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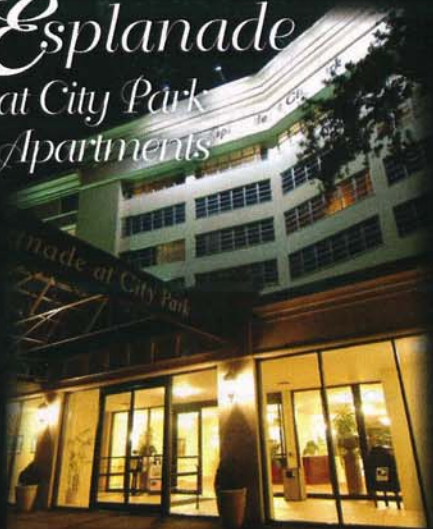
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Condos with brand identity



Prominent New Orleans brand names are increasingly remerging in real estate listings as more of the historic buildings and sites affiliated with them are converted into residential developments.

The latest locally important commercial name to join the likes of Falstaff, Krauss and Crystal Hot Sauce in the new apartment and condo boom is Blue Plate mayonnaise. In December, the local firm JCH Developments secured city approval to convert the iconic former Blue Plate Foods factory in Gert Town near Broadmoor to a 72-unit complex of residential lofts.

The building dates to 1941, and its art moderne design and large neon sign high above the crossroads of Jefferson Davis Parkway and Earhart Boulevard have long made it a landmark. Production of Blue Plate mayonnaise was transferred to a plant in Knoxville, Tenn., in 2000 but the neon sign above the idle building remained illuminated nonetheless. That sign will be part of the new residential redevelopment plan, says JCH president Tara Hernandez.

"Even though they don't make Blue Plate in New Orleans anymore, this is a building everyone who grew up here knows. It's important to the city and I think it should be restored," she says.

More than sentimentality is driving this and other comparable redevelopments. Hernandez says the Mid-City and Gert Town

areas are attractive because they are "central nodes of the city" and convenient to downtown; to Tulane, Loyola and Xavier universities; and to Jefferson Parish.

The recent confirmation of a downtown site for the planned Veterans Affairs and Louisiana State University hospitals should further spur residential demand in the area, she says.

Nearby, the old Falstaff Brewery building has been similarly redeveloped into a complex of 150 apartments by Tad Mondale and David Miller of Renaissance Properties. Also close by, the Domain Companies real estate development firm has built a new 183-unit apartment complex from the ground up on the site that had been home to Crystal Hot Sauce maker Baumer Foods for the past 80 years. The factory was badly damaged by the levee failures in 2005 and Baumer subsequently relocated its operations upriver to Reserve. Though the residential project here started from scratch, the Domain Companies included a nod to the site's long affiliation with the New Orleans pantry by naming their project The Preserve. And downtown, the former Krauss Department Store building, which dates to 1903, has been redeveloped as the 1201 Canal Condominiums. Developer KFK Properties says 80 percent of the 233 units in the building are sold.

— Ian McNulty

