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## PROVENANCE EXPANDS

Provenance Hotels is expanding its reach to cover the West Coast and eventually plans to move into the Midwest.

The Portland-based hotel operator, formerly Aspen Hotel Group, announced this week that it has a new president, new offices in San Francisco and Seattle, and contracts to manage three bank-owned boutique hotels in the Bay area.

Bashar Wali was named president and succeeds Howard Jacobs, who announced his resignation as president and COO on June 11. Wali joined Provenance in 2006. Prior to that, he served as vice president for Grand Heritage Hotels International.

The Portland-based hotel chain will retain its focus on upscale urban hotels. Its portfolio includes Hotel Lucia and Hotel deLuxe in Portland, the Hotel Max in Seattle and the Hotel Murano in Tacoma.

Wali said the market is ripe for new investment.

"We don't pretend to be smart enough to time cycles, but it appears to be time to expand beyond the comfort zone of the Pacific Northwest," he said.

Wali said the firm has been backed by "country club" capital from friends and family. Now, Wall Street investors are showing interest in partnering with experienced hotel operators to take advantage of bottom-of-market prices.

Wali said Provenance is working with several companies and will consider outright purchases as well as management agreements and joint ventures.

Provenance manages a total of 14 properties, including ones it owns. Wali said ideal candidates are older hotel properties with "great bones" that could be transformed into urban boutiques.

Provenance opened a Seattle office to lead its social media efforts and a San Francisco office to serve as its center for international activity.

Wali said the logical next step is to work its way down the West Coast, then expand toward the Midwest.

He said Provenance could migrate as far as Minneapolis or Chicago, but no further.

Gordon Sondland continues as chairman and CEO.

— Wendy Culverwell