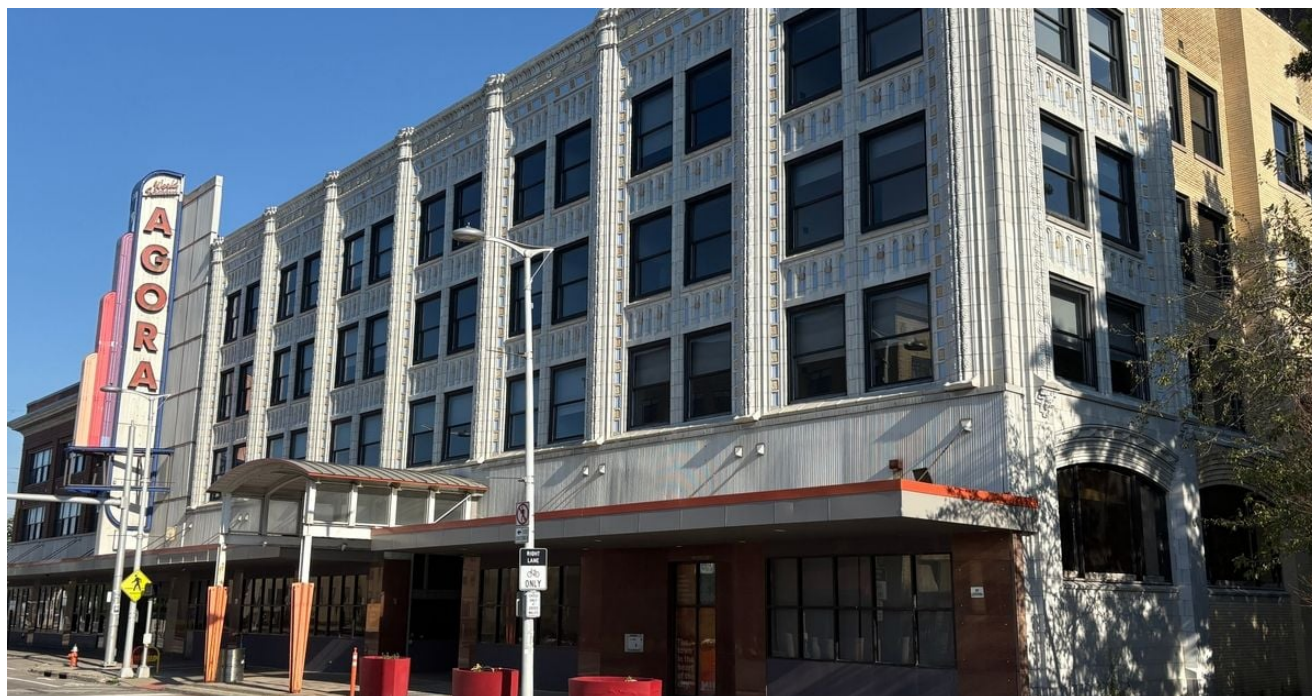


# Agora Apartments officially open to tenants

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Zachary Smith

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The apartments at The Agora officially welcomed its first tenants in August.

Nearly five years after gaining new ownership, the office property connected to the Agora Theater has officially reopened as a mixed-use apartment and office complex, welcoming its first residential tenants over the weekend.

The building, formerly occupied by commercial radio station WHK, has been converted into nearly 50 market-rate apartments, as well as a renovated office for LDA Architects and future restaurant space.

The building, at 5000 Euclid Ave., was purchased by RS Agora Partners LLC, a joint venture formed by Budapest-based Sabor Group USA and Renew Partners LLC, for \$1.7 million.

The redeveloped complex is best visualized as three separate sections: two wings that held the radio studios and a warehouse, and the tower that held the station's executive and office staff. The tower is closest to Euclid Avenue, while the wings are closer to Prospect Avenue.

The apartments — dubbed The Residences at Life at Agora — are in the tower and warehouse spaces, with LDA Architects Inc. serving as architects on the project, and JCI Contractors serving as the general contractor.

The previous warehouse building has been converted into 13 two-story loft-style apartments, comprising 11 one-bedroom units and a pair of two-bedroom units.

The building, internally referenced as “The Tower,” holds the other 35 apartments: 12 studio units; 12 one-bedroom units; seven "one-and-a-half bedroom" units; and one two-bedroom unit.



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A staged living room in a one-bedroom apartment at The Agora.

Apartment sizes range from 550 to 1,350 square feet. Rents range from studios beginning at \$1,375 per month to a two-bedroom loft at \$2,600.

“It’s exciting to see Midtown grow as a complete neighborhood,” said Ashley Shaw, executive director of development corporation MidTown Cleveland, Inc. “It’s truly becoming a mixed-use neighborhood and not just the place that you drive through.”

In addition to the apartments, three studio units that are located directly above the ballroom will become third-party managed Airbnb units, buffering the noise from the concert and are intended for concert goers who may not be staying in the space while a show is happening.



A staged bedroom entrance of a one-bedroom apartment at The Agora.

Common areas like the gym are located near the Airbnb units, adding even more space between the concert venue and permanent residential units.

The redeveloped space will not have access to the Agora Theater and Ballroom, which, while connected, is separately owned by Los Angeles-based concert booking company AEG Presents. After falling into disrepair, it was renovated and reopened in 2018.

The apartments join existing tenants, MidTown Cleveland Inc., which acquired the building in 2011, and LDA Architects, which moved to the radio studios after previously working out of the warehouse area.

“Our office is now next to the theater, and sometimes when they're practicing, you hear the music, and that wasn't going to be so good for residential, said Dominick Durante, president of LDA Architects.” But as we thought about this space more, we thought about what it could be and we got excited.”





The entrance into LDA Architects' office at The Agora.

Finished in 2024, the project won the Excellence in Creative Adaptive Reuse Award from the Cleveland Restoration Society.

LDA Architects infused musical elements from the former radio studios, with communal work spaces in the larger AM studios, the radio broadcasting choice during the station's 1951 to 1976 tenure.

It comes in the form of acoustically optimized rooms, lights designed like microphones, and records designed with LDA Architect projects.

"This was a historic tax credit project, so we needed to preserve the quality of the recording studio," Durante said.



Part of the LDA Architects' office at The Agora.

Preservation even accounts for less joyful times in the building's history, such as the 1984 fire. Some of the wood beams have been kept, and a keen eye will find crackling of charred wood that has been painted over, but still in use.

Even though the building is a historic tax credit project, like the apartments, internal work was added to modernize the space, including adding skylights and solar tubes, which flood the space with natural light even in the winter.

The \$2.9 million restoration didn't end within the offices. LDA Architects reinstalled WHK signage on the exterior of the building facing Prospect Avenue.

"You could see the outline of it on the building," said Michael Sanbury, historic preservation manager for LDA Architects. "So we put them back up."



The reinstalled WHK sign facing Prospect Avenue on the backside of The Agora.

The final piece of the puzzle that needs to be placed is filling the restaurant space on Euclid Avenue, for which a couple of tenants have expressed interest. Shaw said that she would like to see a place that could serve both a lunch and a late-night concert crowd.

“We have a daytime population and a growing residential population,” Shaw said. “We can start to test the market with a space like this that’s attached to the Agora and build off of the people that the Agora brings into the neighborhood.”