel's interior, which had 150 rooms, will be rebuilt into 131 condominiums and shared spaces. "The designer, Thomas Juul-Hansen, isn't recreating a pre-war building for the modern buyer, but instead having the interiors reflect his contemporary design style with some touches that pay homage to Emery Roth, including a foyer in each apartment, so that residents can take a moment of transition from the outside to the inside."

Sales of the condos will launch later this spring, with prices starting at \$975,000 for a one-bedroom home and climbing to over \$12 million for larger residences. The building will offer private on-site parking and a host of indoor amenities, including basketball and squash, a fitness center, a children's playroom with an outdoor area, library and co-working spaces, landscaped terraces and courtyards with lounge seating and dining, a pet spa and a private dining room connected to a bar, and much more.

"We expect some buyers will come from the immediate Upper West Side neighborhood," Gromet observes. "People who live there never want to leave. They love the area's rich architectural history and mix of museums and cultural venues that can only be found here. We also expect to attract buyers from throughout New York City drawn to the vibrancy of the area as well as from across the U.S. and abroad who are seeking a pied-à-terre in New York."

SOMETHING GRAND

While the Marcy Hotel was popular in New York, northerners who spent their winters in Florida spent time at low-rise beachfront hotels in Miami. These hotels, built in the 1930s and '40s followed the art deco style, with pastel colors, rounded corners and nautical designs. Instead of windows, some rooms had porches. Lobbies had glass block details, curved plaster ceilings and terrazzo floors.

Today, developers are adapting some of those hotels for contemporary guests, and many are adding a limited number of luxury condominiums, says Kobi Karp, the architect and designer for several of the projects.

The historic Raleigh, Richmond and South Seas hotels, for example, were built in the 1940s in the heart of Miami's art deco district, designed by architect L. Murray Dixon. Today, the beachfront property is being restored as The Raleigh, a Rosewood Hotel and Residences. The new property will include a 60-room hotel plus a new 17-story condominium tower featuring 44 residences managed and serviced by Rosewood.

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RENDERING COURTESY O AID

While some of the historic structures remain, the Surf Club has been transformed into the Four Seasons at the Surf Club, a hotel open to the public with adjoining luxury residences.

RENDERING BY VM STUDIO
The former Marcy Hotel has long been a fixture on Manhattan's Upper West Side. And it will remain so, because the building's original brick and carved stone facade, as designed by Emery Roth in 1927, is being carefully restored.



PHOTOS COURTESY O AID

The Cadillac Hotel, with its curving exterior and art deco interior, opened in 1940. Today, it is the updated Cadillac Hotel and Beach Club by Marriott, thanks to an adaptive reuse project by Kobi Karp (above). The lobby of the once-exclusive Surf Club has been restored to its celebrity party heyday (right).



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