

New Convention Center hotel will be union built

And hopefully union operated, as Hyatt signs a neutrality agreement with UNITE HERE Local 8

The new Oregon Convention Center hotel will be union built and, hopefully, union operated.

A ceremonial groundbreaking Aug. 4 marked the beginning of construction of the Hyatt Regency Portland, a \$244 million, 600-room hotel that is scheduled to open in winter of 2019. The new hotel will be located on the northwest corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. and Holladay Street, adjacent to the Convention Center in Northeast Portland.

Hyatt is teaming with Mortenson Development Inc. and Schlesinger Cos. to build the hotel. The project also received \$14 million in local and state government grants. Room taxes generated at the hotel are expected to contribute another \$60 million toward the project.

Mortenson Construction is a union general contractor. The company has signed a project "statement of principles" signed by Metro, the City of Portland, and Multnomah County assuring that the developer will utilize union building tradesmen and women on the project.

The project also will work to help minorities and women looking to enter the trades, as well as to improve access to both minority- and woman-owned contractors.

Mortenson Vice President Tom Lander recognized organized labor for their partnership in bringing the convention center hotel to fruition. He gave a shout-out to the Oregon AFL-CIO, Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council, and UNITE HERE.

"We will have 150 people on an average basis of construction workers on this site every day," Landers said at the groundbreaking ceremony, which drew nearly 200 people. "Before the project is done, there will have been more than 2,000 trades people working on this project. I think that is just brilliant."

Lander said UNITE HERE was at all of the early meetings, "because they value the 950 full-time hospitality jobs that this project represents."

Hyatt signed a landmark neutrality agreement with UNITE HERE Local 8, which means the hotel likely will be staffed with union workers. The hotel is expected to support "950 permanent hotel- hospitality- and tourism-related jobs."



Site of future Hyatt Regency Portland at the Oregon Convention Center

Under the agreement, UNITE HERE organizers can meet with workers at the hotel and hold meetings there; managers can attend and make it clear that the company has no objection to workers exercising their right to unionize. Workers will be free to join a labor organization of their choosing, and can do so through a "card check" process or through a government-administered election. If workers choose to unionize, but don't reach agreement with management within six months over the

terms of a first union contract, the contract proposals will be submitted to binding arbitration, under the labor peace agreement.

"Hyatt's willingness to work with UNITE HERE to make this a union hotel was a remarkable stretch for them, but one that they accepted with graciousness — and actually extended it to their entire system. So we hope this will be the first unionized Hyatt, and it looks like it will be," said Metro President Tom Hughes at the groundbreaking ceremony.

Karis Stoudamire-Phillips, chair of the Metropolitan Exposition and Recreation Commission, which operates the Oregon Convention Center, said the project will help local community members through Metro's First Opportunity Target Area program, which has, for 28 years, sought to improve access to convention center jobs for historically disadvantaged community members.

"With this project, MERC, Metro, Hyatt, and Mortenson have made a strong commitment to communities of color, women, and other communities that are often vulnerable to displacement with economic growth," Stoudamire-Phillips said. "I want to thank Hyatt for their firmly stated commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in their hiring practices when they begin to staff the new hotel. Hyatt has committed to working with over a dozen local community groups to ensure there is a diverse hiring pool and the hotel staff can reflect the ever-changing face of Portland."

At a reception following the

groundbreaking ceremony, Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith highlighted the importance of apprenticeship training and "the world-class training centers" operated locally by Sheet Metal Workers, Electricians, Plumbers and Fitters, Operating Engineers, and others.

"Whether it's young people just entering the workforce or mid-career individuals looking for a change, the building trades' apprenticeship programs provide workers the chance to earn while they learn," Smith said. "The continued creation and support of middle-class job opportunities means this project will grow a worker class that will be able to afford to live where they work."

Most of the apprenticeship training programs are accepting applications for new apprentices.

The Hyatt Regency Portland will be 14 stories, and will include 32,000 square feet of meeting venues, a lobby, bar, restaurant, gym and gathering areas. Hyatt has agreed to hold 500 of the hotel's 600 rooms for large conventions that Travel Portland hopes to recruit to Oregon.

Hughes said once the hotel opens, the Oregon Convention Center will generate "upwards of \$1 billion of additional revenue for the region each year."

Separate from the hotel project, Prosper Portland (formerly the Portland Development Commission) will construct and own a 442-space parking garage on the property. The \$32.2 million project will break ground this winter, with completion scheduled for spring of 2019.

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Hope You Enjoy a
Great Weekend ...
Happy Labor Day!