

# THE TIMES HERALD

## Boutique hotel coming to Sperry's building

### Vacant department store to become a hotel

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Attendees walk through the lobby before the announcement of the new CityFlatsHotel April 16, 2014 at the Sperry's Building in downtown Port Huron



Rachel Schneider, general manager of CityFlatsHotel in Holland, looks over a floor plan for the new Port Huron location with Carrie Zanderbergen, operations manager, April 16, 2014 at the Sperry's Building in downtown Port Huron.



Chuck Reid, owner of CityFlatsHotel, announces the new Port Huron location as Scott Beedon of Commonwealth Realty and Larry Jones listen April 16, 2014 at the Sperry's Building in downtown Port Huron.



CityFlatsHotel opened its second boutique hotel in Grand Rapids in 2011. Plans are to open a 40-room hotel in the historic Sperry's building in Port Huron in spring 2015.

Downtown Port Huron's historic Sperry's Department Store will become a high-end hotel and bistro.

Officials announced that a Holland, Mich., company has signed a 10-year lease agreement for the building at Huron and Grand River Avenues Wednesday. The company, CityFlatsHotel, will transform the building's interior into 38 to 40 guest rooms, a bistro restaurant, ballroom and conference spaces.

The hotel is to open in spring 2015. CityFlatsHotel is looking at investing between \$12 million and \$14 million in the building and hiring about 50 people.

CityFlatsHotel opened its first location in Holland in 2008. That hotel has 56 rooms, a bistro, lounge, coffee spot, conference rooms and a digital theater.

A Grand Rapids location opened in 2011 in the former Fox Jewelers Building in the city's downtown with 28 rooms, a bistro, bar and a ballroom.

Chuck Reid owns the company. He was named Michigan Businessperson of the Year by the Small Business Administration in 2010.

"We like downtown locations, we love to create a location where people can park their car and then walk to what the city's finest features are, which would be the downtown. This is the heartbeat of Port Huron and this is the type of place we love to do our work in," Reid said.

Reid spoke to more than 50 people inside the Sperry's building Wednesday. He said the crowd was "heartwarming."

He said his goal is to re-purpose the iconic building for the community. Reid said he hopes to make it a place where people will bring their families and friends to stay, businesses wine and dine customers and tourists stay to enjoy the city.

"This corner needs new life," he said.

Sperry's Landmark Inc., owned by Brent Marsall, purchased the building in 2011.

“After several years of determination, Sperry's Landmark is looking forward to welcoming CityFlatsHotel to downtown Port Huron. We recognize the value that CityFlatsHotel will bring to our downtown. With their unique experience and success in the development of ‘Boutique Hotels,’ we are confident that our team will continue to grow downtown Port Huron to new heights,” Marsall said in a statement.

The existing hotels are Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design gold certified, a program by the U.S. Green Building Council.

CityFlatsHotel uses green materials, technologies and practices to reduce impact on the environment, according to its website. Reid said the Port Huron hotel will meet the same ecofriendly requirements.

Reid also is the owner of Zeeland-based Charter House Innovations, which designs and manufactures custom seating and décor. Each room in each hotel is uniquely decorated and uses the Charter House Innovations materials. Customers can even buy everything from the mattresses to the sheets at the hotels.

The final design of the hotel is expected to take three to four months. And the hotel will be managed by a Blue Water Area native.

Rachael Schneider, a 2005 Memphis graduate who currently runs the Holland hotel, will be the general manager in Port Huron.

Scott Beedon, who marketed the property, said the hotel will be one more piece to help the downtown continue to grow.

“People are pulling in the same direction together,” he said. “Are we where we need to be? No, but we're moving in the right direction. ... This is going to be a big shot in the arm.”

Beedon said discussions are being held with the city and Blue Water Area Transit about securing parking for the hotel.

City Manager Bruce Brown has stayed in a CityFlatsHotel site. He said the announcement is “a game-changer for downtown.”

Reid said the energy and revitalization in the downtown attracted him to the area. He had never been to Port Huron until making his first site visit. Reid said he was “intrigued.”

Minid Fretenborough, a receptionist at Spa 223, said the hotel will be an added boost to the growing downtown.

“I think it will be great for everybody,” she said.

Kate Voss, owner of Kate's Downtown just down the street from the Sperry's building, said she was pleased by the news.

“I’m thrilled,” she said. “The more people that participate in our downtown, the better.”

Even empty, the Sperry’s building has been an important piece to the downtown, Voss said.

“Giving that space life again, I think will shed light on all of us.”

Beedon said talks with CityFlatsHotel started about a year ago. The property was originally marketed as a mixed use of office space, retail, a restaurant and a business incubator.

Plans for a business incubator in the basement remain.

The Sperry’s department store opened in 1893 and closed in 2000. Landmark Development, based in Boyne City, purchased the building in 2011.