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Inside the redesigned David Whitney Building in downtown Detroit

Anjana Schroeder/Crain's Detroit Business



The renovated David Whitney Building at 1 Park Ave. in downtown Detroit is expected to reopen Dec. 15. The \$94.5 million project started in March 2013 and includes 108 apartments, Aloft Detroit boutique hotel with 136 rooms and the Grand Cirque Brasserie French-American restaurant.

After being left vacant for more 12 years, the iconic David Whitney Building at Grand Circus Park is set to reopen in December, featuring a boutique hotel, apartments and a French-American restaurant.

By Anjana Schroeder

The iconic **David Whitney Building** is set to reopen to the public in December.

Designed by renowned Chicago architect Daniel Burnham and constructed in 1915, the building at 1 Park Ave. in downtown Detroit has been empty since 1999, when it last served as an office building.

After being left vacant for more 12 years, the journey to restoration started in March 2011, when **Whitney Partners LLC**, a joint venture between Detroit-based developer **The Roxbury Group** and Farmington Hills-based hotel investment firm **Trans Inns Management Inc.**, bought the building for \$3.3 million.

Whitney Partners has preserved the building's historical touches, including its terra-cotta, mahogany and marble surfaces. The building's exterior is also being restored to bring its façade as close as possible to the original 1915 design.

"We are in the final stages of redeveloping one of Detroit's most celebrated buildings and returning it to Detroiters and visitors to enjoy," David Di Rita, principal of The Roxbury Group, told a 50-person crowd during a media tour and update of the building's \$94.5 million redevelopment project. The building includes:

- a four-story atrium;
- **The Residences at the David Whitney**, 108 one-, two- and three- bedroom apartments;
- **Aloft Detroit**, a 136-room boutique hotel that is part of the **Sherwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc.** chain; and
- **Grand Cirque Brasserie**, the building's signature restaurant.

The building will also be a transportation hub, with second-floor access to the Grand Circus Park Detroit People Mover station, which has been closed for renovations, and an **M-1 Rail** stop outside the building.

The restaurant

Grand Cirque Brasserie's menu will be managed by chef Jacques Van Staden, president of **JVS Culinary Group**. Van Staden has opened 136 restaurants in his portfolio – including **Alize** in Las Vegas – and has recently relocated to metro Detroit.

Grand Cirque will breathe the history of the building in its design, Van Staden said.

"The restaurant's décor will draw inspiration from Daniel Burnham's design for the building, with dark wood, black-and-white marble floors and architectural elements reclaimed from the building's restoration," he said.

Van Staden described Grand Cirque as upscale casual French-American. It will include an open kitchen, bar and possibly patio seating, with about a 150-person capacity. The restaurant, which is expected to open next year, will be open seven days a week, serving breakfast, lunch, dinner and brunch.

The hotel and apartments

On the same floor is the hotel brand's **w xyz** bar, **Re:mix** lounge and **Re:fuel** grab-and-go food shop. The second floor has 10,000 square feet of meeting and banquet space, including a grand ballroom.

The next seven floors consist of the Aloft Detroit boutique hotel, with 136 rooms.

The apartments on floors 10 through 18 range from 569 to 2,000 square feet, starting at \$1,000 a month.

Financing

Financing for the renovation of the building came from **Michigan Community Revitalization Program, Michigan Strategic Fund, Bank of America, the Detroit Downtown Development Authority, Detroit Economic Growth Corp., Invest Detroit, Michigan Historic Preservation Network** and a combination of historic, brownfield and new market tax credits.

Anjana Schroeder: aschroeder@crain.com. Twitter: [@anjanaschroeder](https://twitter.com/anjanaschroeder)

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