

CONDO LIVING



IN THE NEWS

A Hamilton icon seeks return to its former glory

City's transformation will be capped by June 7 opening of Royal Connaught

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Special to QMI Agency

The incredible transformation of the City of Hamilton offers buyers an affordable opportunity to live in a busy and vibrant urban core just west of Toronto. Heading north towards the waterfront, the hip James Street North is lined with vintage boutiques, coffee shops, maker markets and florists.

Hamilton's moment as a destination city has arrived as dozens of independent galleries collectively open their doors for the monthly Art Crawl, and urban crowds connect online and in-person for original openings, pop-up culinary experiences and a highly-regarded indie scene.

Hamilton's downtown transformation will be capped by the official June 7 grand opening of the Residences of Royal Connaught. The century-old grand hotel has been meticulously renovated by Valery Homes and The Spallacci Group and converted into modern condominium suites. Designed by KNY Architects, the completed project including three new residential towers will house 700 condominium units in the heart of downtown.

Valery Homes president, Ted Valeri explains that the two parts of the original hotel were built in different periods. The red-brick structure is from 1917 and contains the

renovated lobby. The adjoining white building was added in 1930 and will be phase two of the residential conversion.

The centrepiece of the heritage restoration is the opulent art-deco lobby. The entrance opens up to a three-storey interior, featuring dramatic crystal chandeliers and expansive 23-foot ceilings. The builders spent considerable effort to restore it to its original splendour.

"We've preserved all the original moldings, even the original floor. We took off many years of other types of flooring that was applied to it," says Rudi Spallacci, president of the Spallacci Group.

The spacious suites are a blend of ancient and modern, to complement an urban lifestyle. Who could imagine living in a fully-restored, century-old building with all the accoutrements of modern-day life?

"You have the original lobby with all the romantic crown moldings and detailing of that century, and now we are introducing the suites with updated heating, cooling and air systems, so you have the comfort of a brand-new suite nestled in this grand location," says Spallacci.

"We're situated right on Gore Park which is right in the centre of the city core. There's a lot going on in that location, and the hotel is a fitting anchor to the developments in the surrounding areas.

"It's all happening at the

same time. The whole area will be rejuvenated and brought back to its original glory that used to exist back then," says Spallacci.

Many events, graduations, proms, and wedding ceremonies were held in the Edwardian grand ballroom, forming the Connaught's legacy as a social hub, the centre of Hamilton society in a bygone era. This is the stuff that memories are made of, and memories are the subject of a recent social media contest. The Memories of the Royal Connaught contest invited Canadians to wade back in time and share their photos and stories of the famed hotel.

The list of past guests at the Connaught reads like a Who's Who of cinema and entertainment celebrity of the time, almost warranting Hamilton's very own walk of fame. "Certain people such as our Prime Minister Trudeau, Ginger Rogers, Louis Armstrong and I understand even Frank Sinatra stayed there, Lorne Greene, Johnny Cash," says Valeri.

Having built many new projects from the ground up, of similar size, magnitude and dollar value, Valeri says that nothing beats the tremendous feeling of satisfaction in bringing back a piece of Hamilton's history. "We've never done anything quite so fulfilling and satisfying. To bring something back from the brink of the wrecker's ball and give it back life, it's a different feeling."

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