

Developers buzzing over Royal Connaught condo project

By Adam Carter, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jan 22, 2013 5:59 PM ET | Last Updated: Jan 23, 2013 1:39 AM ET 15

 Facebook
  Twitter
  +1
  Share
  Email

When Rudi Spallacci talks about transforming the Royal Connaught Hotel into condominiums, the excitement and confidence in his voice is palpable.

"It's a huge deal for Hamilton and for that area," Spallacci said. "Something had to happen there."

To that end, Spallacci Group and Valery Homes formally announced "The Residences of Royal Connaught," on Tuesday — a new development that will introduce 700 condominium units into the heart of the city.

For almost a decade, the empty Connaught has loomed on the edge of Gore Park. Once, it housed elegant balls and political parties. But towards the end of its storied career, things were so bleak that the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario had to pay for an event there in cash — just to make sure ends were met.

But Spallacci, one of the development partners in the project, said the time is right for the Connaught development. His company's research shows that there's a demand from Hamilton and Toronto for this kind of development downtown.

They're looking to attract first-time buyers and investors of all kinds, he said. And with suites starting from the high \$100,000 mark, the environment may seem lucrative to those coming in from Toronto.

The group is well aware of the push from the community to preserve some of the history of the building, Spallacci said. So it plans to preserve the original Edwardian-facade while renovating the interior.



The Royal Connaught project, shown in this artist's rendering, is expected to insert 700 new residences into the downtown core. (180 Marketing)

"That's one of the reasons we're excited," he said. "If you just look at the facade alone, it would be so hard to replicate."

They're shooting to open the presentation centre for the residences in 2013, which will feature a redone three-storey lobby and one unit to show prospective buyers. The lobby will feature a glass staircase, grand piano and coffee bar, with accents in marble and gold as a nod to the opulence of the hotel's past.

"It will be an interesting looking lobby, for sure," Spallacci said.

According to a press release, Valery Homes and Spallacci Group have more than 100 years of experience designing and building in Southwestern Ontario.

"People see The Royal Connaught as their hotel," Valeri said. "Our plans for the project are to bring it back and make people proud of this iconic address once again."

"We can build in numerous communities, but the heart is missing in our city and we want to bring it back," Spallacci said.

Previous revitalization projects from Spallacci Group include the West Avenue Residences in north Hamilton — which included the conversion of an 1885 heritage schoolhouse — and Terraces on King, which rejuvenated a large portion of Hamilton's International Village.

The group also plans to launch retail space that will wrap from King Street along Catherine Street to Main. Spallacci said he expects it will include restaurants, cafés and shops with outdoor seating, and added that it should help attract a "younger crowd" to the core.

"Over time, it'll cause a buzz in that whole area. These people are going to add to the core."

The group is planning an expansive eighth-floor rooftop that includes both indoor and outdoor recreation, the press release said. It also plans a social space that includes a theatre, gaming room, fitness centre and party room.

Coun. Jason Farr, who represents Ward 2, said Hamilton is seeing a surge of new people who want to live in the core.

"The Connaught development will certainly ramp that up and help bring the Gore Park Master Plan to life," he said. "Given the reputation of the two developers, there will be lots of hometown pride in the project."

There is no current goal as to how many units they need to sell before building starts, just that they want to move "as many as possible," Spallacci said. He projects the first 135-unit phase will open in 2015.

"We're overwhelmed by the response we've gotten," he said.



Spallacci says the group is planning to preserve parts of the Connaught's history. This shot features the lobby in the early 1940s. (Courtesy Special Collections, Hamilton Public Library)