

## Harrisburg's Tracy Manor mansion reboot taking shape

By [Jason Scott](#)

Approved by the city in 2007, the historic renovation of the Tracy Manor mansion on Harrisburg's Front Street was delayed by rising material costs and the recession.



The renovation and fit-out of Tracy Manor mansion, left, will cost about \$2 million. A new building for condos, right, remains on hold. The project has frontage on both Second and Front streets in Harrisburg.

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But with the real estate market starting to regain its footing, York-based [Susquehanna Real Estate](#) has made strides to turn its vision of a riverfront attraction into reality.

For CEO Jack Kay, it was a for-sale sign in the summer of 2005 that led to the planned \$16 million mixed-use office, restaurant and condominium project.

Located two blocks from the Governor's Residence on North Front Street, the 20th century [Tracy Manor](#), built as a 30-room private home but later converted into an osteopathic hospital and then a mental health facility, sat vacant in need of a makeover.

"This is the kind of amenity the city needs to offer reasons for people to come back to live in the city," said Kay, whose vision includes new construction of a seven-story, 32-unit condominium building next to the Midtown [mansion](#).

Tracy Manor is the largest development parcel on Front Street, said Tim Fulton, the development company's vice president. It has frontage on both Second and Front streets.

### First phase

Interior demolition and mechanical improvements at the mansion are under way and expected to be completed within the next few weeks. The rehabilitation will pave the way for the fit-out of the project's catalyst, a restaurant called Char's at Tracy Mansion.

The nearly 6,000-square-foot restaurant space, slated for a June opening, will be an American brasserie-style eatery. A brasserie is a type of French tavern with a relaxed upscale setting that serves single plate dishes.

The brainchild of Char Magaro, who operated [Char's Bella Mundo](#) in Shipoke for almost 10 years, Char's at Tracy Mansion will blend fine dining and small plate menus. It will include traditional brasserie fare — seafood dishes, homemade sausages and steaks — but with American and Eastern influences.

Magaro closed Bella Mundo in September following massive damage caused by the flooding from [Tropical Storm Lee](#). That space is being marketed for commercial office use, she said.

Her new restaurant, which was financed in part by a \$100,000 loan from the Dauphin County Industrial Development Authority, will be one of the only restaurants on the river in Harrisburg.

Complete with a terrace view of the Susquehanna, Magaro said she is confident the restaurant will be "the place" in that part of the city. She said she sees this establishment, which includes private dining and meeting room spaces, as a gathering place like the [Midtown Scholar Bookstore](#).

"This will really stimulate economic growth for this area," she said about the overall project.

Magaro, who also owns a jewelry business called [Char Magaro Designs](#), had been looking in York, Gettysburg and on the West Shore for a new restaurant location before being approached by Kay, she said.

The renovation and fit-out of the mansion will cost about \$2 million. The new building for the condos, which remains on hold until the restaurant is up and running, will cost about \$14 million, Fulton said.

"Getting the restaurant going is a critical strategic first step," Kay said.

Professional office spaces are expected to occupy the upper floors of the mansion. Services or compatible retail uses could occupy the adjacent carriage house, Kay said.

### **Harrisburg market**

When the project was announced five years ago, about a third of the condo units were reserved, he said. Some have dropped out, but there still is interest, he said. The units will be between 1,000 and 1,780 square feet, with open floor plans, terraces, large windows and high ceilings.

"The market fundamentals don't go away in Harrisburg," Kay said, anticipating long-term interest in the site for its location and fact that Harrisburg is a big economic driver as the capital city of Pennsylvania.

Despite the city's ongoing fiscal struggles, primarily driven by the incinerator debt, the Midtown district has seen its fair share of development and redevelopment projects.

Susquehanna Township-based [Vartan Group Inc.](#) is the developer behind the \$13.6 million 1500 Project, a condominium and retail building under construction at Sixth and Reily streets.

That area also is expected to be the home of a new federal courthouse building.

Since about 2005, [WCI Partners](#) has been redeveloping the [Olde Uptown](#) neighborhood, bordered by Muench, Maclay, Second and Third streets.

Olde Uptown was filled with vacant and decaying homes that largely were abandoned after the Hurricane Agnes flooding in 1972. In addition to residential revitalization, WCI has begun to focus on retail and commercial office space in that area.

Harrisburg-based [GreenWorks Development](#) and developer Dan Deitchman are redeveloping the city's historic [Furlow Building](#) at 1222 N. Third St. into apartments and retail or office space.

Down the street, at North Third and Calder streets, the Susquehanna Art Museum is planning to reuse a former bank property owned by GreenWorks and construct an addition to create a new museum.