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Park Avenue Building finally gets some love

By Marty Mulcahy
Editor

DETROIT – A prominent, historic building that has heretofore resisted redevelopment – and a date with the wrecking ball – is again seeing signs of life.

Located in the ring of buildings around Grand Circus Park, at Adams and Park Avenue, the 12-story Park Avenue Building that was built from 1922-23 hadn't seen had a tenant since the 1990s, and has largely been vacant since the 1980s. Two years ago, brick and other masonry had fallen 11 stories to the sidewalk in front of the building, leading to a "dangerous" designation from the City of Detroit and the erection of a barricade around the building.

About a week before the masonry fell in April 2018, the Beaux-Arts classic was purchased for \$4.9 million by a Novi developer, Rino Soave. He plans \$22 million in renovations and a transformed 104,500-square-foot building with 75-100 apartments and first floor retail. The apartments will consist of one-, two- and three-bedroom units. Preliminary work on the masonry began June 1, with a small cleaning crew of laborers and Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 2 masons from Grunwell-Cashero.

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POWER-WASHING the 98-year-old brick and limestone exterior of the Park Avenue Building in Detroit are Laborer Rudy Leon and mason Tyler Tabor of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 2. They're employed by Grunwell Cashero. The derelict building is getting readied for renovation after being empty since the 1990s.



OPENED IN 1923 to house business offices and retailers, the Park Avenue Building in Detroit followed the path of other downtown businesses and started emptying out in the 1980s.

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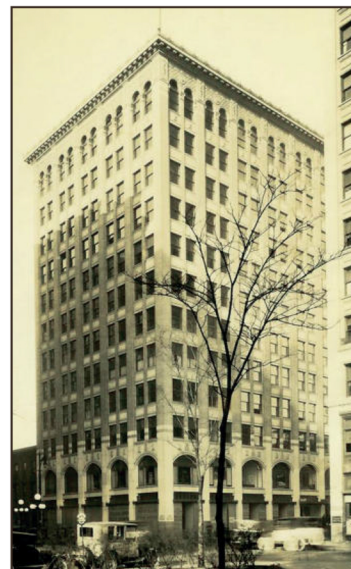
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"We're planning on doing brick repair, caulking, stone replacement and general restoration of the exterior of the whole building," said Grunwell Cashero Supt. Jeff Cusin. "But the first thing we're doing is powerwashing it with hot water, so we can get an idea of what it looks like cleaned up, and we can match the mortar."

Designed by famed architect Albert Kahn, the Park Avenue Building had housed offices and retail, according to the City of Detroit. It was once known as the General Necessities Building.

A 2014 citizens' petition drive sought to save the building from demolition, even though the city called its state of disrepair "the very definition of irreparable harm to the public."



THE PARK AVENUE building, circa 1920s. Photo credit: Indiana Limestone Photographic Collection