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## Aberdeen hotel proposal designed to spark change

***The project includes renovation of an 82-year-old hotel and two blocks that surround it.***

By ANNIE MARTIN  
Journal Staff Reporter

A group called Aberdeen Development, LLC plans to purchase the 82-year-old Morck Hotel in downtown Aberdeen and start a \$12 million renovation this fall that will be completed by the fall of 2007.

The group is also buying major portions of two blocks around the hotel, and plans to build 50 condos and 50,000 square feet of new retail space that will include a steak house, an urban bistro and martini bar, day spa, brew pub, galleries and a 300-car parking garage.



Image courtesy Rice Fergus Miller

**Fifty condos and 50,000 square feet of retail with a steak house, day spa and martini bar would be built nearby, along with a 300-car parking garage.**

The new space is expected to be completed in about two and a half years.

The total project will be valued at \$30 million.





The hotel is located on South K Street, two blocks from the waterfront and one block from the central business district.

"I am very excited about being part of the revitalization of the town," Aberdeen Development LLC principal Chester Trabucco said. Trabucco was involved in renovation of the Hotel Elliott in Astoria, Ore.

"We're trying to offer a Bellevue-quality hotel in the current economic reality," Trabucco said. "Our intent will be to have people walk in and say 'Wow.'"

The purchase of the Morck is expected to close by the first week of August. The hotel is now used as apartments. Trabucco said interior demolition will wait until tenants have found new homes but is scheduled to begin no later than Oct. 1.

There is no set date for starting construction on the rest of the project because of environmental contamination issues with almost every building except the hotel, Trabucco said. The state office of Community, Trade and Economic Development will help secure grants and low-interest loans for clean-up efforts.

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Rice Fergus Miller is the architect, but the general contractor is not yet final, Trabucco said.

The city of Aberdeen approved a measure last week to provide \$300,000 in low-interest loans for the project. The city will also seek a federal appropriation of over \$5.5 million for the garage and sidewalk improvements.

Trabucco was inspired to renovate the hotel when Tim Quigg of Quigg Brothers, a marine and major construction company from Grays Harbor, came to the Hotel Elliott in Astoria. Quigg asked to speak to Trabucco and told him about the Morck Hotel.

After visiting Aberdeen and seeing the site, Trabucco and Quigg formed a limited liability corporation along with Molly Sanders, a long-time associate and partner in other ventures with Trabucco. Others in the LLC are John Yonich, CEO of Holley Moulding in Bellevue and a former Aberdeen resident, and John Harder and Eric Jacobsen, principals in Sunwest Management, a national assisted-living company.

The hotel's current owners are Bill Lipscomb and Bob Annis. They have also contributed money toward the purchase and will be minority partners.

“There have been many more people before us taking a whack but we're going to be one more piece of it,” Trabucco said of efforts to improve Aberdeen's economy.

Rice Fergus Miller partner Mike Miller said he hopes the renovation will attract people and business to his hometown. Miller described the Morck as Aberdeen's “grand old hotel” where many of the city's celebrations — from birthdays to wedding receptions — took place.

“It will act as a catalyst to redevelop the block and spur development in an economically depressed town,” Miller said. “It's a big deal to have somebody talking about doing this, let alone actually doing it.”

The developers are working with other property owners in downtown Aberdeen to expand and redevelop the area.

Miller said other improvements being considered include moving the Tall Ships Sea Port near the hotel and creating a connection to the Chehalis River by building a pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks.

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