

The Oregonian

Developer proposes to bring hip Marriott hotel brand to downtown Portland on city-owned site

*By Elliot Njus
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Mortenson Construction, the company picked to build a subsidized hotel to serve the Oregon Convention Center, is also proposing a 204-room hotel across the river in downtown Portland.

Documents submitted to city development officials describe a 13-story AC Hotel by Marriott at the corner of Southwest Third Avenue and Taylor street on a vacant quarter block owned by the Portland Development Commission.

In May the PDC solicited offers for the site, laying out a timeline that would culminate in an agreement with a developer this month.

Agency spokesman Shawn Uhlman said that if the sale were to move forward, it would be for the site's fair-market price and the project would receive no other PDC assistance. The site was recently appraised at \$2.5 million.

Marriott International imported the upper-moderate AC Hotels brand from Europe last year in an effort to expand its reach among younger business travelers. It describes the brand as "design-focused" with an "urban spirit."

AC Hotels typically include a lounge that serves small plates, cocktails, wines and craft beers, and they include a library with "locally relevant" reading materials.

The hotels are usually located in urban centers. Where hotel chains often aim for uniformity between locations, the AC Hotels chain follows a recent trend of seeking to take on a local flavor.

Marriott said earlier in June it plant to open more than 30 AC Hotels over three years in North and South America.

The PDC bought the site in 1999 and demolished the building there, which had most recently housed an adult video store.

Mortenson, a Minneapolis-based general contractor, was tapped by the Metro regional government to build a 600-room Hyatt Regency hotel near the Oregon Convention Center. The \$212 million project would be privately owned but backed with \$60 million in bonds to be repaid with the hotels' lodging tax receipts, as well as \$18 million in direct local and state subsidies.

Hilton recently proposed a 300-room boutique hotel at Southwest Second Avenue and Jefferson. It would be part of Hilton's Curio Collection, a group of will four- or five-star hotels each operating under its own distinctive brand.

Willamette Week

Portland Asks for Help Picking Places to Increase Disabled Access

VIDEO: One obstacle is getting in the the door at the Portland Building.

*By Aaron Mesh
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Portland officials are asking for help figuring out where to start fixing city parks and buildings that don't give access to people with disabilities.

WW reported Wednesday that the city has identified 25,829 places on city property that don't meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

We toured five locations with advocate Ian Ruder, who pointed out where he had trouble getting his wheelchair to dining areas and basketball courts. But he noted that many of the projects the city calls top priorities aren't keeping many people from getting where they need to go.

The Office of Equity and Human Rights is asking for more feedback. It's hosting an open house at the Portland Building next Tuesday to seek public comment on its choices.

Deciding what projects are most important will be a key step in what's known as the ADA Title II Transition Plan—the city's effort to avoid lawsuits over its lack of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The prioritization is crucial because most city bureaus will need to find funding in their own budgets, a process city documents say could take more than 16 years.

"They know it's going to cost a lot," says Suzanne Stahl, who serves on the Portland Commission on Disabilities. "That right there is the \$10 million question. It's one thing to figure out what needs to be fixed. It's another thing to fix them."

The open house will be held at 12:30 pm Tuesday, Aug. 26 in Room C on the second floor of the Portland Building. It's a building with plenty of work still needed: City documents say it has 1,016 barriers to disabled access, which could cost \$1.3 million to fix.

Here's one of those barriers.