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Goodbye, Yellow Brick Road

A new McMenamins hotel rises from the dust of Club Portland and Silverado

by Stephen Marc Beaudoin

Where exactly do you start when transforming a dilapidated quarter-century-old men's sex club and bathhouse into a high-dollar downtown tourist trap restaurant

and hotel?

With the glory holes, of course.

Ripping out the flat black painted plywood walls with crotch-level gaping holes in the dust-clogged building at Southwest 12th Avenue and Stark Street has been one of construction supervisor Geoff Daggett's more unusual on-the-job experiences in urban renovation. "I had no idea what really went on in here," he says. "And actually coming in and dealing with the underworld that we're not really accustomed to" has been eye-opening for him.

But he and his 10-men Pacific Crest Construction team knew they had their dirty work cut out for them when they took the gig to renovate the former home of Club Portland and Silverado, and they've been hacking away at it for six weeks now. Their mission: to turn the clock back on the sturdy 16,000-square-foot historic building so it hearkens back to its earliest turn-of-the-century usefulness, as a luxury residence for weary travelers.

The movers and shakers behind the renovation are two well-worn, top-dollar hands at Portland development and renovation: Gerding Edlen Development and the McMenamins Hotels, Pubs and Breweries chain. Edlen purchased the building, which had become something of a Stark Street eyesore in its waning years, in spring of 2007, and closed a sale to McMenamins in June.

"We couldn't have imagined a better use for this property," said Patrick Wilde, project manager for Gerding Edlen, in a written statement on the building's sale to McMenamins.

Just Out was among the first print publica-

tions to get an exclusive inside tour of the renovation-in-progress July 30, led by Daggett, with McMenamins marketing director Renee Rank and historian Tim Hills.

Given that emptying out and gutting the

nearly 100-year-old building only started a few weeks ago, Daggett is, understandably perhaps, in hustle mode. When asked about the renovation timeline, he laughs, adding quickly, "We're shooting for January." He gives Rank an example of some recent progress: "We got the filing cabinet out. Did they tell you about that?"

Just that morning, Daggett and his construction team carted out one oversized filing cabinet that contained,

Follow, follow, follow...the hidden Yellow Brick Road on the former Silverado dance floor.

among other things, highly confidential Club Portland employee and member records, all of it left behind by former owner Dick Lawson. Daggett says the building essentially looked like Lawson simply walked away and locked the door behind on June 17, 2007, when the bathhouse called it quits, leaving highly private records—containing members' and employees' full contact information and, sometimes, copies of their driver's licenses, Social Security cards and other identification—vulnerable to theft and duplication.

Lawson, when reached by phone, claimed, "There is nothing that remains of the bath records at this time." When told that McMenamins had



Shine on: Club Portland's notorious vintage Army Jeep.

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