

Construction finally set to start on North Side Comfort Inn

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By Mark Belko / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Seven years after buying the first property needed in support of the project, a local developer finally is [ready to start construction](#) of a six-story hotel on the North Side.

“It’s been a long time in coming, to tell you the truth,” said John Elash, co-owner of October Development.

October closed on the financing for the 96-room Workingmen’s Square Hotel on East Ohio Street this week, clearing the way for construction to begin.

The developer hopes to break ground on the \$17.5 million project within the next two weeks, with the goal of having the hotel open by next Christmas.

Although the hotel will be a Comfort Inn, Mr. Elash said it will have a more urban feel “than the Comfort Inn you see on the highway.”

There will be a pool, a workout room, a rooftop deck, and a 100-person conference center on the sixth floor to host receptions, business meetings, dinners, and maybe even small weddings.

Operating the hotel will be the Priory Hospitality Group, owner of the nearby Priory Hotel. Hotel rates will run from \$130 to \$150 a night.

The hotel marks the start of a much larger redevelopment on East Ohio Street that includes the rehab of the adjoining Workingmen’s Bank Building, formerly the ARC House, into a 350-person wedding venue on the first two floors, with a rooftop brew pub and wood-burning pizza restaurant.

October hopes to have that \$4 million project completed at the same time the hotel opens. Priority Hospitality also will operate that venue.

In addition, the developer is planning to open restaurants in other properties it owns on East Ohio with the goal of making that stretch of the North Side more of a destination. Mr. Elash said October already has had inquiries from seven local restaurant owners about possible spaces.

Also in the works is a 36-unit apartment building on the other side of the new hotel. October expects to start that project, estimated at \$8 million to \$10 million, some time in the spring.

Funding for the hotel development included a \$3 million state capital grant, \$7 million in New Markets Tax Credits and loans from half a dozen private lenders, as well as one from the Northside Community Development fund.

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