

The Boston Globe

ONE TRIANGULAR SENSATION DEVELOPERS GIVE AN ODD BUILDING TRENDY NEW LOOK

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Date: 09/04/2004 Page: E1 Section: Real Estate

BLUEPRINTS / BULFINCH HOTEL Design puzzles abounded in transforming a triangular 1904 industrial building into the trendy Bulfinch Hotel, which opens this weekend.

How best to buttress the original six-story frame to carry three new stories, blend the materials and craftsmanship of the old with the new, and lay out the oddly shaped interior for 80 comfortable yet financially efficient rooms?

The renovation of 105 Merrimac St. has been done to complement the aesthetics of the 19th-century brick building, once a factory and furniture warehouse and later a restaurant with a boardinghouse above.

"It's a classic Beaux-Arts building style of rusticated brickwork with ornamental panels and quoining on the edges," said David Carlson, an architect for the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

It was well worth the effort, said owner Edward Nardi, president of Cresset Development LLC.

"The North Station area is underserved by hotel rooms," Nardi noted. For \$169 to \$209, he expects to lodge those visiting the nearby FleetCenter, hospitals, businesses, and government offices.

To carry the extra load of three new floors, the brick was laced with a new steel frame, and then reinforced by a sprayed concrete shell. With no load-bearing columns required, it left space for 10 rooms per floor, a financially viable formula. The interior was gutted and rebuilt.

The lush mortar and brickwork, elaborated by arches, keystones, and belts, was repaired and cleaned. The facade for the new floors features look-alike bricks and mortar capped by a copper-trimmed cornice detailed with brackets.

"Not a replica, it responds to the original as a testament to the expressiveness of brick," said Robert Del Savio, project architect for Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype Inc. Now 40 percent taller, it "better defines the higher street wall that was created by neighboring 1980s buildings," he added.

Each of the small rooms is outfitted with a custom-designed armoire, bed, desk, bar,

seating, lighting, and carpet. Most of the pieces look built-in, but they're not.

"The color palette is a quiet contemporary variation on a historic theme of green, gray, brown, and dusty rose," said the New York-based interior designer, Campion Platt.

SIDEBAR:

THE SPECS

Owner: Cresset Merrimac LLC

Manager: Oasis Hospitality Boston LLC

Architect: Bargmann Hendrie + Archetype Inc., Boston

Interior: Campion A. Platt Architect PC

Square feet: 40,000

Cost: \$17 million

Gee-whiz detail: The entire building was lined with sprayed concrete to form a tub-like support.