

Bethune Lofts project moves forward as \$1.05 million purchase is completed

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Plans for loft apartments next to Bennett High School have taken a step forward with the purchase of the former Buffalo Meter Co. building by 2915 Main Street LLC, an affiliate of Ciminelli Real Estate Corp.

The vacant building at 2915 Main in the University District was bought for \$1.05 million, according to documents from the Erie County Clerk's Office.

Plans call for a \$12.5 million renovation of the six-story building into 87 apartments known as Bethune Lofts, named for Louise Blanchard Bethune, a Buffalonian from the 19th and early 20th centuries considered the first woman in the nation to become a professional architect. The fourth and fifth floors will be two-story lofts, and the sixth floor will have a penthouse, said Anne E. Duggan, Ciminelli director of marketing and public relations.

Lofts will have one or two bedrooms and "many different configurations, based on the unique components of the building," Duggan said.

The original estimate for renovations was \$8.5 million. "There were unique components of the building that allowed us to do more creative design work," Duggan said. "We hadn't even gotten into the specifics of design when the initial cost was published."

The building was constructed in 1915 and was known as Bethune Hall in in the 1970s, when it housed the University at Buffalo's School of Architecture and Design. Because of its age and design, it qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places, said J. Timothy Vaeth, vice president of development for Ciminelli.

Because of the renovation's green aspects, Vaeth said, Ciminelli will seek certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED.

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