

30 years after closing its doors, Hahne's building gets new life



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NEWARK -- Alan Kane remembers feeling a little anxious when he started as a senior vice president at the Hahne & Co. department store headquarters on Broad Street in Newark in 1977.

He was only 35, and had not worked for the company, or in Newark, before, and said he wasn't sure if the staff or city would accept him.

Two years later, he was the company's president and CEO.

"The culture at Hahne's was just so great," he said in a phone interview Friday.

"There were people who had worked in that building for 30 or 40 years, and they were just so welcoming from day one."

Kane recalled the department store as vibrant and alive, and as an integral part of the greater Newark community. Kane was the final CEO of Hahne's, which closed its doors in 1987, and has stood a vacant reminder of a more prosperous time in the city ever since.

Beginning Monday, the Hahne's building, which will retain its name, begins its second life, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially open a new mixed-use development inside the building.

Express Newark, an arts collaborative and incubator run by Rutgers-Newark, [is already open inside the building](#). On Tuesday, the building's atrium will be open to the public, and executives at L+M Development Partners, the company behind the project, said the entire building will be up and running soon.

The Hahne's development includes 160 apartments, about 65 of which are affordable units, a slew of retail and commercial developments, and the city's first Whole Foods.

About 20 percent of the market rate apartment units have been rented, said L+M's vice president of development John Cortell, and residents are expected to begin moving in Feb. 1. The rest of the apartment units should be renting by mid-March, he said.

The Whole Foods [is expected to open this winter](#), and the other retailers in the building, which include [a new restaurant concept from celebrity chef Marcus Samuelsson](#) and a Barnes and Noble Rutgers bookstore, should be open sometime this year, with the entire building being filled out by next year, he said.

Monday's ceremony, Cortell said, "begins the new life of this building."

The ribbon-cutting comes about a year and a half after city officials, developers, and investors [broke ground on the development](#), which retains much of the old Hahne's exterior. It took about \$174 million to redevelop the rest of the building, investors said.

Though much of the building had been left to decay, the developers were able to save some of the original steel to use in the new development, and included architectural elements that harken back to the lavish department store, according to Ommeed Sathe, a vice president at Prudential who heads the company's involvement in the project. Prudential invested about \$50 million into the project.

"Newark has this incredible diversity that we tried to bring to life...(while still) capturing the grandeur that made Hahne's Hahne's," Sathe said in a phone interview.

He called the site an "incredibly iconic building" in the city, and said that while its 30-year stint as a vacant and abandoned memory may have spoken to the city as a whole, its revitalization "is a huge symbol for where the city is headed."

Kane, who has not been back to the building since the department store closed in the 1980s, said he is looking forward to seeing the new Hahne's at Monday's ceremony.

"I think this (new development) is just great for Newark," he said. "I'm so glad that it's happening there."