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The Phoenix

LUXURY APTS IN HISTORIC BUILDING

ONE THING I love about cities is their ability to renew themselves.

Can you recall when Society Hill was an ugly, disheveled slum? A little bit of love, a little bit of investment (OK, a lot of investment) and it became *tres chic*.

Similarly, once-thriving South Street fell on hard times, was revived by hippies and ultimately bloomed into a vibrant street. Manayunk exploded and so did Old City. And so on.

While Center City never fell flat on its keister, the luster had been off for a while.

The latest proof that Center City is back is that an old building — the Insurance Company of North America at 16th & Arch, built in 1925 — is being rehabbed into 267 apartments spread over 16 stories that lack for nothing.

The name of the building suggests my theme. It's called the **Phoenix**, after the mythological bird that rose from its own ashes (in this case with the help of \$75 million from **Keating Development**).

Some highlights are shops and a restaurant in the lobby, 24-hour concierge, on-site parking (and valet), fitness center, and some two-story "townhouse" apartments. Rents range from \$1,195 to \$3,850 a month. Dogs under 25 pounds are welcome. Move-in starts March 15.

Hot & happening

Now that she's virtually (although not *officially*) single, sultry **Monica Malpass** is available again and dating. Whom? Too soon to let the cat out of the bag. I can tell you that in her divorce action against **Richard Cutler**, she's replaced the **Richard Sprague** law firm with **Robert I. Whitelaw**, neither of which returns calls. (Silent



Monica Malpass dating again? Freddie Mitchell hangs at Top Dog.

team. The total raised for Manna at the event (sponsored by *Philadelphia Magazine*) was about \$12,500, double last year's total.

Celeb spotting

After the Tampa Bay game, Comcast SportsNet's blondifol **Leslie Gudel** was deep in conversation with a gent at the bar at **Downey's** (Front & South). Could have been work, or maybe not ... Former **Stray Cats** leader **Brian Setzer** returned *again* to Glenside's **Blue Comet** (106 S. Easton) and played an acoustic set. He also spent a day at Gettysburg checking out the historic sites ... At Cherry Hill's **Top Dog** (2310 W. Marlton Pike) Eagle wideout **Freddie Mitchell** (gray sweat suit) and linebacker **Barry Gardner** (jeans and sweater) were hanging and having fun, with Freddie sometimes jumping into the DJ booth to work the video camera, fox hunting.

People Paper people

As expected, **Chris Blackman's** been named news direc-



tor at NBC-10, to the delight of the newsies, who loooove this guy ... **Tony Ward** and wife/business partner **Sandy** today leave for Gay Paree to work on his hard-core, high-art "Orgasm 2" book. Why Paris? He's using the French Alixe Publishing. The book's due out in the spring. (P.S.: His contracts lawyer is "next mayor" **George Bochetto**) ... Speaking of books, reviewers are liking **Doug Campbell's** "The Sea's Bitter Harvest," about the deaths of 10 clam boaters who died off the Jersey Shore over a 13-day period in January 1999. Before the book, the stories were an eight-part series in the *Morning Yawn*, where Campbell had been a staffer.

The last word

On the Rev. **Martin Luther King Day**, I have a dream of a better world as we live up to his stated values.

Dan Gross contributed to this column.

If you hear, see or know something you want to share with Bykol, e-mail Stu Bykofsky at stuspy@phillynews.com or dial up the Stuspyline: 215-854-5963.