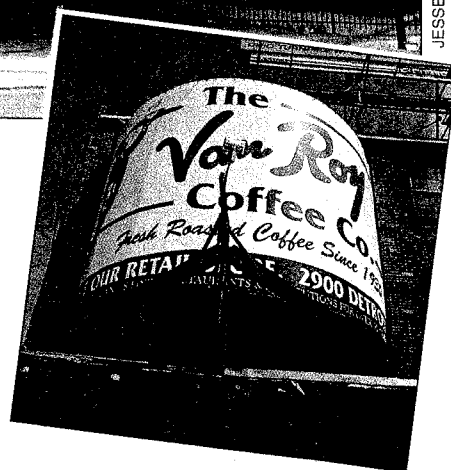


Developer Michael Chesler has bought the Van Roy Coffee building, known for its giant coffee-can sign.

JESSE KRAMER

Changes brewing for Van Roy bldg.



Coffee company gone; new owner weighing options

By **STAN BULLARD**

Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood has lost the Van Roy Coffee Co. to Brooklyn Heights, but eventually will gain a redo of the company's landmark former home by developer Michael Chesler.

REAL ESTATE

Van Roy moved its operations March 21, according to a notice posted on the front door of the old building at 2900 Detroit Ave. A huge coffee-

can shaped sign bearing the company's name and logo juts from the northwest corner of Van Roy's old home next to the West Shoreway and has signaled the beginning of downtown for generations of eastbound motorists.

Cuyahoga County land records show Van Roy on April 1 bought a building at 4566 Spring Road in Brooklyn Heights for \$720,000. On that same date, the 2900 Detroit Ltd. partnership was deed-

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ed the 110-year-old Romanesque Revival industrial building at that address.

A sale price for the transfer of the deed to the partnership, which sends its tax bills to The Chesler Group Inc.'s Prospect Avenue address, wasn't reflected in county records. However, Provident Bank issued a \$750,000 mortgage to the partnership for the 36,000-square-foot building.

Mr. Chesler, the Chesler Group's principal, has carved out a name for himself renovating old Cleveland properties during the past two decades. He started out with mansions in the MidTown area east of downtown and graduated to larger properties with historic qualities, such as the former William H. McGuffey School in Ohio City, McGuffey recently became the home of The Covenant Inc., a chemical dependency treatment and prevention program for teens.

Mr. Chesler was reluctant to discuss the former Van Roy building because he isn't sure what he will do with it. He said he's undecided about whether to use it as open office space to capitalize on lake and downtown views — a strategy he has used in the past — or to convert it to loft apartments.

Mr. Chesler pitches the use of the building for office space on his web site, www.cheslergroup.com. Regardless of the structure's eventual fate, Mr. Chesler plans to follow federal guidelines for adaptively reusing the building to win historic tax credits.

Mr. Chesler often has a tenant in tow when he buys a building, but this time, he said, "It's such a good building I bought it vacant." The structure is the best surviving example of its style in Cleveland and was once home to an airplane motor piston factory operated by a precursor to the former TRW Inc.

Jim Miller, Van Roy president, did not return three telephone calls last week and did not respond to an e-mail. Van Roy's web site touts its history from its 1930 founding on West 25th Street to the 2900 Detroit building becoming its home in 1938. The coffee company's new address is not shown on the site.

Mr. Chesler said Van Roy's operation had grown to the point where it no longer could process coffee in a three-floor building, but instead needed to locate in a single-floor structure. The fate of the distinctive Van Roy sign is not yet set.

Van Roy may yet have a presence in the building, which will continue to bear the company's name. Van Roy operated what Mr. Chesler termed a "bustling" retail shop for coffee beans and blends on the first floor of the building. Mr. Chesler said he and Van Roy's owners are discussing opening a Van Roy coffee shop of the Starbucks variety in the storefront.

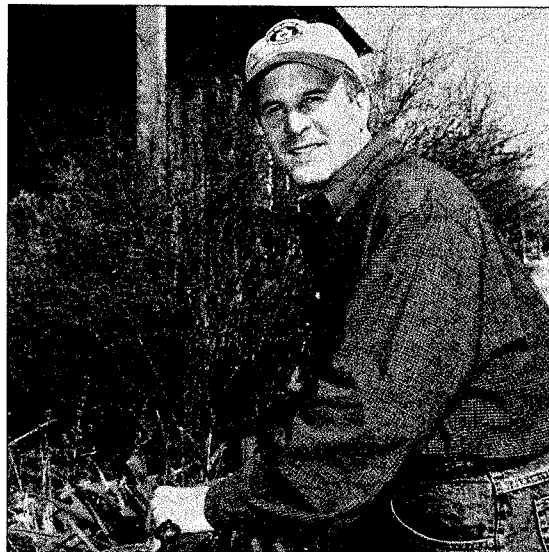
"It would be an amenity for the building in any case," Mr. Chesler said.

Cleveland Councilman Joe Cimperman, whose Ward 13 includes the former Van Roy property, is excited that Mr. Chesler controls the building.

"He's going to polish that jewel on Detroit," Mr. Cimperman said. "He'll do it so it knits into the fabric of the neighborhood."

Mr. Cimperman said Mr. Chesler plans to install parking on part of the first floor of the building for tenants, a welcome move because it would reduce a parking crunch that's developed on that part of Detroit.

"I thank him and the neighborhood will thank him" for increasing the availability of parking through an innovative move, Mr. Cimperman said. But the councilman quickly added, "It's a good problem to have."



JANINE BENTIVEGNA/FILE PHOTO

New Van Roy Coffee building owner Michael Chesler has carved out a name for himself renovating old Cleveland properties during the past two decades.