



The Progress-Index

Seward site to get new life

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There's probably no better building to renovate and revitalize in Old Towne Petersburg than the former Seward Luggage headquarters. And there's probably no better place, on historic High Street among some of the city's most significant historic architecture, for the renovation to occur.

A group of community leaders recently met the man who is going to transform the former home of Seward, once the world's largest luggage company, into luxury condominiums. There's probably not a better man for the job.

Robin Miller, president and owner of Miller & Associates, has performed many such transformations in Richmond. A local group brought together by the Petersburg Chamber of Commerce took a bus tour of some of his sites last Wednesday afternoon. Wet and windy spring weather did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of those who took the tour. Seeing those sites enabled the tour group to see the possibilities for Miller's proposed project at the Seward location.

Miller's company turned the former Lee Elementary School in Richmond into luxury apartments. The former Stuart Circle Hospital and an adjacent one-time nurses dormitory called the Laurel Hill House have been renovated into luxury apartments and condominiums. His

company has built 34 apartments and 30,000 square-feet of commercial space at the former Johnston-Willis Hospital in Richmond.

Richmond's Manchester District is the site of a current renovation project at a former warehouse. That project mirrors his intentions and the scope of the work to be done at the former Seward Luggage site. The Seward site boasts some 200,000 square-feet of living space.

Miller's Richmond projects offer up to 2,500 square-feet per apartment or condominium. The condos fetch upwards of \$430,000 while the apartments rent for up to \$2,600 plus utilities per month. Obviously, there's a huge market for the type of housing that Miller and others are offering in Richmond.

Some people say apartments and condominiums can do just as well in Petersburg. Others aren't as optimistic.

One thing is certain. If it's going to happen, it would be at the Seward site in the High Street Historic District with Miller & Associates leading the way.

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