

Whitefish Pilot

Wednesday, August 18, 2021

\$1.00

New downtown boutique hotel planned

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Whitefish Pilot

Plans for a boutique hotel on Central Avenue have been unveiled, and the company behind the project is pledging to donate \$500,000 toward workforce housing.

Averill Hospitality on Friday announced its plans to construct a 40-room hotel at the vacant corner lot at Central Avenue and First Street. The site next to Craggy Range has long been discussed as having the potential for a boutique hotel.

Construction is planned for 2022 with the opening of the hotel expected in 2023. The hotel is expected to include dining and retail space on the first floor, a rooftop deck with food and beverages, and a basement parking structure.

Averill Hospitality says it will also donate to the Whitefish Housing Authority to contribute to the costs of a 26-unit workforce housing project downtown.

"One of our company's fundamental goals is to be a steward and

See Hotel, A5



Proposed boutique hotel at the corner of Central Avenue and First Street. (Courtesy photo)

Hotel

from A1.

support our community in a meaningful way," Brian Averill said in a release. "This commitment helps guide our business decisions, operational goals, and philanthropy. Having grown up here, I know how critical this need is for our local residents in our community."

Averill Hospitality also owns The Lodge at Whitefish Lake, the Firebrand Hotel and the Downtowner.

In addition to the initial donation, Averill Hospitality says it plans to establish an optional 1% philanthropic gift from hotel guests on lodging and food revenues, to also be donated to the Whitefish workforce housing projects for a period of five years.

The company has a similar successful program at The Lodge at Whitefish Lake where funds from lodge guests are donated to the non-profit Whitefish Lake Institute for science, education and aquatic resource initiatives.

The facade of the hotel is expected to use a mix of materials — brick, stone and wood — and use recessed walls to give the appearance of multiple buildings to blend better with the downtown streetscape.

Windows are expected to be covered with awnings for a visual break, but also to provide shelter.

The rooftop deck is expected to be used by hotel guests and the public using the restaurant and retail establishments.

Dedicated bicycle parking, on-site spaces for employee parking, an off-site parking lease for any parking overflow as needed, as well as a shuttle service for employees from off-site locations is part of the plan.

Hydraulic parking stackers in the underground parking garage will nearly double the dedicated 42 on-site parking spaces, the company notes.

"Modern innovation will be a hallmark of this project as we balance community needs, our local economy, and livability for working families and guests of our mountain town," Averill said.

The lots where the hotel is planned have been vacant since the early 1980s after Markus grocery moved into the mall. Ownership of the land has changed hands several times, and at one point the city leased the lots to provide downtown parking.

On a few other occasions, the last time in 2012, different developers have come forward with potential plans to construct a hotel on

the site but those never materialized. The city's downtown master plan calls for a boutique hotel on the corner.

"We are excited at the prospect of supporting workforce housing for the sustainability of the Whitefish community while we place a final puzzle piece into the downtown master plan to enhance the year-round economy and walkability

for Whitefish visitors," Averil said.

Averill Hospitality in 2013 proposed constructing a hotel at the corner of Third Street and Central Avenue, but that hotel was never built. The property houses a city-owned parking lot.

The Whitefish Planning Board is expected to review the project at their Sept. 16 planning board meeting.