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New Housing in Mixed Use Development Opens Near the Rock

By Antoinette Martin



30 of the loft units are complete here. Mayor Booker will attend the ribbon-cutting.

NEWARK, NJ – Celebrating a milestone in what has been a long and keenly calibrated effort to add new housing and retail in the neighborhood of the **Prudential Center arena**, Newark officials and developers today will officially cut the ribbon on the \$38 million RockPlaza Lofts.

The development includes seven historic properties clustered along **Market Street** that are being transformed into 80 loft-style, market-rate rentals, with 34,000 square feet of street-level retail.

Today 30 of the loft units are complete, a popular rib joint in the ground floor of a building finished last year has livened up the neighborhood, and construction of another 48 units and more retail space is underway.

The **Fidelco Group's Mark Berson**, a partner in the project, tells GlobeSt.com, that getting to this point proved "torturously slow."

When "The Rock," as the arena where the New Jersey Devils play is known, opened five years ago, it was expected to spur a quick surge of redevelopment downtown

Berson and Samer Hanini, principal of **The Hanini Group** which has worked with Fidelco on RockPlaza, say that instead it took continuous, dedicated to craft a workable plan to rehab' existing buildings, obtain federal and state funds to restore them to historic standards, and bring the housing to market.

The first completed building housing eight units opened last year and a branch of New York's Dinosaur Bar-B-Q opened on the ground floor earlier this year. The second building, with 22 units – already renting rapidly, says Berson – has its formal opening today as officials gather at 1 p.m. at Championship Plaza, at the corner of Market and Mulberry Street.

The high-ceilinged units range from 1-to-3-bedrooms and each has a unique configuration, incorporating historic architectural elements and exposed brick walls. The "Columbian," the building opening today was originally a liquor distribution center, Hanini says; another of the structures was a bowling ball shop, and a third was a tavern.

The apartments are finished in what Hanini calls "**Manhattan/Hoboken**" style with granite counters, stainless steel appliances, and sleek modern cabinetry.

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