

Coffee shop to be first retail tenant in Orland Park's upscale apartment building

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Giovanna Rendina O'Malley says her late father lived life to the fullest, and "he taught us that if you work hard, you can achieve whatever dreams you had."

A dream she and her mother, Maureen, had to open a coffee shop was put on the back burner after the recession hit. But sometime in March, when the first apartments in Orland Park's Ninety 7 Fifty on the Park building are ready for tenants, their Amano Vivere Cafe should be open for business.

Serving coffee, tea, smoothies and baked goods, the cafe will be on the ground floor of the building, which continues to take shape northwest of the intersection of 143rd Street and Ravinia Avenue.

Facing the 143rd Street Metra train station, the cafe will cater to commuters as well as residents of the apartment building, said Rendina O'Malley, of Palos Park.

"For the first few months it will be pretty much all commuter traffic" until more tenants move into the apartment building, she said. "We knew we had to be by a train station."

About 80 units at Ninety 7 Fifty will be ready for occupancy toward the end of March, with more being finished every two or three weeks after that, Christopher Kirles, a vice president with Flaherty & Collins, the project's developer, said. By the end of September, if everything goes according to schedule, all 295 units will be completed.

So far, 18 leases have been signed, with a mix of tenants including young professionals and empty-nesters, he said. Since the project's preview office opened in late October to visitors, more than 140 people have stopped by inquiring about apartments, Kirles said. There's also a website, www.ninety7fifty.com, promoting the project.

At the office, located in a portion of the former Orland Plaza, visitors can help themselves to tubes of lip balm with the Ninety 7 Fifty development logo on them, or

take home pouches of coffee that will be served at Amano Vivere. There's also a computer-generated, three-dimensional, video "walk-through" of the apartment building.

Kirles said Flaherty & Collins hadn't set a target of how many leases it hoped to have in hand at this point.

"There is no magic number by any means," Kirles said. "We are very happy with the demand. October to March is not a great time for the apartment market."

As work progresses on the building, that "continues to stir more and more activity and interest," he said.

Model to be ready soon

Kirles said that, by the middle of next month, a fully furnished, one-bedroom model apartment will be ready for potential tenants to inspect. Monthly rents range from a bit more than \$1,300 for a one-bedroom up to \$2,400 for the 14 two-level units that will be part of the project, he said.

In early February, much of what remains of the Orland Plaza, with the exception of the Marquette Bank building at the east end of the property, will be demolished, Kirles said. A trailer will be set up to handle leasing for the apartments, he said.

Ultimately, the Marquette Bank also will be razed. The bank will relocate to a new branch office it is building at the southeast corner of LaGrange Road and 143rd Street.

While Ninety 7 Fifty on the park is the centerpiece of Orland Park's "Main Street" redevelopment, it occupies 3.5 acres of the 20-acre site, which officials want to see developed as a pedestrian-friendly mix of shops and other businesses.

Along with the coffee shop, Kirles said there is still another 2,800 square feet on the ground floor of the apartment building that will be available for retail uses.

Mixing old with the new

Rendina O'Malley, who studied art history and architecture in Ireland, wants the cafe to be a showcase for works by local artists, and she's talked with art teachers at Sandburg High School about displaying works by students and teachers.

Materials to build the cafe's interior, as well as the organic coffees and teas that will be sold, will come from small, family-owned companies, she said. Tabletops will be made out of wood being reclaimed from an old barn in California, while coffee cups and sleeves will be made from recycled materials, she said.

Rendina O'Malley, who grew up in Lemont, said she wants Amano Vivere to be like the cafes in Chicago she visited as a child with her Italian father, who would chat in his native language with friends over coffee.

"I really want to promote talking to the person who is sitting next to you, getting to know your surroundings," she said.