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Bob Monahan launches Downtown Duluth hostel project (<https://www.perfectduluthday.com/2017/11/16/bob-monahan-launches-downtown-hostel-project/>)

Mark Nicklawske (<https://www.perfectduluthday.com/author/marknick/>)

Nov 16, 2017 (<https://www.perfectduluthday.com/2017/11/16/bob-monahan-launches-downtown-hostel-project/>)

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Red Herring Lounge owner Bob Monahan stands outside the former Garon Brothers jewelry store at 217 W. First St. Monahan plans to renovate the building and open a 46-bed hostel.



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Visitors to Duluth can soon add a hostel to the growing number of lodging options available in the Twin Ports. Nightclub owner Bob Monahan and an undisclosed partner purchased the former Garon Brothers Jewelry store at 217 W. First St. and plan to open a 46-bed hostel in the space next spring.

St. Louis County property records show the Nov. 3 purchase price for the three-story, 5,200-square-foot building was \$160,000.

The year-round, no-frills, communal sleeping space will be the first of its kind in Duluth.

Monahan said the hostel will offer travelers of all ages, families, even sports teams, an inexpensive alternative to Canal Park, Downtown Duluth and Miller Hill hotels. Sleeping space will be limited to single and double bunk beds with shared bathrooms and lounge areas.

Low season weekday lodging is expected to cost \$30 for a single bunk. High season double bunks will cost around \$80 a night.

“We’re going to appeal to young people, hikers, bikers, outdoorsy-types coming to this area to check out Duluth for a day or two,” Monahan said. “If people want (privacy) there’s 786 or whatever private rooms in Downtown Duluth so they can go there. This will be a different experience.”



(https://2b9sqw2iiqxr36ntqa1exnal-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/DSC_0381.jpg)

A third floor window bank offers hillside views of Downtown Duluth.

The yet-to-be-named hostel will feature bunk rooms on its street level and third floor. The second level connects to the downtown Duluth skywalk and will serve as a lobby and lounge. Amenities will include a sauna and a back deck with hillside views.

Monahan said guests will be encouraged to visit his [Red Herring Lounge](https://www.redherringlounge.com/) (https://www.redherringlounge.com/) at 208 E. First St., along with the assortment of bars, restaurants and galleries in the downtown area. The Holiday Inn parking ramp sits directly across First Street.

Originally known as the Armstead Building, the structure at 217 W. First St. was built in 1913 and is a part of the Duluth Commercial Historic District. Garon Brothers Jewelers spent almost 100 years at the site before closing its doors in 2013. The building has sat empty for four years.



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Monahan said he and his partner spent about a year searching for a downtown property suitable for a hostel project. He led a similar overhaul four years ago when a neglected 19th Century building was renovated into the Red Herring Lounge.

"The closer we could be to the Red Herring the better, because we want it to be the go-to spot," he said. "This is a great location. You're immersed down here ... and we think this will bring a lot more life to this block."

The space was gutted earlier this month and workers exposed brick walls, high ceilings and a large, mysterious metal door that connects to a neighboring building. Monahan said custom-made bunk beds with cubicles will be built off site and installed this winter in a fashion similar to new Asian and European youth hostels.

"Each bunk will have a curtain and cubby holes for your things ... They'll be arranged in the room so they're not facing each other so it's your own space and it becomes private," said Monahan. "It'll be cool."

Visit Duluth President and CEO Anna Tanski called the hostel project great news for travelers seeking different lodging options.

"It will be a first for us," she said. "I anticipate there will be a demand from a segment that seeks out a value option. The price point that it offers will be attractive to a fair number of visitors."

Tanski said high-season hotel rooms can average around \$200 a night in Downtown Duluth and Canal Park. High demand events, like Grandma's Marathon weekend, can push room rates into the \$300 to \$400 range.

New hotel development has increased competition and kept room rates consistent. A Holiday Inn Express and Hampton Inn recently opened in the Miller Hill shopping district. Pier B Resort opened on the waterfront in June 2016 and a Fairfield Inn is under construction at the Lakehead Marina on Park Point. Duluth now has approximately 3,300 rooms available for visitors year round.

"We've really undergone a two-year boom in hotel construction," said Tanski. "It's the largest we've had since Canal Park was developed in the 1990s."



https://2b9sqw2iiqxr36ntqa1exnal-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/DSC_0384-e1510791414165.jpg

A street-level room is currently undergoing renovation. The space will feature custom-made bunk beds for inexpensive lodging.



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TOYOTA200X (HTTPS://WWW.PERFECTDULUTHDAY.COM/AUTHOR/TOYOTA200X/)

about 11 months ago (https://www.perfectduluthday.com/2017/11/16/bob-monahan-launches-downtown-hostel-project/#comment-78646)

Great news. Thanks for story.

CLAIRE (HTTPS://WWW.PERFECTDULUTHDAY.COM/AUTHOR/CALK/)

about 11 months ago (https://www.perfectduluthday.com/2017/11/16/bob-monahan-launches-downtown-hostel-project/#comment-78650)

This is exciting news for downtown Duluth and I wish Bob success! I've had friends visiting me in Duluth who can't afford to stay in hotels, they are so expensive. A hostel is a great idea! This is going to bring more interesting and young people into Duluth. I've heard that the new hostel up in Grand Marais has done very well too.

LUCIE AMUNDSEN (HTTPS://WWW.PERFECTDULUTHDAY.COM/AUTHOR/LUCIE-AMUNDSEN-2/)

about 11 months ago (https://www.perfectduluthday.com/2017/11/16/bob-monahan-launches-downtown-hostel-project/#comment-78654)

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This is so great! People are getting priced out of visiting Duluth -- cheers to making this a place everyone can visit.

KEVIN F. DECKER
([HTTPS://WWW.PERFECTDULUTHDAY.COM/AUTHOR/KEVIN-DECKER/](https://www.perfectduluthday.com/author/kevin-decker/))

about 11 months ago

(<https://www.perfectduluthday.com/2017/11/16/bob-monahan-launches-downtown-hostel-project/#comment-78666>)

What a fantastic and exciting project for Downtown Duluth! A lodging venue such as this is long overdue, and will provide affordable access to all that Duluth has to offer. It is not only inviting to the millennial crowd, but provides an opportunity to all generations who want to explore this wonderful city!

KAREN MARIE
([HTTPS://WWW.PERFECTDULUTHDAY.COM/AUTHOR/KAREN-MARIE/](https://www.perfectduluthday.com/author/karen-marie/))

about 11 months ago

(<https://www.perfectduluthday.com/2017/11/16/bob-monahan-launches-downtown-hostel-project/#comment-78695>)

That is super kool. I inquired about this idea from city officials two years ago, and no one would answer my emails. But glad Bob is on it. The prices quoted, even in the off-season are quite high for a hostel bunk though. As someone who has stayed in a bunch of hostels, European and U.S., these would be the highest prices I have seen anywhere for a bunk/shared space. It would even be high for a private room. See: Hostelworld.

CARL SACK
([HTTPS://WWW.PERFECTDULUTHDAY.COM/AUTHOR/REDIGUANA/](https://www.perfectduluthday.com/author/rediguana/))

about 11 months ago

(<https://www.perfectduluthday.com/2017/11/16/bob-monahan-launches-downtown-hostel-project/#comment-78708>)

Great idea, Bob. I wish the project success!

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