
2 firms to acquire Helene Curtis site ; Office resales set as condominiums; [Chicago Final Edition]

Thomas A Corfman, Tribune staff reporter. **Chicago Tribune**. Chicago, Ill.: Mar 16, 2004. pg. 3

Full Text (406 words)

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A joint venture of two Chicago real estate investment firms has signed a contract to acquire the former Helene Curtis headquarters, with plans for what could be the first office condominium conversion in downtown Chicago.

Sterling Bay Cos. and Marc Realty LLC have agreed to buy the 10- story building at 325 N. Wells St. for about \$16.5 million, sources said. Executives with the two firms declined to comment.

Executives with the Chicago office of real estate firm Trammell Crow Co., which represents the seller, Lehman Brothers, could not be reached for comment.

Lehman bought the 154,000-square-foot building in December 2002 as part of a deal to induce Helene Curtis' parent company, Unilever NV, to move to 205 N. Michigan Ave., in which the New York investment bank has a controlling interest.

In an office condo, individual companies own their space under an arrangement similar to a residential condo.

Hispanic Housing Development Corp. has signed a contract to acquire one floor, confirmed Hipolito "Paul" Roldan, president of the non-profit affordable housing developer, currently located at 205 W. Wacker Drive.

"In 10 years, we will have a small balance on our purchase price for an asset that will probably be worth \$2 million or \$3 million more than we paid," he said.

As a condo owner, Hispanic Housing will save money because non- profits are exempt from property taxes, he added.

In addition, the Chicago School of Professional Psychology has an agreement to buy four floors, moving from 47 W. Polk St. in Printers Row, where the school leases about 23,000 square feet of space, sources said.

School President Michael Horowitz declined to comment. The Chicago office of real estate firm Transwestern Commercial Services represented the non-profit graduate school.

Enrollment at the institution is expected to grow to more than 800 students this fall from about 680.

The office condo concept, which is somewhat better known outside of Chicago, is attractive to small to midsize businesses seeking to take advantage of the current low interest rates, said John Goodman, executive vice president in the Chicago office of tenant representative Julien J. Studley Inc., which is not involved in the deal.

But it is uncertain whether there will be a resale market for such office condos when it comes time to sell, Goodman said.

[Illustration]

PHOTO; Caption: PHOTO: The former Helene Curtis headquarters on the bank of the Chicago River is being marketed as office condos. Tribune file photo.

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