

Rocky Mountain News

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W may be looking to put hotel downtown

By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News

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The trendy W hotel brand reportedly is interested in opening a property in downtown Denver, its first in the metro area.

"I've just heard rumors that East West Partners is looking at one of the Starwood brands, and W is a Starwood product, so that could be it," said Ilene Kamsler, head of the Colorado Hotel and Lodging Association.

Mark Smith, principal of East West Partners, which is developing the high-end Riverfront neighborhood in the Central Platte Valley behind Union Station, declined to comment.

Richard Scharf, president of the Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau, said he had heard W was looking at a site in the Central Platte Valley.

"If you look at all the growth down there from the intermodal hub that is going to be developed at Denver Union Station, and the new office buildings going on down there, I think that is a great location," Scharf said. "I think it is going to be the next generation of Denver. But I'm not sure if in the short term it would be able to get the same proportion of the business that the hotels along Denver's main spine are able to get."

Officials from W and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide could not be reached Thursday. In addition to W, Starwood also owns the Westin and Sheraton brands.

Another developer, a subsidiary of Bellingham, Wash.-based Trillium Corp., also is marketing its land called the Commons behind Union Station.

"We have two sites that we think would be ideal for a four-star or five-star, full-service hotel," said Eric Roth, marketing the property with fellow CB Richard Ellis brokers Martin Roth and Tim Swan.

Eric Roth said he also had heard W would like to open a hotel in the Central Platte Valley.

One advantage East West could have is that the Commons is only zoned for commercial uses, so it could not include condos with a hotel. There is a trend to combine luxury condominiums with upscale hotels.

Along with a possible W, plans are in the works for a Four Seasons and a Ritz-Carlton downtown.

A W hotel would "thrive" in the downtown environment, said Bob Benton, principal of Robert S. Benton & Associates.

"The question is, how many upscale hotels can we have? There is already the Brown Palace, the Hotel Monaco, the Teatro, and plans for a Ritz and Four Seasons," Benton said. "I would think if they were all announced, one of the new ones would not happen. It seems like too much right away."

But Kamsler said she thinks there is room for a W, Four Seasons and Ritz-Carlton, if their openings are staggered.

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