

The Nines Hotel Carves Out a Home in Historic Portland Building

By Glenn Hasek
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PORTLAND, ORE.—Almost 100 years old, the historic Meier & Frank department store here is being converted to a 331-room Starwood Luxury Collection hotel called The Nines. The upper nine floors will be the home for the hotel; the lower five floors are being refurbished by Macy's, Inc. and will open as a Macy's department store.

The Nines, which is being developed by Denver-based Sage Hospitality Resources, has Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver certification as its goal. The hotel is slated to open in summer 2008. SERA Architects, Inc., Portland, Ore., is the architectural firm on the project and PAE Consulting Engineers, Inc., also in Portland, is the mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineer.

Kenneth Geist, executive vice president of Sage Hospitality Resources, says his company first got involved in the project in 2003 when he took a trip to Portland to meet with the Portland Development Commission.

“They showed us a list of properties,” Geist says. “The Meier & Frank building caught our interest. They set us up with Federated Department Stores and helped us put together a great team.”

Sage has had significant success restoring historic buildings in urban locations that have architectural significance and that have been let go or are underutilized. The upside for Sage is that these types of

projects qualify for historic building tax credits. Since 1997, Sage has transformed six older buildings into successful hotels and four more are currently under development.

“Guests love historic buildings,” Geist says. “The hotels typically outperform the competition in every market we are in.”

Accumulating LEED Points

On the path to LEED certification, The Nines is earning points for site selection, water efficiency, energy conservation, materials selection, indoor air quality and design innovation.

“Because we are reusing an existing building, we will be getting one point,” says Gary Golla, project architect with SERA Architects, Inc.

Approximately 90 to 95 percent of the 24 million pounds of debris removed from the structure will be recycled and diverted from landfills. So much rubble has been produced because a 7,000-square-foot atrium has been carved out of the middle of the upper floors of the building. The skylight-covered, 100-foot-high atrium will be encircled by the hotel rooms.

Fifty percent of the outside of the building is windows—leaky ones at that. Thanks to a \$5,600 sustainable development grant from the city of Portland, an air-infiltration study was done and it was determined that the best way to create an energy-efficient building would be to seal and insulate the windows.

In addition to that step, compact fluorescents and energy-efficient mechanical systems will help optimize the hotel’s energy performance at a rate of 26 percent less than code. The Nines will contract with renewable energy sources to provide 100 percent of the electricity for the hotel. By doing so, The Nines will prevent more than 6 million pounds of CO2 from being released into the atmosphere—the equivalent of removing 536 cars from the road.

The 100 percent nonsmoking hotel will also take steps to reduce water consumption. According to Chris Ziegler, project manager for Sage Hospitality Resources, The Nines will include dual-flush toilets that give guests the option of using .8 gallons per flush (gpf) or 1.6 gpf. The toilets, plus other measures such as low-flow faucet aerators, will help the hotel save 400,000 gallons of water annually. The Nines will not use low-flow showerheads. Ziegler says they tried to find one that uses less than 2.5 gallons per minute that would not impact the guest experience but were unsuccessful.

Indoor Air Quality Addressed

To maintain a healthy indoor air environment, low-VOC adhesives, paint and carpet will be used. A green housekeeping policy will be put in place and will ensure that only cleaning products certified by Green Seal are implemented.

SERA Architects, Inc.'s Logan Cravens, LEED coordinator for the The Nines project, says it will earn a LEED point for not adding new parking and for partnering with Flexcar, a car sharing company. The hotel will benefit from being adjacent to Portland's light rail system.

In addition to The Nines, Sage Hospitality Resources is also renovating the old Toronto National building in Portland, Ore. It will open as a Courtyard by Marriott property in 2009 and will also pursue LEED certification.

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