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Renovation Report: Former Carrollton Courthouse to open as an assisted living facility

By: Meghan Keen, Web Editor February 14, 2023



Project Description: Historic renovation of the former Carrollton Courthouse into an assisted living and memory care facility.

Address: 701 South Carrollton Ave., New Orleans, 70118

Owners: Felicity Property Company and Liberty Senior Living

Architect: Waggonner & Ball

General Contractor: Impetus

Space: 16,000 square feet of renovation, 85,000 square feet of new addition

Start date: May 2021

Completion date: February 2023

The historic Carrollton Courthouse has found new purpose as The Carrollton, an assisted living and memory care facility.

A ribbon cutting will be held Wednesday, and it will officially be opened to residents in early March. The Greek revival courthouse, designed by 19th century architect Henry Howard, was built in 1855.

Construction started on the new facility operated by Liberty Senior Living in May of 2021 and includes 16,000 square feet of renovated space and 85,000 square feet of new addition. It will have 93 units, including 73 for assisted living and 20 for memory care.

Careful consideration had to go into both the renovation of such a historic landmark and the addition.

"Every part and piece of this building was touched to make sure that it was restored...it was a complete renovation and restoration," said Patrick Schindler, co-founder and managing partner of Felicity Property Company.

"There was extensive masonry tuckpointing and re-sistering and shoring of joists. We actually salvaged a lot of the heart pine out of the building and repurposed it for the entry desk and the stair treads," Schindler said. "It's really special material because if you think about it, this building was built 167 years ago and that was old growth pine. The building was built in the 1850s. Those trees were probably growing in the 1700s, so that material is the founding of our country's age."

While they tried to preserve much of the original building, new finishes were selected to be in keeping with the historic design. All new doors and windows were installed, while the vestibule entry and two front parlors were lime plastered. Original brick was left exposed in places, and many of the door frames and transoms were preserved.

Elements from a later schoolhouse on the property, including chalkboards, cabinets, windows and a desk, were donated for use in a new building at the Music Box Village. The building is expected to be completed this month.

When it comes to potential pandemic-related delays, Schindler said he feels in some ways they got lucky.

He experienced some material delays and cost increases with several manufactured goods: casework, cabinets, manufactured doors, windows and steel.

"It's just this crazy time," he said. "I think that we navigated that mostly successfully. We weren't unscathed from longer lead times and startup costs, but for the most part we got through it."

According to city records, the property was sold at auction for [\\$4.7 million 2017](#). It was previously owned by the Orleans Parish School Board. The renovation cost was not disclosed.

The finished facility includes amenities like a Galatoire's-inspired dining room, a 24-hour on call doctor and a full-service hair salon and barbershop. Liberty Senior Living uses the GEMMS Program, which stands for Genuine, Engaging & Meaningful Memory Support and is designed to offer individualized memory care.

"It's specialized 24-hours a day, all memory support and we engage in programming that specializes and is geared toward Alzheimer's, dementia and those kinds of diagnoses," said C. Billy White Jr., executive director of The Carrollton.

Felicity Property also issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) for artwork through the Arts Council of New Orleans. They received over 400 submissions and selected about 40 pieces by local artists. Paintings were selected to compliment themes throughout the building, including a portrait of Benjamin Franklin in the Ben Franklin Bar and a citrus still life in the l'Orangerie sitting area.

A studio with Level One care starts at between \$5,900 and \$6,300 with 336 to 371 square feet. Units range from bedrooms with a private bathroom to studio apartments. All rooms have private bathrooms that feature zero entry showers.

The memory care unit has its own staff, dining area and amenities on the third floor, as well as access to its own enclosed courtyard. Memory care residents will have access to the rest of the facility when accompanied by staff.

They currently have 10 deposits and expect to create between 75 and 85 new jobs at full occupancy.

"Every visit we have its amazing how many people tell us that they've visited this courthouse over the years," White said.

The former courthouse became John McDonogh No. 23 in 1889 after the city sold the property to the McDonogh School Fund. According to the [New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission](#), part of the property did remain a jail and records court until the 1930s when it was removed after parents of the students complained that the "prisoners were boisterous and often ill-behaved, and the children could see and hear them from the school windows." It later became Ben Franklin Senior High School, followed by Lusher Elementary School and Audubon Charter, which left the property in 2013.

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