

BALTIMORE BUSINESS JOURNAL

RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

Chasen Cos. acquires historic downtown building to create 173-unit apartment tower

BY MELODY SIMMONS
Reporter, Baltimore Business Journal

Chasen Cos. plunked down \$11.1 million for one of Baltimore's oldest buildings and plans to turn it into a 173-unit luxury apartment tower.

The prolific Baltimore developer's latest target is 1 Calvert Plaza, a 15-story building in the central business district that is ripe with history as a survivor of the Great Fire of 1904 and former home to offices for the Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. The building was built in 1900 and once held the distinction as the tallest in the city before the Bromo-Seltzer Tower was built in 1911.

The latest acquisition adds to CEO Brandon Chasen's growing multi-family empire in the city. His company is currently working on several high-profile projects in Harbor East and Fells Point and has scooped up properties in Mount Vernon over the past year for more apartment renovations, boosting its portfolio to about 1,000 units.

"We are believers in the city market," said Drew Peace, chief business development officer for Chasen Cos. on Thursday in an interview with the Baltimore Business Journal. "Most of our projects are fully leased and a lot of tenants are renewing. We believe downtown Baltimore will come back and there will be a lot of growth."

The acquisition of 1 Calvert Plaza is the latest new investment in old downtown office space. The reset has allowed the city to revitalize its residential base in the central business district at a time when many companies are downsizing or have moved out. More than 15,000 new luxury units have been added over the past decade in former office space, such as 10 Light St., 225 N. Calvert St. and at The Lenore at 114 E. Lexington. The latter was built in 1928 and was once home to the Federal Reserve.

The 16-story Fidelity & Deposit Building at Charles and Lexington streets this month sold for \$6 million and will soon convert to 240 apartments with street-level retail and a new bar and restaurant in the former bank vault.

Peace said Chasen Cos. was attracted to 1 Calvert Plaza after the property hit the market over the past year.

The tower currently has four commercial tenants, which will be vacating after their leases expire by late September, he said. Some of the interior space was demolished by the prior owner, Plaza Realty Management, Inc., an investment group based in Northern Virginia.



The historic 1 Calvert Plaza is slated for redevelopment from office space to luxury apartments by Chasen Cos.

"And we will begin to demolish other parts of it next week. We have already got the permits for it," he said. "We're keeping the historical façade of the property, we feel it's a beautiful building. We saw it as a property that was not far from the Inner Harbor and we thought it was a great opportunity to pick up a property with already a lot of vacant space that we could convert into a new multi-family project."

1 Calvert Plaza is across the street from the former Alex. Brown & Sons headquarters, another downtown landmark that hit the market over the past year after a new restaurant installed in its ornate former office space closed during the pandemic. An adjoining building at 125 E. Baltimore St. recently sold to an Arizona-based investment group for conversion to a boutique hotel.

Chasen is working on a pair of large apartment projects in Fells Point and Harbor East that will add 272 new units to the upscale communities and total about \$150 million in new investment.

The company also has multi-family projects underway in Mt. Vernon and St. Paul Place downtown. Chasen recently opened The Caroline, a 31-unit boutique development that replaced the former Tutti Frutti Ice Cream plant in Fells Point, which fully leased up within months after opening in January.

Aaron Lebovitz and Mychael Cohn brokered the sale of 1 Calvert Plaza for seller Plaza Realty Management, Inc. through their firm, CPG Realty.