

Under construction

The South End's development boom

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285 Columbus Ave.

Who's building it: Boston Residential Group, LLC, which manages several large properties across the greater Boston area, purchased the property from the American Red Cross in Oct. 2005 for \$17 million.

What it is: The building, originally called the Earle Building, was built in 1924 as a three-story retail space. In 1928, five stories were added to the building and the space has been generally used for retail and office space since then. Currently the local headquarters of the Massachusetts Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross and national headquarters of community service organization City Year, the building is being used as an office space, with a food pantry run out of the lower levels. The architects planning the space, ADD, Inc., said that few changes would be made to the exterior of the building, but that the inside would be completely gutted. The rehabilitated 96,200 square foot space will be given over to 63 condominium units in the upper levels, with the remaining 9000 square feet refashioned into high-end retail

or restaurant space on the street level. Eight of the units will be designated as affordable, according to Curtis Kemeny, president and CEO of Boston Residential Group, LLC.

The property is also the first large project to fall under the purview of the Groundwater Overlay District zoning regulation, which requires that developers to recharge groundwater beneath construction and in the area. Kemeny said that his company is working with geotech firm Haley & Aldrich, Inc. to engineer plans.

Where it is: On the corner of Columbus Avenue and Clarendon Street, the property abuts the MBTA Back Bay station. The commuter rail tracks actually pass underneath one corner of the building.

Cost per unit: Between \$700,000 and \$800,000.

When will it be done: "Our preliminary thinking on the timeline," said Kemeny, "is that we would permit the building this year, we would start construction in 2007, and then bring the building to the market for occupancy for 2008."