

## **Agreement reached to purchase downtown Oshkosh hotel**

**by Alex Hummel - Thursday, September 01, 2011**

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/13893/agreement-reached-to-purchase-downtown-oshkosh-hotel/>

*The following is a media release shared jointly by the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, UW Oshkosh Foundation and WHG Cos. LLC on Sept. 1:*

OSHKOSH, Wis. — A team of community leaders has announced that an offer to purchase City Center Hotel has been accepted. The agreement to proceed with the purchase will result in an investment of approximately \$8 million to renovate and revitalize the riverfront property.

The plan calls for WHG Cos. LLC and the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Foundation to serve as co-owners of the hotel. Their purchase offer, at an undisclosed price, has been accepted by Nashco Hospitality Group LLC, owner of the hotel property since 2009.

Project partners continue to refine their business plans and project timelines. They are working closely with the City of Oshkosh to begin renovations on the hotel by the end of 2011.

The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation served as a facilitator in discussions about revitalizing the hotel to its full potential. Although the Community Foundation is not an investor in the hotel, it funded a \$1 million loan to renovate the Convention Center, which is attached to it.

WHG and the UW Oshkosh Foundation will ask the City of Oshkosh and the Oshkosh Common Council for tax incremental financing (TIF) support to renovate the property. City Manager Mark Rohloff said he and the city's Community Development Department, citizen boards and the Oshkosh Common Council will closely review the proposal.

“It is exciting to have this unique, public-private partnership emerge with plans to breathe new life into Oshkosh's downtown hotel,” Rohloff said. “All three of the local organizations involved in the plans, including two nonprofits, have great track records when it comes to supporting our community. They see how tourism, education, downtown revitalization and riverfront redevelopment complement one another. We are eager to work with the partners to make the hotel another vibrant example of downtown's ongoing renewal.”

Leaders from WHG, UW Oshkosh and the Community Foundation praised Rohloff, city hall and the Oshkosh Common Council for their ongoing support of the Downtown Action Plan, the city's 11-year-old downtown redevelopment vision.

“Having a viable hotel in the downtown is a huge need and it's a quality of life issue, there's no question about that,” said Eileen Connolly-Keesler, Community Foundation president and CEO. “The Community Foundation has been involved with numerous initiatives like this — the Convention Center, Pollock Pool, the Leach Amphitheater — where we brought people together to make projects happen. Revitalizing City Center Hotel is another example of how we brought community-minded and capable people to the table.”

The initial discussions to purchase and renovate the downtown hotel began in the spring of 2010 when the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation brought together successful hotelier WHG and the UW Oshkosh Foundation to discuss the possibilities for purchasing and revitalizing the hotel into a high-quality, full-service property.

“Our community is also fortunate to have two dynamic foundations to its credit, both involved in this venture,” said UW Oshkosh Chancellor Richard Wells. “The Community Foundation has brought together partners and a potential solution for the downtown hotel. Our UW Oshkosh Foundation is once again bringing vision and entrepreneurialism to the table in support of the University’s educational mission. And, last but not least, we are pleased to be working alongside an accomplished, locally based hotelier in WHG.”

The new agreement follows previous exploration of a new hotel property attached to a UW Oshkosh Alumni Welcome and Conference Center on the campus. (See [UW Oshkosh Today for more on the newly-unveiled Alumni Welcome and Conference Center project](#)).

Having previously expressed an interest in the hotel, WHG emerged as an obvious choice for a partner in the discussions.

“With three successful WHG hotel properties in Oshkosh, we understand the hospitality landscape here and know there is still a huge demand for quality, full-service hotel beds during busy times,” said Brian Wogernese, president of WHG Cos. “We believe this dynamic, local partnership will not only increase our city’s tourism power, but it will also, finally, develop the quality hotel downtown Oshkosh, UW Oshkosh and the adjacent Oshkosh Convention Center need.”

The UW Oshkosh Foundation, a separate nonprofit organization supportive of UW Oshkosh, sees the availability of a full-service downtown Oshkosh hotel just a couple of blocks from campus as integral to enhancing campus-based educational conferences and alumni events it will host in the new Alumni Welcome and Conference Center.

“With ample rooms, a more manageable renovation cost than building a new hotel property connected to the Alumni Welcome and Conference Center, the downtown hotel will be the campus visitor and conference-hosting solution the University and the community have long sought,” said Arthur H. Rathjen, president of the UW Oshkosh Foundation. “We are appreciative of WHG’s partnership and the Community Foundation’s leadership.”

Upon completion, the renovated City Center Hotel is expected to be a full-service hotel, with 179 rooms, a restaurant and meeting and banquet facilities. The facility is attached to the newly renovated Convention Center and is near numerous cafes and restaurants, the newly installed riverwalk and the Leach Amphitheater and Grand Opera House performance venues.