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Development News

La Vogue Apts restoration leads resurgence of Palmer Park Art Decos

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The rebirth of the Art Deco apartment buildings along Palmer Park begins with the restoration of the La Vogue.

The circa-1929 apartment building at 225 Merton (closest to Woodward Avenue on Merton) is arguably the most architecturally distinctive building in a [historic district](#) filled with them. The four-story beauty was designed by Cyril Schley in different architectural styles that were popular in the early

20th Century. There are hints of Tudor-revivalism in the exterior with intricate tile and brickwork but has a common area at the entryway that screams Art Deco.

The La Vogue started to show its age in recent decades until it was purchased by Shelborne Development, an Indian Village-based company controlled by Kathy Makino-Leipsitz and Mark Leipsitz, in 2008. They spent four years putting together the financing to make the \$6 million restoration a reality, patching together historic tax credits, brownfield tax credits, funding from the federal stimulus package and a number of other economic tools.

To make the building financially viable, Shelborne Development shrunk the 44,000-square-foot structure to 41 units, creating larger apartments with more modern conveniences while maintaining the building's historic character. Downtown Detroit-based EBH Inc did the redesign of the La Vogue.

"When we talk about a gut-job rehab, this is a gut job rehab," Kathy Makino-Leipsitz says. "We went to the studs. This has blown-in insulation and new windows."

The units also utilize high-efficiency furnaces, energy start appliances, and a number of other green features. There are also modern, durable amenities, such as granite countertops and new cabinets. The Makino's refinished the apartments' hardwood floors and preserved the entryway's rich Art Deco designs, such as its ceilings, elevator and front doors.

"We wanted to preserve what it looked like in the 1920s," Mark Leipsitz says. "We want to emphasize the existing architecture with new materials."

The La Vogue will include a mix of both affordable and market-rate housing. The

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apartment prices will range from \$434 for a one-bedroom unit to \$800 for a three-bedroom unit. Heat and water will be included with the rent. The Makinos have also purchased a vacant lot behind the apartment building on McNichols that they plan to turn into gated parking.

The building is set to welcome its first residents in early June. Shelborne Development has attracted four-times the number of applications as units available, including twice as many that qualify for affordable housing. The company expects to open the La Vogue to full occupancy this summer.

Source: Kathy Makino-Leipsitz and Mark Leipsitz, co-developers of the La Vogue

Writer: Jon Zemke

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Roland C Hansen · Wayne State University

I lived there in the early/mid seventies. Glad it has been saved. I would love to see it inside again. I lived on the first floor, last apartment down the hall on the right side of the lobby. It was a great place.

[Reply](#) · [3](#) · [Like](#) · February 16 at 2:33pm



Greg Piazza · Central Michigan University

What is source for Schley as architect? I have researched the area for 30 some years and my research was basis for historic register. I have not seen proof of Schley designing La Vogue. IF he did, great then we've found a previously unknown work. I am working with family of Schley to present a tour through Preservation Wayne Sept. 15. See their website for detail.

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Mary Barson · Top Commenter · Oakland Community College

Too fabulous!!! Those places are treasures!!!!

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Scott Zedde

Cool.

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Cathryn Gerrish Barnett · Detroit, Michigan

I watched the entire modernization process! Awesome! It is a beauty! Thank goodness someone took a sincere interest a historic building!

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Dwight Dawson

Sweet!

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