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# CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

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## Aloft hotel to debut in region as part of David Whitney Building renovation

By [Daniel Duggan](#)

The edgy Aloft hotel brand will be putting its name on the historic David Whitney Building in Detroit as part of the renovation of the 19-story building.

It will mark the first appearance in the Detroit area for Aloft, a division of White Plains, N.Y.-based **Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc.** An Aloft had been planned in Birmingham before the recession.

“This is a unique project, and we were looking for something that builds on the uniqueness of this,” said Mike Damitio, senior vice president of acquisitions for the Farmington Hills-based hotel investment firm **Trans Inns Management Inc.**

Trans Inns is developing the Detroit building in a joint venture — **Whitney Partners LLC** — with **The Roxbury Group**, a Detroit-based development firm. The Roxbury Group will oversee development of a 108-unit residential component in the building as well as a retail development.

Aloft is similar to the **W Hotel** concept Starwood uses in upscale markets, Damitio said. On the Starwood website, it describes Aloft as “a vision of W Hotels.”

“Aloft is a modern, industrial, clean, fresh approach to branding,” he said. “It’s going to be a great fit.”

In a press release, Brian McGuinness, senior vice president of specialty select brands for Starwood, said the brand is strong for adaptive reuse projects.

“Aloft is particularly well-suited for adaptive reuse because of its urban aesthetic,” he said. “Preserving this integral part of Detroit’s history is a priority for us as well, and it’s exciting to meld Aloft’s design sensibility with this spectacular original structure.”

The David Whitney project is expected to receive state incentives this week that will keep it on track for construction to start early in 2012 with completion in 2014, said David Di Rita, a principal with The Roxbury Group.

With the public brownfield incentives lined up, it will make the path to getting the final bridge financing much easier.

“Until those tax credits and incentives are lined up, we can’t complete the financing,” Di Rita said.



The David Whitney Building (right) will be home of Starwood Hotels' Aloft brand, described as being similar to the company's W Hotel for upscale markets.

The building, at 1553 Woodward Ave., is across the street from the Broderick Tower, which is being renovated to be an apartment building.

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