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Los Angeles Times

HEAR HARLEY'S VROOM IN MILWAUKEE

TUESDAY, JULY 01, 2008
BY SUSAN CARPENTER

...My second day began across the canal from the new Harley-Davidson Museum, where I got a hard-hat tour of an intriguing new hotel called the Iron Horse. One hundred years ago, the six-story brick building was a furniture factory. Now it's being transformed into a luxury boutique hotel catering to business travelers and motorcycle enthusiasts. The hotel was just two months from its scheduled Sept. 1 opening, but that plan wasn't obvious. The entrance was clogged with bulldozers, and the interior was swarming with hard-hatted workers. The Iron Horse's owner, Tim Dixon, 46, was able to show me an almost finished room, though. As with so many other revitalization projects in Milwaukee, this one has been careful to retain and incorporate much of the building's history. The old wooden pillars that were removed for the remodel are being re-crafted into boot benches that will rest on the slate tile floors of the rooms' entryways. A 1907 sign for the Milwaukee Boiler Co. will mark the entrance to an underground pool called the Boiler Room. The hotel's motorcycling orientation is subtle. The entire subbasement is designed to house motorcycles, and the furniture in the lounge is leather, but overall the cycle theme, to a non-motorcyclist, is merely elegant. But a biker who looks closely will find purposeful nods, such as the custom iron hooks in the rooms, designed to withstand 60 pounds of wet leather. BIKER BOOTS? NO BIGGIE The concept for the Iron Horse is to be stylish for business travelers yet durable for bikers, so a woman like me would feel equally comfortable walking through the lobby in high heels or dirty buckle boots. "My hope is that at my bar on a Saturday afternoon, I've got two guys in full leathers having a pint of beer and talking about their ride, three businesswomen having martinis too early and four grandmas having a late lunch," Dixon said...

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