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CRE Reuse Project of the Year: The Bellwether

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Two long-time vacant buildings in the Highlands have been given new life with the Bellwether Hotel.

Located at 1300 Bardstown Road, the hotel opened for bookings in October. The \$3 million hotel fills about 16,000 square feet of two formerly abandoned buildings, the Highlands Police Station and the adjacent building which was once home to the Louisville Ballet.



visitors, and a restaurant and bar concept called Nostalgic will open on the first floor of one of the buildings this year.

The hotel provides guests with a nontraditional hotel experience with a low-touch model. Guests are able to avoid a front desk by registering for their rooms online.

The project was led by two local couples and entrepreneurs, Sarah Mattingly and Ben Botkins and Sean and Annie O'Leary.

Botkins said the project faced several challenges during the pandemic, just like the rest of the hospitality industry.

The team used the delays to double check details and make sure the project was perfect.

“Slowing down is expensive,” Botkins said. “But it allowed us to really think through each step and say ‘OK, we can’t rush this thing even if we want to now. We have to get every part right.’”

The owners sought to preserve the historic nature of the building and reflect the aesthetic of the Highlands. This was done in its design and art, which all came from local artists and retailers.

The project was special for the four owners, who wanted to see some wins for Bardstown Road. For years, Botkins hoped someone would buy those buildings and make an interesting project out of them. When that never happened, he and the ownership group decided to do it themselves.

“I’ve only ever lived in the Highlands in Louisville, and this is right in the heart of that,” Botkins said. “We thought we could save some buildings, make a cool usage and do something overall great for the neighborhood.”

Key Players

Owners: Park Mile Partners LLC

Architect: Jeff Rawlins, Architectural Artisans

Furniture supplier: Blue Ocean Traders, No Direction Home, Architecture Salvage and Alcott & Bentley



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