

Molly Hayes Sun Jan 20 2013 23:20:00 3 Comments 1 Recommend

Fond memories of the Connaught, high hopes for its future

Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.

The rebirth of the Connaught is an idea Hamiltonians have heard before, and some downtowners are reservedly optimistic about the latest redevelopment rumblings.

"When I see the scaffolding go up, I'll believe it," Larry Sobel said Saturday, after news broke last week of plans for a massive condo project in the building.

Sobel has run Rainbow Bridal for 35 years, kitty-corner to the hotel just west of King and John streets.

He was hired back then to close the place — "my uncle told me 'King Street is dead.'"

But he had faith in it then, has faith in it now, and wants nothing more than to see the Connaught revived.



Connaught

Cathie Coward/The Hamilton Spectator

Will this be the plan that succeeds for the old Royal Connaught Hotel, or will it be another pipe dream?

1 of 4



"It's a suicide mission for me," he joked. "I want this downtown to explode, and then I won't be able to afford rent here."

Back when the hotel was vibrant and full of people, he never had to give customers directions.

"For 25 years when people would ask where we're located, I'd say 'by the Connaught Hotel' and that was enough," he said.