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Camden's long-troubled Northgate will undergo an \$130 million, top-to-bottom makeover to become affordable housing

The 321-apartment complex in North Camden opened as a luxury project, but has long been plagued by problems.



A rendering of the fully renovated Northgate apartments, a landmark overlooking the Benjamin Franklin Bridge in North Camden.

KMA Design Studio

by Kevin Riordan

All 321 apartments at Northgate, the landmark high-rise at the foot of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge in Camden, will be completely renovated and made affordable for individuals and families with very low incomes, the building's new owners announced Wednesday.

"We are delighted ... to enhance the affordability and overall quality of housing in Camden," Jason Bordainick, cofounder and managing partner of the [Hudson Valley Property Group](#), said in a statement. The \$130 million project should be complete in two years.

Camden Mayor Vic Carstarphen said: "This is a win for the residents, a win for the community, and a win for the city."

"We've been fighting for this for some time," he said. "I've been on every floor of that building. The code violations are incredible. I know [Hudson Valley] is as passionate as I am about changing that environment."

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Hudson Valley specializes in turning around and managing troubled rental properties in urban areas. In 2022, the New York-based firm completed renovations at the [Crestbury Apartments](#) in Camden's Morgan Village neighborhood, renamed [Community Meadows](#). The 74-year-old complex has 391 apartments spread across 42 two-story buildings. That project cost \$85 million.



A rendering of what the main lobby of the 21-story Northgate apartment building in Camden will look like after renovations.

KMA Design Studio

In interviews and email exchanges before the announcement, Hudson Valley cofounder and partner Andrew Cavaluzzi said preliminary work is expected to “begin immediately” at Northgate, on North Seventh Street in North Camden.

“The groundbreaking is what I’m waiting for,” said Karen Merricks, who has lived in Northgate for about 25 years and is president of the residents association.

“The biggest issue is the quality of life for the residents,” she said. “We need properly managed maintenance, and better security, so people who aren’t living here don’t hang around in here.

“The building has become like an open house, and that shouldn’t be.”

Meetings between company representatives and tenants will be held in the coming weeks to review planned upgrades and operational changes at the building, where about 30 apartments are vacant, Cavaluzzi said. Renovation of individual apartments is expected to begin in April.

Replacing each of three plumbing stacks that run from the basement to the 21st floor will necessitate moving tenants to other apartments in the building.

Philadelphia developers built Northgate and opened it in 1963 as a luxury tower complete with a swimming pool, a shopping “colonnade,” an underground garage, and a two-story penthouse with access to a private roof deck.

The building was hailed as a sign of confidence that Camden’s fortunes, then fading fast amid business relocations and white flight to the suburbs, could be reversed.

But within a year of its opening, Northgate was only half-rented, and its owners were seeking a reduction in its property tax assessment. By the 1980s, the pool was full of trash, and Northgate was beginning to change hands.

An inspection in 2022 resulted in 1,000 violation notices, and a subsequent reinspection attended by Carstarphen, other officials, and the media found that little appeared to have been done beyond some repainting.

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Residents showed the visitors where leaks had eaten away at the bathroom and kitchen walls and said management and security personnel were unresponsive.

“People have been stuck in this property that was getting worse around them,” Cavaluzzi said. “It’s terrible to see families and little kids in that environment.”

Cavaluzzi also said plans call for extensive interior and exterior security measures, on-site management, and community rooms, as well as renovated retail and office space.

The mayor said the plans also reflect an improving economic climate for
