

Old and new blend hotel's character (slideshow)

Commodore Hotel to reopen after 45 years; developers use mix of modern and historic fe



ALEX PAJUNAS - The Daily Astorian
Developers Lance Marris, left, and Brian Faherty take care of final preparations inside the lobby of the Commodore Hotel, as the historic, renovated buildings nears its reopening this Saturday. Marris and Faherty, along with Paul Caruana helped transform the old 30-room Commodore, closed since 1964, into an edgy and modern 18-room hotel.

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This weekend, after a two-year, \$1.5-million renovation, the Commodore Hotel will reopen in do years.

Developers Paul Caruana and Brian Faherty of Astoria and Lance Marrs of Portland have revived shuttered in 1964 and remained untouched until 2007, when the three bought the Lewis Building

Inside the two floors above the former Chris' News storefront, under decades of dust and crumbling rooms, abandoned along with a collection of yellowing photographs, newspapers and other curious

Drawing inspiration from the building's history and adding fresh, edgy décor, the new owners have Commodore, creating a space where sleek and funky meet vintage and thrifty.

"It's a modern hotel inside a historic building," said Caruana.

They've kept the old hotel's core structure intact with 10 small sleeping rooms, or cabins, that they've added high-tech amenities, digital artwork and a whimsical chandelier in the lobby.

The nightly rates are purposely modest, targeting a young, creative demographic.

Eight suites with their own bathrooms and showers run between \$129 and \$179, while the 10 cabins

"We're hoping to attract a new sort of traveler to Astoria, which is known as a retirement community places that cater to the older crowd. We're trying to attract people who appreciate this sort of aesthetic

The owners want to lease the adjoining retail space to a coffee shop or a bar to complete the look.

Something old, something new

Caruana, Faherty and Marrs put a lot of thought into the pairing of old and new as they remodeled

The building, constructed in 1925, is a registered historic landmark, which required them to strike historic preservation.

They found Astoria architect John Wicks' blueprints for the building through the Oregon Historical Society's original floor plan.

Faherty's company, Schoolhouse Lighting, renovated the original light fixtures while Caruana Inc gutting the walls down to the studs, and removing, restoring and re-installing the old molding, doing

"We tried to bring the old stuff back into the building as much as we could," said Faherty. "You do have that old character."

They used the old floorboards to make coffee tables and wood paneling. They stuffed the old key on an artfully arranged "found-object wall," which offers a miniature museum of items plucked from suitcases, a church directory, an antique radio, and a ferry schedule from the days before the Astoria ferry the sleeping quarters for passengers riding the ferry at the foot of 14th Street.

The rooms, once stark with boxy wooden drawers and metal-rung bed frames, are now brightly lit with mattresses, iPod docking stations and flat-screen TVs. But they also have numerous vintage elements like windows and radiators, as well as mirrors salvaged from the old dressers.

Each room has its own unique wall painting of a tossed fishing net suspended in mid-air above the water, coursing through the hotel's new design.

"It's a modern interpretation of Astoria's maritime history," he said.

Some elements of the new interior design are surprisingly eccentric.

The chandelier in the lobby looks like draped red licorice strung with bare bulbs.

And then there's the commodore himself, towering over the lobby from the stairwell in an elaborate mural of crashing waves and a sinking ship.

"In the military the commodore keeps watch over five ships," Caruana said. "Here he's watching over the city."

Part of a renaissance

Caruana and Faherty have taken on a load of historic building restoration projects along 14th Street. They purchased the Astor Hotel between Commercial and Duane. They've already overhauled the Sharkey Building and are working on the Norblad Building at 14th and Duane.

Faherty said the Commodore Hotel is not so much a money-making venture for the developers as

"We see this as a civic project," said Faherty. "We're preserving a really important piece of architecture and giving an audience to the city that hopefully will benefit other people and the city as a whole."

Astoria City Manager Paul Benoit, who recently toured the new Commodore, said he was "totally

"I think it's courageous what they're doing - particularly in this economy," he said. "For the 20 so
been interesting how you could see through the upstairs windows these old hotel beds. Nobody ha
It was a little like a ghost facility."

Benoit said he shares the developers' vision for the hotel as an addition to the city that will bring 1
customers away from existing businesses.

"Looking at the way they're doing it," he said, "it may well have the ability to attract people to As
else - not in the city."

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