

# First look: Downtown's newest hotel, Woodlark, combines 2 historic buildings

By Elliot Njus | The Oregonian/OregonLive | Posted December 13, 2018 at 07:00 AM



Downtown Portland's historic Cornelius Hotel, headed for demolition in 2013, will instead reopen Saturday as a 150-room boutique hotel in combination with its next-door neighbor, the Woodlark Building.

Together, they'll be known as Woodlark House of Welcome.

It's the latest in a long list of new Portland hotels to open in 2018. Downtown has added some 800 rooms in 2018 alone, with hundreds more under construction.

Most, however, are newly built. Fewer have opened in renovated historic buildings.

The Woodlark hotel, at 813 S.W. Alder St., is owned by Gordon Sondland's Provenance Hotels and NPB Capital and operated by Provenance.

"We're really excited to preserve these new buildings and breathe new life into them or bring them back to their original use," said Kate Buska, a spokeswoman for the hotel group.



The ground level retains flourishes from the original buildings. The ground-floor Bullard restaurant includes original black-and-white penny tile from the pharmacy that once occupied the space. A back room, originally the Cornelius Hotel's ladies reception hall, will open later in the month as Abigail Hall, a cocktail lounge.

The lobby will include a coffee bar operated by Portland-based Good Coffee.

The French Renaissance-style Cornelius was designed by local architectural firm Bennes, Hendricks and Tobey. It opened May 18, 1908, when guests rented rooms for \$1.50 a night, and it's notable for its elaborate mansard roof.

The Cornelius was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

It was headed for the wrecking ball in 2013, when then-owner TMT Development sought a demolition permit after trying for years to come up with a viable rehabilitation plan.



TMT bought the building in 2002 with plans to turn it into a hotel, but those plans were upended by the economic downturn of 2008.

The Cornelius Hotel's upper floors were vacant for decades and damaged by a fire in the 1980s. Even the ground-level floors were boarded up because the building was considered structurally unsafe for occupancy.

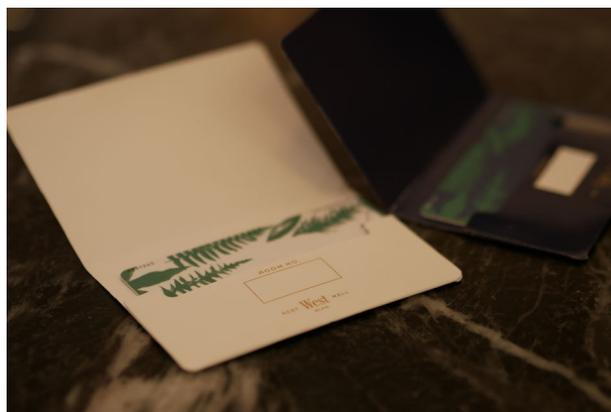
The demolition was averted when TMT sold the building to development group Arthur Motal for \$2.1 million. A renovation began two years later in a partnership with NBP Capital and Provenance, both of Portland. The group bought the adjacent Woodlark office building for \$6.9 million.



The Woodlark was designed by Portland architecture firm Doyle, Patterson and Beach and opened in 1912 as the headquarters for a wholesale pharmacy, the Woodard, Clark Drug Co. The design is typical of the early 20th century commercial style, and its nomination to the National Register notes its elaborate cornice and detailing.

Combining the two buildings presented challenges. The floors don't line up, so stairways are used to transition from one building to the other. One elevator serves the former Cornelius building, while two others serve the Woodlark side.

To help guests navigate, corridors and room keys are color-coded to match each building. The Cornelius takes on a darker motif to match its darker facade, while the Woodlark side is decorated in brighter hues.



The burst of new hotel room construction has left more rooms empty, but it hasn't had a big impact on hotel operators' bottom line because they're collecting bigger nightly rates per room, according to STR, a travel research firm.

Buska said the growing supply could sting hotel operators if the economy hits a downturn but that Provenance -- which owns other Portland hotels including the Sentinel and The Benson and manages the Heathman Hotel -- isn't too concerned about oversaturation.

"We kind of reached capacity in terms of what's sustainable for now, but overall this is an attractive destination," she said. "If we were speculative investors coming in and all about flipping the hotel, we might be concerned. But because we're long-term holders, we think we're in a good position."



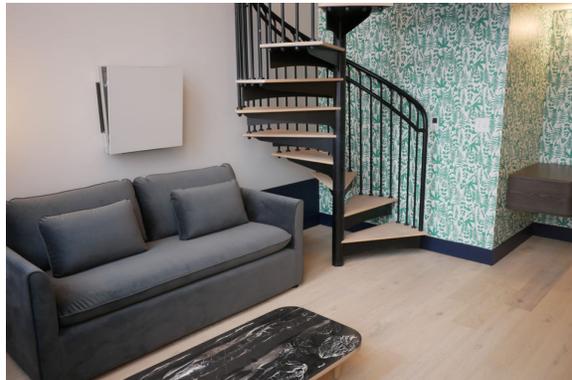
Colibri, a flower shop opened by James Beard Award-winning chef Naomi Pomeroy, will operate a flower and plant stand in the Woodlark lobby.



A 230-square-foot king bed guest room.



The wallpaper was custom designed based on plants found in Portland's Forest Park.



A 415-square-foot loft suite, built into the second floor of the Woodlark Building, which had 15-foot ceilings.



The two Woodlark Suite corner rooms, at 576 and 665 square feet, are the largest rooms in the hotel. They feature a king bed separated from the suite's living area by a glass wall.



-- Elliot Njus

enjus@oregonian.com; 503-294-5034; @enjus