

# South End News

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### First wave of luxury living on Columbus



The luxurious corner unit at 285 Columbus Ave. Photo: Sean Hennessy Photography

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The first wave of luxury housing on Columbus Avenue is set to break in late April, with the official completion of the new luxury residences at 285 Columbus Ave., the former American Red Cross and City Year headquarters.

Over the past year, the eight-story building at the corner of Clarendon Street and Columbus Avenue has undergone a complete renovation, courtesy of real estate developers The Boston Residential Group, LLC. The group purchased the property for \$17 million from the Red Cross in 2005; the units are being sold for \$600,000 to \$1.6 million each, a price tag that includes one parking space in the 131 Dartmouth building next door, doorman services, use of the common roof deck and extra storage.

Residents are expected to begin moving in to the 63 one- and two-bedroom units in May, when they do, they'll be the first luxury settlers on that stretch of the street, which is currently experiencing a construction boom. Currently under construction nearby are the luxury residences at the Bryant at 301 Columbus Ave., a nine-story building boasting 50 luxury condos; The Clarendon at 131 Clarendon St., a massive structure creating more than 300 units of housing; and the beleaguered Columbus Center, which began work on the site three months ago.

"We're the only ones here," said Curtis Kemeny, president and CEO of the Boston Residential Group, explaining that he's not concerned about the potential of the housing market becoming oversaturated in that part of

the neighborhood. "If you want to live in this part of the neighborhood, this is it."

And it's certainly something, if the two showrooms at 285 Columbus Ave. are any indication. Boasting Wolf and Jenn-Air appliances in the kitchen, Toto toilets in the bathroom, and walnut cabinetry and flooring throughout, the residences are finely appointed and smoothly finished. Work from local interior designers — Meichi Peng, a SoWa artist and designer, and Andrew Terrat of Columbus Avenue's Mitchell Gold — highlights the two apartments' flexibility, modernity and luxury loft-style living. And for living practically on top of the MBTA's Back Bay bus and subway station, the residences at 285 Columbus are remarkably quiet. "We're very careful, we're very mindful of the noise," Kemeny said.

A third of the units have been sold, Kemeny said, a number of them to South Enders looking to "trade up." The ground floor of the building, around 10,000 square feet, has been reserved for retail. The huge space will remain a single unit and Kemeny said that though he's had offers from a number of retailers and restaurants, nothing is final yet.

Asked if he's concerned about selling luxury residences, while all around signs are pointing to an unstable if not recessive economy, Kemeny said he wasn't. In fact, he said, he's very optimistic. Some of that optimism comes from where he sees Boston heading, despite reports that droves of young people are leaving the state because of high living costs.

"Boston is a great city, it's a great city to live in, a great city to work in," he said.