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Rise of The 9

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By Doug Bardwell | Photos by Ryan Arthur

If famed architect Marcel Breuer were standing on the west side of East Ninth Street recently, one can only wonder what he would have thought. Staring across the street at the bronze Bentley and white Maserati parked in front of his one-and-only office tower, could he have ever foreseen a hotel valet station under the porte-cochère? Looking skyward, he surely would have been surprised to see multi-story, high-definition LED signage promoting his iconic structure.

Such is the transformation completed recently, with the former AmeriTrust Tower now becoming a key element of the Geis Companies' newest project, The 9. Impossible to describe in one sentence, The 9 can best be illustrated as Cleveland's only urban resort. Blending dining, entertainment, 400,000 square feet of high-rise apartments and The Metropolitan (a 195,000-square-foot luxury hotel), The

9 offers Clevelanders and visitors a 700,000-square-foot destination unlike any other in the city.

A very short history lesson

In the 1920s, Cleveland Trust Bank was the sixth largest bank in the United States. Experiencing decades of continuous growth, the bank finally decided to build a high-rise office of its own on East Ninth Street,

adjacent to its historic rotunda. Being the financial center of Cleveland during the '60s and '70s, it was an ideal location. Marcel Breuer, the famed Bauhaus architect and furniture designer, was retained to design his first-ever high-rise office tower. A second tower to mirror the first was planned, but never built.

The Cleveland Trust Tower, at 2017 East Ninth Street, opened in 1971 and

Photo by Ken Krych

TOWERING ACHIEVEMENT The newly opened Metropolitan luxury hotel (top), is one component of The 9, a mixed-use complex that incorporates the former AmeriTrust tower and the historic Cleveland Trust rotunda (bottom).

shortly thereafter Cleveland Trust changed its name to AmeriTrust. By 1991, AmeriTrust would be acquired by Society Bank and the tower became vacant.

In 2005, the property was purchased by Cuyahoga County officials with the intention of tearing it down to create new county offices. Fortunately, the plan did not proceed and in 2012 it was put out for bid by the county along with a parcel of other buildings extending along East Ninth Street from Euclid to Bolivar.

With only one walk-through of the space, Greg Geis, CEO of the Geis Companies, envisioned the possibilities of the parcel's one-million square feet and knew the property had tremendous potential. A second walk-through was offered by the county, but Geis already knew what he wanted to accomplish.

In February of 2013, Fred and Greg Geis purchased rights to the entire Ninth Street complex, which included the Cleveland Trust rotunda, the Breuer tower, the 1010 Euclid Building, two small buildings since razed to create the new Cuyahoga County Administrative Headquarters and associated parking garages, for \$27 million.

"If you are going to open a new hotel and apartment building, you have to do it before the snow flies," says Greg, so the race was on. The grand opening date was set for fall 2014 – an extremely aggressive 18 months from taking possession of the property. What could normally take three or four years would be done in less than half that time. "Fortunately as a full-service design-build firm, we inherently have full control of everything from ownership to design to construction to management and knew we could make it work."

"Remember, after our bid was approved, not only did we have to wait



Photo by Ken Krych



RICH DETAILS The former office tower's marble-lined lobby (left) has been renovated as the main entrance for The Tower at The 9, with a range of seating options for residents, hotel guests and visitors (opposite, bottom). The adjacent Adega Modern Mediterranean Restaurant (opposite, top) features indoor and outdoor dining space along E. 9th Street.

for financing, closing and occupancy; we also had to identify the full project scope and identify a hotel partner, all within about 14 months," adds Fred Geis, owner of the Geis Companies.

Working concurrently, Geis Companies designed and built the new eight-story, 220,000-square-foot Cuyahoga County Administrative Headquarters at the corner of East Ninth and Prospect as well as redid the entire interior and exterior of the AmeriTrust Tower. On July 15, the county moved into its new space. (See full story in *Properties*, August 2014 issue.)

Transforming the tower

Once the bid was accepted, the real job of deciding what to build where became paramount. "As everyone knows, Cleveland has undergone a complete transformation in the last ten years," explains Greg. "Fred was the first one to catch Cleveland fever and he gave it to me. So we looked around the city and asked what's missing."

"First and foremost," says Greg, "we were missing a high-end boutique hotel. Second was luxury living. Cleveland has a great food scene, but not as complete as New York or Chicago, so we decided on Modern

Mediterranean for our restaurant. We also wanted a place where people could enjoy a high-energy social scene. Finally, with all the people moving back downtown, we needed a great grocery store."

Under construction now, a new Heinen's Fine Foods store will occupy two floors of the historic rotunda and a

"We're not in it for the short term. We're looking for a way to give back to the community that gave our parents an opportunity when they arrived here in 1967 with just \$70 in their pockets."

Greg Geis
The Geis Companies

portion of the 1010 Euclid Building next door. The grocery is scheduled to open in early 2015.

"This started with a gut belief that we could do it, but the motivation for our entire team is to have created the best project in Cleveland a hundred years from now," Greg says. "We're not in it for the short term. We're looking for a way to give back to the community that gave our parents an

opportunity when they arrived here in 1967 with just \$70 in their pockets. If you're lucky, once in your life, you are presented with an opportunity and have the ability to fundamentally change your home town, and to push it to the next level."

Echoing Greg's sentiment, Fred adds, "If you talk to any of the government agencies we've touched, whether it's in the city or in the suburbs, they'll tell you that the projects we've done have been transformational for that community. It takes a great space, a great location, a big dream and the wherewithal to get it done – that's why we had the confidence to do it."

In order to maintain and obtain tax credits, essential to the funding of the project, Geis worked with Sandvick Architects Inc. for historic preservation. "We actually got involved with this project back in 2007, when the county hoped to take advantage of national tax credits," recalls Peter Ketter, preservation specialist. "Much of the interior finish was already gone during abatement work, but many of the essentials important for maintaining the credits could be saved."

Railings overlooking the lobby and a concrete/terrazzo buildout on the second floor were items required to be saved and reused. Geis refurbished the railing as part of the Ledger Bar and the concrete buildout was incorporated into counter space in the Alex Theater.

Turning concept to reality

"Our division, GLSD Architects, worked very closely with the branding for the Marriott Autograph collection," relates Jen Dotson, president of GLSD. "We were creating layouts and renderings for the Marriott at the same time as we were generating plans for City Hall building permits."





EMBRACING OPULENCE Exquisitely detailed patterns and textures in the Mint Ballroom's carpeting, wallcovering and furniture (top) create an unforgettable impression, both inside (middle) and within the pre-function space outside (bottom).

With such an aggressive timetable, the team needed to work extremely closely with suppliers, contractors and city officials.

"City Hall told us we probably had 30 permit submissions on this project, but the cooperation we got from the building department was phenomenal," Dotson says. "Early on, we started having meetings with our design-build contractors and our entire team. At some points, we had 25 people sitting around the table. We had to be cognizant of what was above, because we couldn't build this if plumbing had to be done above for that. Spreadsheets went on for pages and we eventually prioritized by delivery schedule. Our custom carpeting for example, had to be ordered even before plans were completed to ensure it would be here in time."

Helping to move the project along efficiently, Buric Global worked directly with Geis Companies and its subcontractors to develop a detailed CPM (critical path project management) schedule for each of the major areas of renovation. In addition, Buric Global performed monthly schedule updates and provided the construction manager's project management team with detailed schedule update information, which compared planned versus actual project progress, provided accurate project status assessment, and detailed short term and long term look-ahead work projections.

"To project the quality level we wanted, we essentially custom designed every furniture piece you see in the public spaces," says Christina Martini, IIDA, LEED-AP, interior designer for GLSD Architects. "We also went with custom designed carpeting, as well as custom designed light fixtures. Our team was filled with talented people and this was a chance to show what we could accomplish."

"Greg wanted some really unique light fixturing and I suggested he

find an artist in town that could fabricate his vision,” explains Phil Soroky, project engineer for Ullman Electric. “Wouldn’t you know, in very short order he found Cleveland Art, who we were able to partner with and deliver the custom reclaimed lighting fixtures he wanted for the desired design.”

“I’m just so proud of how our team handled any roadblocks that came up,” says Dotson. “It wasn’t unusual to see someone staying up until 2:00 a.m. to find a solution. We’d also have procurement team members downtown at 3:00 a.m. receiving deliveries to minimize disruption of traffic on East Ninth Street.”

Controlling design completely in-house provided the flexibility to be creative but also the capability to control tight deliveries. “In the hotel suites, we designed the dresser units with visual cues to old bank vault doors, including the use of brushed bronze chemetal,” says Martini. “The headboards pay homage to Marcel Breuer, mimicking his exterior entrance design.”

Brandon Kline, senior designer for GLSD, made a trip to California just to visit the casegoods firm manufacturing



TOP OF THE TOWN A 12th-floor, rooftop bar called Azure Sun Lounge situates guests 150 feet above street level with invigorating views of Cleveland and surrounding areas.

the headboards. “We did a lot of due diligence on the manufacturers we used because there couldn’t be any hitches at the end,” Dotson says.

Turning eye-sore into eye-catcher

The years of non-use had not been kind to the Breuer tower. During the

county’s ownership, the decision was made to proceed with a mass asbestos abatement project. With little regard to the historic structure, two-thirds of what would be the ground level restaurant’s polished granite Mondrian-like exterior storefront was removed and replaced with two commercial over-

The Foss Ohio Fund, sponsored by Foss & Company, is proud to be the Ohio Historic Tax Credit Investor on **The 9**.

We are excited about the tremendous transformation taking place in downtown Cleveland and look forward to participating on many more projects in the city!



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READY TO SERVE Meeting rooms are equipped to accommodate breakfast business gatherings and other social events.

head doors to aid in asbestos removal. Instead of the historic façade, Ninth Street commuters would be greeted with garage doors in the heart of the financial district.

The tower actually was quite well built and required very little in the way of structural work. Outside, the building was completely cleaned and every caulk joint was redone with 25-year warranted material.

Power was an issue – right from the start. Ullman’s first matter of business was to replace the main power for the complex, which originated under one of the buildings to be demolished.

“We needed to split the service to maintain uninterrupted power for the parking garage, provide a separate service to the new County building and create new residential and commercial services for The 9, rotunda and 1010,” Soroky says. “Without the cooperation of

Cleveland Public Power bringing in transformers and equipment in record time, we could never have accomplished this.”

Those hideous garage doors: gone.

“The original ground-level façade was recreated and now floods the restaurant with natural light,” explains

“To project the quality level we wanted, we essentially custom designed every furniture piece you see in the public spaces.”

Christina Martini, IIDA, LEED-AP
GLSD Architects

Tom Charek, project manager for Geis Construction. “Original marble for the lobby was still available from the same quarry and was shipped in to patch as needed. With just six weeks left before the hotel opened,

solid block masonry walls and garage doors were converted to a beautiful storefront, enabling the ground floor restaurant to open on time.”

“That was one of the coolest things Geis did,” recalls Ketter. “Recreating the original Marcel Breuer design storefront was a wonderful addition for the restaurant.”

“Outside, a new entrance canopy was necessary for hotel operations, but it had to be sensitive to the historic design of the Marcel Breuer tower,” explains Ketter. “Installed as a free-standing element, it met the preservation board’s requirement to be distinctly new; but, in scale and character with the original façade.” A new, wider revolving door would serve the pedestrian needs of the new hotel.

In order to efficiently manage emergency services to the complex, the tower, the rotunda and 1010 were

HIDDEN TREASURE Historic bank vaults have been transformed into The Vault, a labyrinth of social lounges with swanky decor and an atmosphere inspired by the prohibition era.

envisioned to be combined as one unit. A final design with one fire command station, one fire pump and one emergency generator to serve all three buildings was accomplished by working closely with the Cleveland Fire Department prior to submitting a formal permit set.

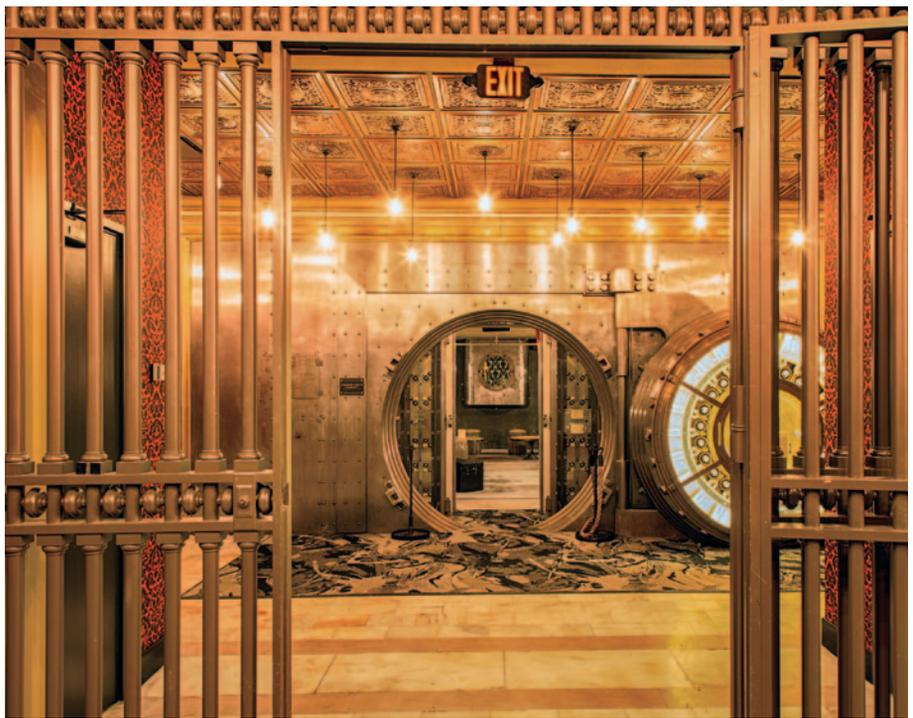
“We created a two-hour rated vault in the basement for a 2,000-gallon fuel tank,” recalls Soroky. “The emergency generator needed to be located outside, above the Alex Theater, but was too heavy for the tower crane. That required disassembling the generator from the day tank and weather housing and hauling it up in multiple lifts.”

Luckily, the original fire shafts installed in the building were able to be reused for kitchen exhaust, saving considerable coring and drilling. What is normally very challenging in rehab work became quite simple on this project.

Conversely, where removing walls is not usually that challenging, the bank’s large vault walls in the basement consisted in places of two-foot-thick concrete, complete with multiple layers of burglar-resistant metal plating and rebar inside.

All 10 existing elevator cabs on the project were redone in various color schemes, each with its own unique textured stainless panels. All the 1970s-era elevator hoist motors were completely refurbished. Computer controls were installed throughout for smart elevator access, and easy-to-read touch screen panels let you select by floor or destination.

“Wanting to control Saflok door access and Otis destination elevator control for three buildings with just one card system was something that had never been accomplished before,” says Soroky. Ullman provided card readers for the elevators, which were used with the custom software Geis developed to allow communication between Otis, Saflok and the Hotel PMS system.





DOWNTOWN DIGS One- and two-bedroom apartments in the 1010 Building (left) range from 500 to 967 square feet, with kitchens that include a full complement of Bosch stainless-steel appliances (right).

1010 Euclid Adds to The 9

Renovated Swetland Building delivers housing, office space

Just as work is starting for a new Heinen's in the old Cleveland Trust rotunda at the corner, work is wrapping up now for its neighbor – The 1010 Building. The stately 13-story apartment/office facility, formerly the Swetland Building, is yet another component of Geis Companies' mixed-use complex, The 9.

The entire brick and sandstone façade has been carefully restored and looks like a new building again.

Preparing for the rooftop bar on the building, the entire building cornice was removed and replaced with new GFRC material so that the look is identical to the original. Integrated into the new material was a channel along the top to support a clear-glass safety rail around the publicly accessible areas.

The roof of the building is a dual-function area call Azure. By day, lounge chairs offer the ability to sunbathe or read a book in the open air. By night, the lounges fold completely horizontal to expand the sofa seating already available across from the bar. With great views of Euclid Avenue, great tunes coming from the sound system, and fresh air in Cleveland's only rooftop bar, this is the place to be in the evening.

Similar to The Tower at 9, there is a fitness center available for all residents on the 13th floor. 1010 also has its own dog park area on the 13th floor, along with a limited number of storage lockers.

Floors 12 through four are the apartments. There are 90 apartments in the 1010 Building, of which 80 are one-bedroom and 10 are two-bedroom. Apartments range from 500 to 967 square feet.

Each apartment is equipped with a wall of Zebrawood kitchen cabinetry and a full complement of Bosch stainless-steel appliances. Medium-toned cork flooring contrasts nicely with the dark cabinetry. Above, flat drywall ceilings are accented by high-intensity LED lights on a track and exposed HVAC ductwork. Slightly recessed window wells are all furnished with white mini-

blinds, and residents are allowed to add interior window coverings if desired.

The bedrooms come with a generous-sized closet and sliding doors. All doors in the apartment are solid-core Zebrawood and provide increased acoustical privacy.

The bathroom has a walk-in fiberglass shower with heavy glass doors and a premium, heavy-duty exposed chrome roller suspension. Toilets are eco-friendly, low-profile white fixtures and the above counter, square lavatory is equipped with a stylish waterfall faucet. All plumbing fixtures are from Moen.

Residents will enjoy all the amenities of The 9 and may use the Alex Theater, when available, for their own events. Additionally available to all 1010 residents are 24/7 room service, housekeeping and maintenance personnel. Some residents also choose to take advantage of the valet parking service available at The 9, although there is no parking available in the 1010 Building itself.

With dual fiber-optic feeds to the building, residents will enjoy the city's fastest possible Internet connectivity. Each unit has its own VOIP phone that connects directly to the building services.

The third floor recently became the new home for the Downtown Cleveland Alliance. The second floor is now being completed to become a new office for the Geis Companies. And the first floor is the entrance to the building, facing Euclid Avenue.

Also on the first floor, a portion of the 1010 Building space will be allocated to the new Heinen's, which will be coming in early 2015. —DB

Trying to keep sourcing as local as possible, Ullman was able to obtain billboards from Cincinnati and all the electrical distribution equipment from Eaton, based in Beachwood, with most of the switchgear built in Eaton's Parma plant.

Plentiful broadband was added with all new fiber optic connection to Time Warner with redundant backup and service from One Community.

"We've got enough broadband that every room can be streaming a movie at the same time," assures Charek. Besides fiber service to each room, the passive fiber distribution system also powers 225 cameras for security and 10 nine-terabyte servers. Now, even snacks can be purchased at wireless dispensing machines.

"We are also tied in with Cleveland Thermal and a steam turbine produces power that we sell back when not needed to produce energy for our LED lighting," says Charek. High-efficiency water-source heat pumps provide individual control throughout in this LEED equivalent design.

Keeping it local

"We stayed with as many Ohio vendors as possible," recalls Greg. "All our kitchen cabinets were manufactured in Ohio, Conneaut Leather did our upholstery and our faucets came from Moen."

Andrea Conroy, senior director of marketing for Moen wholesale, notes that Moen was proud to be part of the project team.

"As a Cleveland-based company, Moen is thrilled to have our products included in such a notable and iconic property as The 9," she says, noting that featured products included chrome Moen 90°™ bathroom faucets and bath accessories, chrome Align™ kitchen faucets and stainless steel undermount sinks.

Cleveland Art did most of the custom pieces featured at The 9, notes Greg. "There is definitely a social conscience component here as well," he says. "We've tried to feature local artists who are super talented but who haven't built big reputations yet. We also outsource as little as possible. Our hospitality group was formed so we could completely source the furniture and fixtures for our properties. In that



TASTEFUL TOUCHES Luxury suites are furnished with custom zebrawood cabinetry, granite countertops, custom wet bars and a full range of high-end kitchen appliances.

group we even design all our own artwork for the display boards outside.”

Geis Hospitality Group Principal and Chief Operating Officer Keith Halfmann expands upon that, saying, “On the second floor we are creating an art gallery that will stretch from Ledger Bar all the way back to Alex Theater. The space will feature works of local artists, and will change on a frequent basis. In addition, we’ve reserved space for an artist-in-residence, and you’ll be able to watch them at work from the lobby. We expect each emerging artist to be there about four months, and the space will be provided at no cost to them.”

People that frequent the lifestyle segment of hotels are looking for very different experiences, Halfmann explains. “They don’t want cookie cutter spaces,” he says. “In addition, we are providing a strong food and beverage service that will attract the locals as well. That strong combination in conjunction with the new Cleveland Convention Center is what will make this succeed. There honestly is a new energy, a growth and a

spirit that you can feel in the downtown area.”

So let’s take a tower tour

Starting at the top of the tower and working our way down:

29th floor: Bark Dog Park, the city’s only indoor dog park with exercise area and two red fire hydrants.

28th – 25th floors: Sky Suites, the 16 largest luxury living units at up to 3,000 square feet each with panoramic views of Cleveland.

24th – 14th floors: Luxury Apartments starting at 463 square feet. All units are completely customizable and include housekeeping, 24-hour room service, concierge service and valet parking.

Reserve floor: “Hotel within a hotel,” with a staff of curators offering butler and concierge services.

12th – 4th floors: Balance of the Autograph Collection by Marriott’s pet-friendly 91 rooms and 65 suites, plus 12 meeting rooms. The hotel offers the largest rooms in the city – averaging 400-650 square feet each. Striking Zebrawood case goods, textured lava glass showers and recessed fireplaces

provide visual interest in the rooms. Signage for the guest rooms mimics safe-deposit doors with large digits and a faux keyway.

3rd floor: Kitchen space for meeting rooms and catered events

2nd floor: Alex Theater, a 67-seat in-house theater/comedy club/presentation space with a 24-foot-wide HD projection screen. The Ledger Bar overlooking the lobby and serving small plate global cuisine. The artist-in-residence space and art gallery in the hallways. Entrance to the Azure Sun Lounge, Cleveland’s only rooftop bar over the 1010 Euclid Building. Additional private dining spaces for the Adega Restaurant.

Ground floor: Main lobby for the apartments and hotel. Adega Modern Mediterranean Restaurant serving three meals daily with brunch on Saturdays and Sundays. A 2,000-square-foot patio will be the largest of its kind downtown.

Basement: Mint Ballroom with 5,500 square feet serving up to 350 guests for special events, weddings or meetings. The Vault is an authentically designed social lounge that harkens back to the time of prohibition. Constructed from four



LUXURY LIVING Suites include open living areas (top) and generously sized master baths (middle), plus expansive windows with skyline views of downtown Cleveland (bottom).

belowground Cleveland Trust vaults, this area offers truly unique areas for socializing and enjoying a signature cocktail. Changeable LED lighting and historic wall sconces have been refurbished and reused throughout the entire space. A speakeasy section is available by reservation for special occasions.

Sub-basement: Energy Fitness, a state-of-the-art gym with certified personal trainers, can accommodate dozens of residents on all the most popular pieces of equipment.

Wrapping up the 9

“Huntington Bank is very pleased to have led the financing for such an important project within our community,” says Ryan Terrano, senior vice president, commercial relationship manager for Huntington. “Redevelopment and elimination of a long vacated property on one of our most important intersections will serve as a catalyst for future redevelopment in the area. Geis had fantastic vision and created a unique asset for Cleveland’s residential and business communities. The successful completion of the building, and the resulting demand, are a testament to our client’s vision, company mission and the company’s extraordinary track record.”

It started with one man’s belief that a giant eyesore could become the focal point of his city. Bringing in a team of handpicked subcontractors who shared his passion allowed the project to come together. Assembling a team of in-house personnel, including several key individuals who would move downtown and work 18-hour days, made it happen on time.

Now, having a city quickly fill the apartments, and a traveling public sell out the hotel, you know this project is a success. As of September 15, only nine suites were still available for rent. Marcel would have to be proud. **P**



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