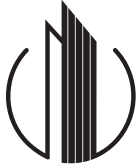


WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL



**BEST REAL ESTATE
DEALS OF 2021**

BEST MULTIFAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Park Kennedy Apartments

McCullough
Construction, L.L.C.

When the D.C. government started its hunt in early 2008 for developers willing to tackle 68 acres near the obsolete RFK Stadium along the Anacostia River, more than a few observers were skeptical that this slice of Hill East would ever be a thing.

At the time, then-Mayor Adrian Fenty called D.C.-owned Reservation 13 the “last major piece” of development along the District’s eastern waterfront, though the Great Recession temporarily derailed the appetite for a risky large-scale development opportunity.

Thirteen years later, Donatelli Development and Blue Skye Development delivered the first phase of what now seems like a no-brainer development. The Park Kennedy’s elegant apartment and retail building looks as though it has always been there, sitting above the entrance to the Stadium-Armory Metro stop.

But to arrive at this point, the developers had to win the new post-recession bid with the city, contend with the demolition of the former D.C. General Hospital, coordinate with the Metro transit and environmental authorities, and wait for the city to relocate a population experiencing homelessness who had been concentrated within the shuttered hospital.

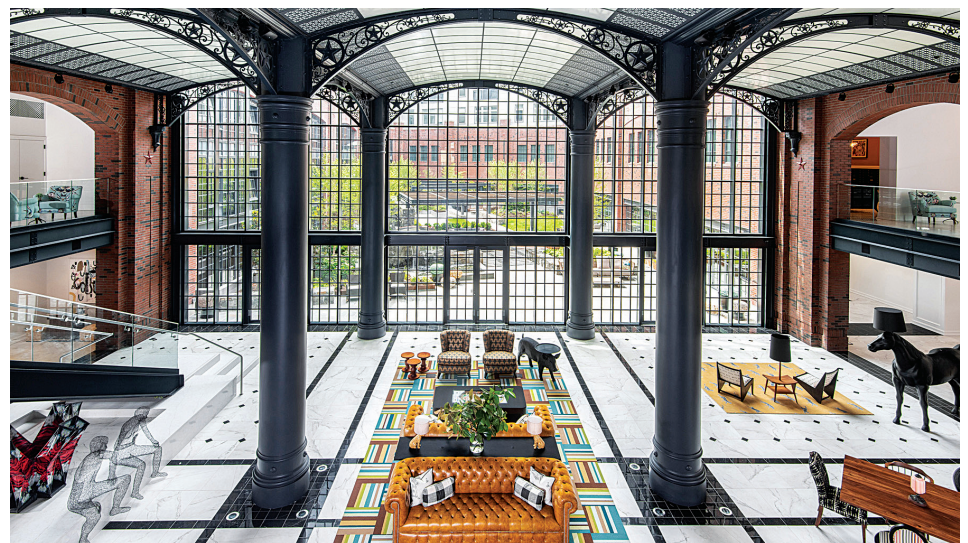
If that wasn’t enough, the site also needed the basic infrastructure that supports urban life.

“We’ve done components of all of that before, but not at one project,” says Chris Donatelli, president and CEO of Donatelli Development.

For the most part, Donatelli says, he turned over the details to his team and gave them plenty of runway to do their thing, as long as it “comes within earshot of a budget.”

That laissez-faire approach ultimately brought something très élégant to the larger Hill East community. It wasn’t wholly coincidental. Brian Rogers, an engineer and Donatelli’s vice president, was regularly traveling to London and Paris to watch his daughter perform in the Royal Ballet School. “While I was there, I was struck by the European train stations, and I wanted to do something inspired by the nostalgia of rail travel,” Rogers says.

GTM Architects translated that into a 30-foot grand atrium with ornate faux cast-iron columns and trusses supporting 430 translucent ceiling panels. Rogers also wanted the interiors to have



the feel of a boutique hotel – sophisticated and filled with more than 100 pieces of original art and whimsical details.

The atrium flows into the courtyard, where the residents’ private yards abut an outdoor bar, bocce court and a yoga lawn.

Outside of the flatiron-shaped building, the developers and architects were careful to convey that same sense of timeless permanence. GTM designed the two main facades to mimic a series of smaller rowhouses and mansions.

The Park Kennedy’s appearance belies the gritty behind-the-scenes work. The project was a \$95 million public-private partnership between the District, Donatelli and Blue Skye, and was partly financed with EJF Capital Opportunity Zone equity.

Since signing the contract with the District in early 2015, the development team took the lead in designing the infrastructure for the entire 68-acre Reservation 13, although this team was only awarded a fraction of the development opportunity.

The developers worked with numerous agencies to design the street network, bike lanes and water main system, to lay out street parking and sidewalks, relocate Metro bus stops and more.

General contractor McCullough Construction started construction in late 2018 and delivered the first move-in ready units on Jan. 14, 2021. Through Kettler’s property management, the Park Kennedy was stabilized in 12 months and is currently more than 95% leased. Retail leasing is ongoing, with Sala Thai and Duffy’s Irish Pub already in place.

“One of the best compliments I’ve heard from people as they walk through is when they ask what was this before you renovated this space,” Rogers says. “The masonry, the steel looks authentic, but it was all new.”

– Melissa Castro Wyatt

THE DEAL

Building address: 1901 C St. SE

Major parties involved: Donatelli Development, Blue Skye Development, GTM Architects, McCullough Construction

Size: 262 units

Cost: \$95 million

Date building delivered: Jan. 14, 2021

Current occupancy: 95% leased