

Two historic buildings to become one

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The Woodlark Building, left, and the Cornelius Hotel. (MCA Architects)

The developers who plan to create a new upscale hotel from two historic downtown buildings hope the end result will become a community gathering place.

A plan to transform the **Cornelius Hotel** and the **Woodlark Building**, on Alder Street between Park and Ninth avenues, into a 150-room "lifestyle" hotel took on new life when the property was purchased earlier this year. Provenance

Hotels and NBP Capital were major investors, and development group **Arthur Mutal LLC** also invested in the purchase and hotel development.

Lauren Noecker Robert, a managing member of NBP Capital, said she hopes the new hotel will attract both out-of-town visitors and locals looking for a place to "hang out."

"For a time, the Cornelius was called the House of Welcome and that resonated with us," she said. "We haven't decided on a name yet, but we wanted something that invokes emotion and that says anyone and everyone is welcome. We want it to be Portland's gathering place."

Noecker Robert said work to renovate the two old buildings will begin as soon all the required permits are obtained.

A first step was a hearing Monday before the Historic Landmarks Commission. The commission unanimously approved the plan, with a staff-recommended requirement that no more than 20 percent of the old windows would be completely replaced.

The Cornelius Hotel, built in 1908, has been closed up for a long time, Noecker Roberts said, and "needs a little more love" than the Woodlark, which was built in 1912 for commercial uses.

Bashar Wali, president of Provenance Hotels, said plans for developing the hotel include restoring the lobby of the hotel "to its original feeling and glory," and keeping as many artifacts as possible.

"Unfortunately, there's not a lot left to preserve, but we hope to find hidden gems," he said. "I have done a lot of historic hotels and have seen some where sometimes the accents are cheesy."

The design and décor of the hotel, with the theme, "the New Northwest," will reflect the past while also looking to Portland's future, Wali said.

"We hope to embody what the city can become, and (the hotel) will be softer and prettier than just flannel and reclaimed barn wood," he said. "The hipsters' moment in time has passed. Portland is more sophisticated and has outgrown the image presented by Portlandia."

LCG Pence Construction will serve as general contractor. All work on the project will be done by local companies, Noecker Robert said.

R&A Architecture + Design handled initial design work. **MCA Architects** is serving as the architect of record and is overseeing design implement of the overall project. Interior design is being handled by **Staicoff Design Co.**

of Portland.

Because the two buildings feature different types of construction, converting them into one structure won't be a simple process, said Ted Grund, MCA Architect's project manager. The Cornelius Hotel, built in 1906, is made of load-bearing masonry with some iron columns and beams.

"They improvisationally used iron where they didn't want heavy columns and the rest is timber," he said. "It has a heavy load-bearing wall that's 21 inches thick at the bottom. In the lower levels, to have slimmer columns, they used structural steel encased in concrete."

The Woodlark Building, on the other hand, is built entirely of reinforced concrete with steel supports.

Another challenge in joining the two buildings is their different heights. The Woodlark is nine stories; the Cornelius is seven stories.

"Every single floor is at a different height, including the ground floor and the basement," Grund said.

The owners estimate the renovation will cost around \$30 million and will take between 12 and 18 months.

According to MCA's application to the Historic Landmarks Commission, renovation of the two buildings includes installing new wood and a metal storefront. A new "Juliet" balcony is planned at the entrance, and a new elevator penthouse and stair tower are planned for the roof of the Cornelius.

Both buildings will require new elevators and enlarged elevator shafts, which also will add to the complexity of the renovation work, Grund said.

The project's developers are seeking tax credits for retaining the exterior historical aspects of the two buildings using original drawings by the architectural firm of Bennes, Hendricks and Tobey.

A metal and glass canopy over the sidewalk on Cornelius will be recreated. The mansard roof on the Cornelius, damaged earlier by fire, will be restored to original condition. All windows, although they will be double-paned, will be clear glass.

The new hotel will include a large restaurant and bar on the ground floor of the old Woodlark building with a sidewalk-level lunch window on Southwest Ninth Avenue. The lobby of the Cornelius portion of the building will have bar and will serve light meals throughout the day.

The new hotel will also have deluxe suites on the two top floors with two large conference spaces and meeting rooms on the basement level.

Once the new hotel is completed, it will be Provenance Hotels' fifth property in Portland. In addition to owning the Westin Portland, the company owns and manages the Hotel Lucia, Hotel deLuxe and the Sentinel. The company also owns hotels in Seattle and Tacoma as well as Nashville.

NBP Capital currently owns more than 2,000 apartments and 400,000 square feet of commercial space in the Portland metro area.

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