

# NEWS



Release Date: IMMEDIATE

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## **THOR EQUITIES, NEW OWNERS OF THE PALMER HOUSE SAYS "ALL SYSTEMS GO" FOR THE HISTORIC CHICAGO HOTEL**

(Chicago, IL) - The much anticipated restoration of the historic Palmer House Hilton since being acquired by THOR EQUITIES last year is moving ahead on schedule according to Mary Ann Cronin, Director of Development for THOR EQUITIES.

"Today's meeting with the City of Chicago's Commission on Chicago landmarks and the positive votes is an important first step in THOR EQUITIES exciting restoration plans for the Palmer House Hilton. THOR couldn't be more pleased or grateful for this vital demonstration of support and encouragement the city has given us today, said Margaret Tobin, Executive Vice President of Development, THOR EQUITIES."

"The timing of the restoration and rejuvenation of the Palmer House couldn't be more perfect," according to J. Peter Lynn, Palmer House Hilton general manager. The Chicago hotel market has been experiencing a tremendous growth in the past year with a number of leisure and business - oriented new hotels announced and beginning construction. "The Palmer House needs to be competitive, and our new owner's exciting and innovative plans over the next three years will return the Palmer House to its rightful place as one of the world's great hotels, and most assuredly one of the top hotels in Chicago. Hilton Hotels Corporation is delighted with THOR EQUITIES overwhelming commitment to the rebirth of the Palmer House. We are especially pleased that with all the new enhancements and upgrades to take place within and outside the hotel, our new owners are taking great pains to maintain, even enhance the historical integrity of the property," Lynn said.

"Plans are in the final stages of development and the commencement of phase one should begin sometime during the fourth quarter of the year," Cronin said. Cronin adds that specifics of the \$150 million dollar comprehensive project will be revealed in early fall -- probably mid-September, but highlights just a few of restoration project's features: The unsightly exterior fire escapes and grill - like covers that camouflage them on the State street side of the hotel, dogging it for decades, will be removed and replaced with interior fire exit stairwells. Hotel guests can look forward to indoor parking, thanks to the creation of an interior parking garage that is part of the rejuvenation portion of the hotel. Further, guests will be greeted at both the Monroe and Wabash Street entrances of the hotel under newly reconfigured and lit canopies. Dramatic sky lights will create an open and inviting feeling.

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## ADD ONE

The redesign of the Monroe street entrance includes relocating the spectacular hand - forged, bronze doors with their majestic peacock motif that were the signature of Chicago's first incorporated business, C.D. Peacock. "The relocation to the Monroe street entrance of the hotel will put them in a place where these magnificent doors can be better seen and appreciated." Cronin said. Being sensitive to the historical significance of the former C.D. Peacock jewelry emporium (now Ultra Diamonds), the retention and restoration of the original storefronts will return the corner of Monroe and State to its original glory and splendor.

Accommodations included in the rejuvenation program are, 1,000 remodeled rooms, and 54 new suites, all with a focus on hospitality functions. A dramatic 4,000 square foot penthouse suite, costing over \$9 million dollars will be the most luxurious of its kind in the city.

Still further plans include a full day spa, and a totally upgraded fitness center. Prominent in THOR EQUITIES plans for the Palmer House Hilton is a completely redesigned street arcade and State street frontage targeted to attract upscale retail operations more in line with today's higher retailer expectations. This new design will clearly make a statement about the Palmer House's entrance into its third century of operation --- again, being sensitive to its history.

"The restoration of what has been called, 'the Chicago hotel the world knows best' is truly going to be a labor of love for all those involved," Joseph J. Sitt, President & CEO of THOR EQUITIES said. "Moreover, our company's acquisition of the Palmer House and its return to grandeur is demonstrative of the reawakening of the downtown Chicago area, particularly the developments taking place south of the Chicago River. Clearly, a new chapter is being written in downtown Chicago's history. We believe THOR EQUITIES is leading the charge," Sitt added.

"The Palmer House is a welcome addition to THOR's outstanding portfolio of properties," said Sitt. We are excited by the opportunity to further improve its stature through a \$150 million dollar restoration and renovation program that will include an exciting new retail component. When the details and specifics of the program are released in September, the Palmer House will be making news throughout the world," Sitt said.

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