

Studio apartments open in downtown Fresno's Pilibos Building

By BoNhia
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City Studios, 830 Van Ness Ave, in downtown Fresno. BONHIA LEE - THE FRESNO BEE

- For information:

City Studios

830 Van Ness Ave., Fresno

(559) 905-3913

- Property Profile

This story is part of an occasional series about interesting houses and buildings in the central San Joaquin Valley. If you know of a property with a tale to tell, email blee@fresnobee.com.

The [Fresno Housing Authority](#) is getting ready to open its [CityView](#) housing development in downtown Fresno.

The big 45-unit apartment complex on the corner of Van Ness Avenue and Inyo Street is impressive if you remember what was there before. The corner was home to the Droge Building which was held up for years by iron-props that jutted into the street.

Two doors down from CityView is another residential project — from a local property investor — that opened at the end of last year with little fanfare, but a lot heart.

Roger Boman and his sons, Quinn and Kent, are hoping to ride on the coattails of the housing authority project and set an example for private developers.

“Our downtown core has been slow in revitalization and I think it’s important that the private sector do everything they can to help bring about a change in downtown,” Roger Boman said.

The family company, Boman Investments, bought [830 Van Ness Ave.](#) in a Fresno County auction three years ago. The 6,154-square-foot office was one of four surplus buildings owned by the county but no longer needed, Roger Boman said.

Before that, the two-floor mid-century modern building was home to the Mexican Consulate. It was built in 1961 for developer Steve Pilibos and designed by architect Robert Stevens. The flat front facade of the building includes sculpted Hans Sumpf clay tiles by artist Stan Bitters.

The Boman’s started buying investment properties in Kingsburg, where Roger Boman raised his family. Then they bought real estate in Selma and Fresno. The family owns nearly a handful of properties in downtown including the [Maubridge Building](#), at Tulare and N streets, where the Fresno Redevelopment Agency once had its office.

The Maubridge Building and Pilibos Building are on the [Local Register of Historic Resources](#).

“I like taking old buildings and making them productive again,” said Roger Boman whose core business is in insurance. “It’s something that’s kind of a labor of love.”

The Van Ness building, now called City Studios, is the family’s first venture into downtown residential development. They gutted the interior of the structure and built 10 studio apartments ranging in size from 550 to 700 square feet. The rent is \$650 for a downstairs unit and \$700 for upstairs.

Each apartment has full kitchens with granite countertops, a stackable washer and dryer, and a full bathroom. The first-floor units have outdoor balconies. Gated parking is available behind the building.

“It was a good solid structure,” said Quinn Boman. “We thought it would be nice to do studios for downtown.”

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