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Franklin West converts Ronald McDonald Houses to apartments in Shadyside

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The Franklin West property group has recently completed the restoration and renovation of two Queen Ann Victorian homes in Shadyside, now offering a total of 21 apartment units. This project brings their work in the neighborhood full-circle, as the homes are located across Shady Avenue from the company's first-ever renovations, completed nearly 50 years ago.

Caroline West says her family-owned company has prided itself on home-to-apartment conversions in Shadyside that blend with existing, historic buildings and single-family homes.

"In converting [these buildings] to apartments we tried to respect all the original historic characteristics, such as the tall windows, the tall doors, the high ceilings," West says. "Both buildings have been completely modernized, yet it still from the outside looks like exactly what it is--a gracious, old Victorian."

Both homes, built circa 1880, are former Ronald McDonald Houses, and had offered residences there from 1970 until 2008, when Franklin West purchased both buildings. The foundation was able to continue operating from Shady Avenue until its new location, within the Lawrenceville Children's Hospital, was completed.

Architect Kevin Wagstaff of Perfido, Weiskopf, Wagstaff, and Goettel, designed the renovations of both buildings, 500 and 512 Shady Avenue. A mix of one- and two-bedroom apartments, with rents ranging from \$1300 to \$1890, each unit features high-efficiency appliances, washer/dryer, and central heat and air conditioning.

Of the company's properties, which total near 1,000 units in the greater Pittsburgh area, West says the work on Shady Avenue is exemplary of Franklin West's commitment to maintaining historic properties.

"It's an example where through creative reuse we are able to preserve the charm and character of the neighborhood--why people want to come and live in Shadyside," she says. "We have really focused on maintaining buildings...[that] still have viable use and a desire in the neighborhood."

Writer: Andrew Moore

Source: Caroline West