

# Hahne's building opening celebrated as a sign of Newark's rebirth



The old Hahne & Company store reopened with apartments for rent in Newark, NJ. (Ed Murray | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)  
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on January 24, 2017 at 8:15 AM, updated January 24, 2017 at 10:07 AM

**NEWARK** -- Taking her turn among the VIP's welcoming the old Hahne & Co. building back to life as a mixed-use enclave of apartments, shops and educational space, Rutgers-Newark Chancellor Nancy Cantor said the store had been a pillar of what she called the "social infrastructure" of the state's largest city.

"So many people have stopped me to say that they had their holiday photos taken in this place," said Cantor, who was speaking during a ribbon cutting ceremony Monday

in the four-story atrium of the 115-year-old building, which has been rebuilt as a public space.

One of those people was Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, a Newark native who used to go with his family to Hahne's, not to shop -- it was too expensive -- but to have their picture taken and to take in the holiday decorations.

"It was the place to be," DiVincenzo said.

Hahne's closed its doors in 1987, and had stood vacant ever since as a reminder of both a more prosperous era in Newark's history and the city's inability to recapture its faded luster.

But on Monday, city, state and federal officials, developers, investors and hundreds of others gathered to proclaim the Hahne building's second life, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony that culminated with a shower of silver confetti from the balcony section of the atrium.

Rutgers-Newark will have a presence in the form of Express Newark, an arts collaborative and incubator, which is [already open inside the building](#).

The space will be open to the public starting Tuesday, when the block-long, 24-hour atrium will open with entrances at both ends, as a link between the university section on its Halsey Street side and the rest of downtown on Broad Street.

Speakers included Mayor Ras Baraka and his predecessor, U.S. Sen. Cory Booker, who both supported the project, along with representatives of Goldman Sachs, Prudential Financial, Citi Community Capital, which helped to finance the \$174 million project. There were also officials of New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Company and the state Economic Development Authority, public partners in the project.

The event was hosted by Jon Cortell, a vice president for L+M Development Partners, the developer of the project. Standing before a grand staircase in the atrium, with ornate iron railings, columns and brass light fixtures set below a vaulting skylight, Cortell addressed a crowd of at least 800 well-wishers.

"At no point did we ever question the utter beauty of this building," Cortell told the seated and standing crowd. "That said, it has never looked better than it does today."

Baraka said he was "ecstatic about what's happening here today."

The project includes 160 apartments, 65 of them affordable units, space for shops, a restaurant and bank, and the city's first Whole Foods.

Booker said it was "profound" that 40 percent of the units were affordable.

The ribbon-cutting came a year and a half after city officials, developers, and investors [broke ground on the development](#), which retains much of the old Hahne's brick exterior.

Though much of the building had fallen into 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 store's lavish heyday, 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.

About 20 percent of the market rate units have been rented, according to Cortell, who said and residents are expected to begin moving in Feb. 1. The rest of the apartment units should be rented 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](#), plus a Barnes and Noble Rutgers bookstore, are expected to open sometime this year.

Samuelsson was among the speakers at the ribbon cutting.

"Our goal is to work with the local farmers, and to work with the local farmer's market here," the chef said of the weekly produce market at Military Park, just across Broad Street. "The building is beautiful. The history is beautiful."