

Celebrating 100 Years

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Redeeming features



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Developer Robin Miller stands at the Towne Center building in Staunton. He bought the former YMCA and is developing the former Western State hospital, which most recently served as the Staunton Correctional Center.

Accomplished developer ready for two city projects

By Ruth Jones/staff
rjones@newsleader.com

STAUNTON — When he breezed through Staunton en route to Richmond 10 years ago, Robin Miller didn't know he would play a role in changing the face of the Queen City, much less live in it.

But after finding his way back three years ago, something grabbed his attention. "I saw some articles about the neat things happening in Staunton, and I met Bill Hamilton," Staunton's economic development director, Miller said. "It sort of spiraled from there."

He finds himself smack in the middle of Staunton now that he's chosen to make two historical properties in the heart of the city innovative living and working spaces. He bought the former YMCA — also known as the Towne Centre and former McCormick's building — and is developing the former Western State hospital, also known as the Western State Lunatic Asylum, and most recently, the Staunton Correctional Center.

A native of Kingsport, Tenn., the 56-year-old developer resides in Ginter Hill in north Richmond with his wife Nan

Miller and children Brett, 16, and Michelle, 14.

Miller graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1971 and received a master's degree in public policy at Harvard University.

Afterwards, he spent nine years on active duty in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, spending four of those years at West Point teaching economics and public policy.

During that time, Miller picked up his development knowledge working with partners. "I had partners ... I learned the game by having a senior partner," he said. "They had the money, and I had the time and energy."

But in 1980, the desire to run his own development company took over. "In 1980, I resigned my commission to start my own company and become a real estate developer and have done that ever since," Miller said, now rehabbing historic buildings.

"I've always liked old buildings, and with my engineering background, I just have been attracted to old historic buildings and it's been a challenge to save the buildings and adaptively reuse the buildings so they're not torn down so that we can save the architecture,"

On The Web

Monroe Properties:
www.monroeproperties.com

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- Plans for former YMCA open new doors, A4 ➤
- Vision for former Staunton Correctional property is a village-like community, A5 ➤

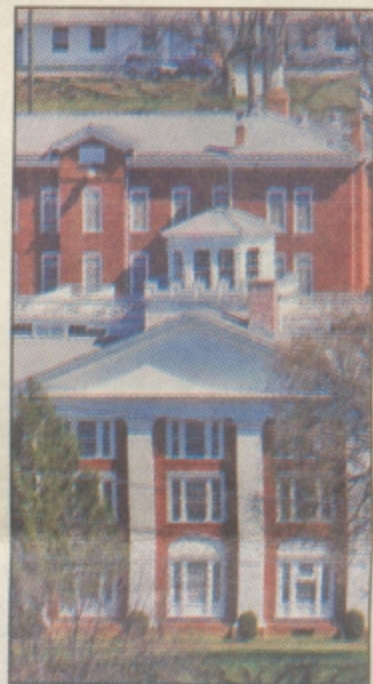
Miller said. He's not been one to shy away from a challenge.

Miller found himself doing projects from his start in 1976 in Cambridge, Mass., converting a 1920s apartment building into condominiums, to undertakings in New York, New Mexico, and his home state of Tennessee. He finally settled in Richmond and ran his first project as a one-man show, converting a 1858 building into 19 apartments within a year.

"It was just me," he said. "I was the owner, the developer, the general contractor, the clerk, the janitor, the leasing agent. I did it all ... when I finished that one I realized that I really liked doing it, and I knew how to do it, and I started gradually building my organization."

He now owns Miller and Associates — his development branch — and Monroe Properties, his rental, sales and management company.

"We focus on upscale and



File

The former Staunton Correctional Center is a focus of redevelopment.

historic buildings," Miller said. "I've done a lot of new construction and like doing that too, but it's not as challenging and there's not as many people doing it, so we have carved out sort of our own niche doing these historic buildings, and we're pretty good at it and know how to do it and got good contractors because we've been successful."

Miller and Associates has completed almost \$80 million worth of work in Richmond.

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