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Trinity Towers Gets New Look, New Name

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RON BATH • BUSINESS FIRST

Barrington Place LLC bought the former Trinity Towers building for \$1.3 million and is in the midst of a \$2.25 million remodeling project.

Kohner Properties Inc., a Clayton, Mo.-based real estate investment and management firm with a reputation for transforming once-neglected facilities, is trying to work its magic in downtown Louisville by renovating the former Trinity Towers apartment building.

A Kohner Properties subsidiary, Barrington Place LLC, purchased the 17-story tower on the northeast corner of South Third and Guthrie streets in April for \$1.3 million. The seller was Trinity Towers Corp., a subsidiary of the Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church, which had owned and managed the facility since it was completed in 1962.

Now, Kohner is in the midst of a \$2.25 million upgrade and remodeling project on the property, which is being marketed as Barrington Place Apartments. The firm also is handling property management for the building.

Renovation work began in October and is expected to wrap up in April, according to Shelley Bold, Kohner's director of marketing and property services manager.

The 218 units in the apartment tower are being gutted and repainted, and old cabinets and appliances are being replaced by new ones, she said. Updated light fixtures and blinds are being installed, as is new carpeting and a sprinkler system.

A fitness center is being added on the tower's second floor, with new equipment scheduled to arrive next week, Bold said. Other existing amenities include an on-site convenience store, which is run by an independent operator, and laundry facilities.

A renovation crew from Kohner Properties Management Services Inc. is handling the project. "It should be shiny new by the time we're done with it," Bold said.

Plan Being Developed to Boost Occupancy

Of the 218 units at Barrington Place, only 45 are currently occupied. The occupants of 43 of those 45 had lived in the tower prior to its acquisition by Kohner and have been relocated to renovated apartment units, Bold said. Their rent was slightly increased to reflect the improvements, she added.

She added that the tower hasn't been at 100 percent occupancy in more than 15 years. Bold said she is developing a marketing strategy that she hopes will drastically improve the occupancy in the next 18 months to two years.

Barrington Place is open to renters who are at least 20 years of age and employed. Kohner also has a policy of not including Section 8 or subsidized housing in its rehabilitated properties, Bold said. "We won't just move people in here just to fill it up because that never works."

The tower has 146 studio apartments and 72 one-bedroom units. Studios rent for \$400 a month, and the one-bedrooms are \$495. During the renovation work, a \$100 per-month discount is being offered for the first six months of a lease. A \$100 security deposit is required. Utilities are provided free of charge.

Bold said she doesn't expect rental rates to be increased this year. Bold believes that the property, located at 537 S. Third St., would be an "ideal" living space for students at the University of Louisville or Jefferson Community College or for employees of the nearby Louisville Medical Center.

Visiting the apartments for the first time in mid-February, Bold admitted that fully leasing Barrington Place will be "a little tougher than what we've thought."

A couple of factors make the job difficult, she explained. For one, the tower has no available parking. "That's a big problem," Bold said. A second issue – according to Bold's observations – is that downtown Louisville doesn't have an active nightlife, particularly on the weekends.

"I was shocked at how dead it gets here," she said. But Bold added that Kohner officials are heartened by some of Louisville Mayor David Armstrong's plans for revitalizing downtown, particularly the planned \$70 million redevelopment of the Louisville Galleria and the reinvention of Fourth Street as an entertainment district.

Firm is Not New to Redevelopment Efforts

Kohner is no stranger to redeveloping depressed apartment buildings, according to a January 2000 article in the St. Louis Business Journal, a sister publication of Business First.

Company President and CEO Jon Pyzyk, acquired the firm in 1981. Since that time, he's relied on a formula using renovation, signage and marketing to reposition distressed properties, the article said.

"It's all about us getting (the properties) for the right price," Bold said. Pyzyk "has good financial backing." Kohner employs about 300 people and owns or manages 43 apartment properties in seven states, according to Bold. In Louisville, the firm owns Summit Apartments, a 168-unit complex at 2814 De Mel Ave., in the Iroquois Park area.