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Shoreland Reopens

HYDE PARK — For the first time in more than 40 years, you don't have to be enrolled at the University of Chicago to prowl the hallways of the historic [Shoreland Hotel](#).

The former stomping grounds of Amelia Earhart, Al Capone and Jimmy Hoffa has loomed empty over the lakefront since the [University of Chicago](#) moved its students out in 2009.

Now, the first 25 households are moving back into the building at 5454 South Shore Drive, but the

cramped quarters of a dorm or hotel are gone.

"It's amazing how many people come back who say they used to live here," said Kim Kilibarda, the property manager, adding that two of the current residents lived in the building when it was a dorm.

[Peter Cassel](#), director of community development for MAC Properties, said many former residents from its dorm days may find a familiar view, but few of the old interior details.

Leaning on new granite countertops, Cassel said every electrical wire is new, every gas line is new and even much of the basement is new.

"We took out every piece of interior material that was not structural," Cassel said, standing Monday in a 700-square-foot, one-bedroom unit that rents for \$1,500 a month.

Even the hallways have changed width as the building was cut down to 330 mostly one-bedroom apartments from 1,000 units.

Though the [landmarked](#) building looks largely the same from the outside as when it was built in 1926, only remnants of the 1926 construction of the historic hotel survive, most notably a dim second-floor library clad in wood paneling, where union boss Jimmy Hoffa used to host card games.

The grand ballroom where Amelia Earhart celebrated her 1928 trans-Atlantic flight is stripped bare, and Cassel said the owners hope to rent the space to a larger restaurant concept similar to ones Downtown.

If a restaurant does move into the former ballroom, diners could eat and gaze across the green of Burnham Park to Lake Shore Drive and the lake beyond, and they would observe no trace of the massive new parking structure in the building.

After taking the new elevators down below ground level, Cassel led a path through car-sized holes in the brick walls that once marked the foundation of the old hotel.

The original basement has expanded to connect to an excavated cavern beneath the main driveway, creating 330 parking spaces underground.

Cassel said building the underground parking garage was a learning experience, but not one the developer was required to go through.

"We landmarked the building with the city, so the parking requirement goes to zero," Cassel said of meeting the city's minimum parking requirements.

Cassel said the developer chose to excavate the parking garage because it was one of the amenities the building needed to be competitive in the rental market. He said in-unit washers and dryers, a fitness center and [super fast Internet connections](#) were also part of the plan to make the Shoreland competitive.

The Shoreland is renting the first through seventh floors of the building, with the apartments on floors eight through 13 opening by the end of the year.

According to the city's landmark [designation report](#), Capone "was rumored to host weekly card games in the Shoreland's private drawing rooms." Eleanor Roosevelt, the poet John Masefield and teams in town to play the White Sox at old Comiskey Park were among the guests.

Elvis Presley [reportedly](#) stayed in room 1207.

The building was designed by Meyer Fridstein and built by G.H. Gottschalk & Co. for \$5.5 million. In the 1920s, single rooms rented for \$240 per month while nine-room suites fetched \$1,075.

"From its opening in 1926 through the 1950s, the Shoreland remained one of the city's most prominent luxury hotels," the landmark report says.

Despite the interior changes over the years, the reports says, "the building's main lobby and Crystal Ballroom retain the vast majority of this historic features that exemplify the building's storied history as one of the largest and most prominent early 20th century luxury apartment buildings in Chicago."

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