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## Genosha will open as high-end hotel in 2007

Hotel well-situated at Oshawa's "new four corners"

Sep 14, 2006  
By Jillian Follert  
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OSHAWA -- Almost a year after the landmark Genosha Hotel was purchased by a Toronto firm, plans to spruce it up are finally underway.

The downtown property was sold to ICC Global Group in October 2005, for \$1.8 million. Despite original whisperings that it would be turned into a student residence, the company's CEO confirmed this week it will return to its hotel origins.

"We're talking about a high-end outfit, this isn't the kind of thing you would find off the 401," said Rob Mattacchione. "Council has done an amazing job of changing the downtown landscape and a luxury hotel is something the downtown desperately needs."

Mr. Mattacchione said the new hotel will house between 85 and 100 rooms, boasting plasma TVs and cutting-edge internet connections. Negotiations are underway to bring in a well-known restaurateur to cater the banquet facility.

While he remains tight-lipped on the hotel brand name until negotiations wrap up, Mr. Mattacchione would say it is an "identifiable" brand that will appeal to corporate and recreational travellers.

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A corporate tie-in with General Motors is also being explored.

The redevelopment process will begin in the next three months, and take 12-16 months to complete. A grand opening is expected sometime in 2007.

In the meantime, City officials say developers are beating a steady path to their door, thanks to projects like the Genosha.

"We've reached critical momentum," said David Tuley, the City's downtown development officer. "The Genosha is a very positive development in a prime location."

Mr. Tuley said UOIT and the new arena could support a downtown hotel on their own, calling the Genosha's spot at King and Mary streets Oshawa's "new four corners," because of its proximity to parking and attractions.

A recent hotel market study commissioned by the City listed the downtown as a good hotel location, but warned it would have to be done carefully with the right size, brand and developer.

According to PKF Consulting, the firm that completed the study, any new hotel in Durham runs the risk of low occupancy rates because the market is becoming saturated.

Prior to 2000, there were five hotels operating in the region. Today, that number of properties has more than doubled and the number of rooms has increased 23 per cent.

However, PKF experts said a high-end downtown hotel could be the exception and outperform existing hotels.

Built in 1929, the Genosha was Oshawa's first luxury hotel. The stately building fell on hard times in recent decades with the upper floors used for a rooming house and a strip club operating on the main floor until 2003.

Last year, it was designated as a heritage site, which means the interior can be changed but the Chicago-style exterior will be preserved.

In addition to the Genosha project, ICC Global has set its sites on buying the city block across

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