
Developer wants to renovate Medical Arts Building

If purchase goes through early next month, it could be converted into 90 apartments

BY JILL ROSEN
[SUN REPORTER]

The building that generations of Baltimoreans know as the place for checkups and teeth cleanings could soon become apartments.

A Washington-based development company is finalizing a deal to buy Mount Vernon's Medical Arts Building at Read and Cathedral streets.

Somerset Development principal Nancy Hooff said she expects to do a complete renovation of the building's network of office space to convert it into about 90 apartments.

If the purchase goes through as expected early next month, she said, construction could begin as soon as next fall.

"It's a beautiful building and right in the heart of historic Mount Vernon," Hooff said. "I think it's a great opportunity."

The tan brick structure was built in 1927.

An array of doctors and dentists set up shop in there, and some offices are still active.

In 1998, a *Sun* columnist called the building's formality "a metaphor for the way we lived in 1950s Baltimore."

"There was a doorman who wore a braided coat and plenty of

porters scurrying about the first floor's Vermont marble corridors," the column read. "Someone always seemed to be polishing the brass railings. Today we'd consider it curious, but you had to go up a few steps to enter the lobby."

Hooff said the company plans to apply to the state for historic tax credits, a program that rebates a portion of the renovation costs to encourage preservation and attention to historic detail.

Hooff declined to give the purchase price. According to state tax records, 101 Read LLC bought the property in April 2004 for \$2.2 million.

Somerset has not finalized details of the project, including whether the units will be for sale or rentals.

The building's lack of parking, Hooff said, probably makes it impractical for condominiums.

However, she added, owners of nearby lots have pledged spaces so that future tenants would have somewhere to park.

The Medical Arts Building would be the second Baltimore project for Somerset.

The company also is building the Station North Townhomes in the 1700 block of N. Calvert St.

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