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Independent Boutique Hotel to open in Downtown Eau Claire, Summer 2016 – will offer Restaurant, Bar, Venue, and more

Drawing on historic elements, the new property will be called The Oxbow Hotel, owners will focus on the outdoors, music, and arts, for the property's design aesthetic and ongoing programming



EAU CLAIRE, WI – Steady progress has continued on plans for the renovation and re-launch of downtown Eau Claire’s former Green Tree Inn & Suites, 516 Galloway Street. Interior demolition has already taken place and new construction is starting this month with the intention to open in the summer of 2016 as The Oxbow Hotel – an independent “boutique” hotel serving the needs of an increasingly active city center. With the property’s 30 modern rooms, a restaurant and bar, and shared common spaces both inside and out, the establishment will gain a unique local identity as a highly creative space through two major vibes: 1) a deep evocation of our community’s outdoor and recreation scenes, and 2) a strong connection to Eau Claire’s burgeoning, nationally recognized music/art scenes. Guests and locals will experience these elements throughout the space, as well as through ongoing programmatic offerings and events. With an overarching goal of evoking a genuine sense of place in the property, and through the unique amenities planned for the site, partners anticipate the property becoming a distinct destination loved as much by locals as by travelers.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

The name “The Oxbow Hotel” has a lot of hidden localness. It most obviously refers to Eau Claire’s unique body of water, Half Moon Lake (an “oxbow” lake). But the name has deep roots in our area’s history as a logging and agricultural community, during which times teams of oxen were used to help build our city and grow our food. Oxen were known as the more powerful, sure-footed option compared to horses, and an “oxbow” was part of the unique wood and metal harness used with those hard-working teams.

**THE
OXBOW
HOTEL**

A NEW BAR / RESTAURANT / VENUE

Central to the hotel, and a main way it will serve both locals and travelers, is a new bar, restaurant, and music venue all wrapped up in the same space. The restaurant will feature a small but dynamic local menu planned and executed by renowned local chef Nathan Berg (Native Bay, The Creamery, etc). Using Wisconsin-centric ingredients like local cheese, maple syrup, wild rice, cranberries, etc., the menu will be filled with artisan items that help to evoke a unique sense of place. “When we eat local foods, and especially when we eat foods that are native to the Upper Midwest, we help to create an identity that’s more closely tied to this region,” said Berg. “By eating the foods of these northwoods, a greater part of us *becomes* the northwoods.”

The bar, while serving craft beers (as has become common), will primarily focus on craft cocktails – a focused mixology artform new to Eau Claire. To this end, the venue has secured the talents of Megan Arts, a Minneapolis-based mixologist with local ties, to create a custom menu of Wisconsin-inspired cocktails. Central to the establishment’s aesthetic will be a dynamic performance stage (inside the restaurant/bar) that capitalizes on Eau Claire’s remarkably strong tradition of jazz performance and collegiate education, giving that specific scene a home base of operations. The space is championed by one of the project’s main partners – Eau Claire’s two-time Grammy winning and internationally touring musician Justin Vernon of Bon Iver. “We want to make a place in Eau Claire where our rich tradition of jazz can meet with other types of improvised performances and songwriting. Where we put the emphasis on cultivating a calendar of quality music appreciation,” says Vernon.

CREATIVE ELEMENTS & LOCAL CRAFTS PEOPLE

The stage and lighting design, as well as the design of some key lighting elements throughout the space, will be designed by Michael Brown and his partner Maria Meyer. Brown is the creative director of the new Eau Claire Music & Arts Festival and has done stage design for the likes of The National, Grizzly Bear, Tom Petty, and Bon Iver. Local woodworker Tim Brudnicki of Eau Claire Woodworks will craft much of the furniture and other signature items from urban wood that’s come from ash and other trees brought down for various reasons in Eau Claire. The restaurant/bar will feature an extensive and multi-faceted courtyard/patio featuring tables, couches, firepits, and even a grassy area for playing kubb, beanbags, etc.

Packing in more interesting elements, the property will feature an artist-in-residence program where artists from anywhere can come live in Eau Claire for several months at a time and work inside an open glass enclosure in the hotel’s lobby, interacting with guests and locals alike and offering workshops on their craft. Finally, capitalizing on the property’s location just feet from the state bike trail and two rivers, the hotel will offer “adventure rentals,” including bicycles, kayaks, canoes, tubes, and more – all available to both guests and locals.

COMMUNITY DONATIONS

In 2014, contents of the previous hotel – dozens of chairs, tables, nightstands, etc – were donated by current ownership to worthy causes. Local community action agency Western Dairyland opened 15 new homeless/transitional apartments for individuals and families furnished with donations the former hotel. Hope Gospel Mission received materials for their programs, as well.

BROAD COMMUNITY INVESTOR GROUP

Information on the principal four partners (making up Longform, LLC) has been previously released and can be found at TheOxbowHotel.com. Those include: Nick Meyer (owner of Volume One & The Local Store), Justin Vernon (Grammy-winning musician behind Bon Iver & more), Ben Richgruber (executive director of the Eau Claire Regional Arts Center), and Zach Halmstad (co-founder of JAMF Software). Additional like-minded community investors are also helping move this project forward, those include (in no particular order) Stuart Sandler, Larry & Marie Past, Anton Smets & Rae Schilling, Bill & Jodi Sparkes, Phil & Leslie Lyons, Nicholas & Jennifer Mohr, Denise Olson & Pete Seymour, Nicole Lasker, Beverly Wickstrom, Paul & Emily Madsen, and Ryan & Erin Hanson.

CONSTRUCTION, DESIGN, & FINANCING TEAM

The commercial lending partner for this project is People’s Bank Midwest of Eau Claire. Leading architects and designers on the project include SDS Architects (of Eau Claire) and Shelter (of Minneapolis). Empirical Hotel Investments (of Minneapolis) is the project consultant. Rhom Construction (of Eau Claire) is the general contractor. Additional consultants and subcontractors from Eau Claire are also involved.

PRESS IMAGES & SOCIAL MEDIA: High-res photos are available for download at www.TheOxbowHotel.com

OXBOW LOBBY RENDERINGS



EXTERIOR COURTYARD SPACE RENDERINGS

