

See inside the new Central West End hotel that caters to millennials



By [Gloria Lloyd](#) – Reporter, St. Louis Business Journal
Dec 16, 2021

A new \$44 million hotel built on prime real estate in the Central West End is opening to guests for the first time Thursday, with an atmosphere designed to cater to millennials.

AC Hotel [will open its first St. Louis location](#), with seven stories and 192 rooms, at 215 York Ave. The property once held the television studio for KPLR-TV, whose “Wrestling at the Chase” events in the 1960s and 1970s were hosted next door at the Chase Park Plaza hotel. The former television studio was torn down for the new ground-up hotel construction.

A venture of Marriott, the AC Hotel brand caters to millennial travelers, said developer [Sam Kopljar](#), president of St. Louis-based Kopljar Properties, which developed the site. Kopljar Properties owns the local hotel in partnership with Montana developer Homebase Partners and Concord Hospitality Enterprises, which will manage it. Several

developments around St. Louis also have announced they will include an AC Hotel, including [downtown](#), [Chesterfield](#) and [Clayton](#), but the Central West End location is the first to open.

The hotel brand intentionally appeals to younger travelers with slightly smaller rooms that have modern, minimalist touches such as hardwood-style flooring and upscale finishes, while prioritizing experiences over traditional hotel amenities, Koplars said.

“It’s really a lifestyle brand, and the long and short of it is it’s got everything you need, nothing you don’t. It’s geared toward the millennial traveler,” Koplars said. “It’s got a good European feel to it, and that really interested us. Younger travelers want to have more unique experiences when they travel — they don’t want the bacon double cheeseburger you get in the hotel lobby. They want to go out and explore the neighborhood where it’s walkable, where there’s shops and restaurants. And I think the Central West End provides that.”

Koplars Properties contributed the land to the partnership, said Koplars, whose grandfather [Harold Koplars](#) originally owned the site and founded KPLR, better known locally as Channel 11. Koplars’s father, [Ted Koplars](#), later ran the television station and created the children’s show “[Voltron](#).” The family sold the television station in 1997 for \$150 million.

As a developer, Koplars said he’s followed more in his grandfather’s footsteps than his father’s.

“My [father was always a television guy](#), but my grandfather was a hotel guy, and I think I kind of got the hotel bug,” Koplars said.

The project has been more than a decade in the making, after Koplars rehabilitated the historic KPLR offices next to the Chase Park Plaza into [luxury apartment building York House](#). Financing fell through for some planned projects in the Great Recession, and rebuilding on the KPLR studio site required many years of planning and more than 25 months of construction because of the heavy engineering needed to handle some of the site’s unique challenges. [Demolition started in late 2019](#).

Construction took so long mostly because part of the KPLR building was tied into the structure of the Khorassan Ballroom of the [Chase Park Plaza](#), which was also owned from 1929 to 1981 by the Koplars family. [Harold Koplars](#) constructed tunnels from one building to the other to easily move cameras back and forth to broadcast “Wrestling at the Chase.”

“We had to figure out how to tear down this building without the Khorassan Ballroom falling down,” Koplars said. “Imagine if you had a table, a four-legged table, and you took out two of the legs. How do you keep the table from collapsing? It’s a little bit more complicated than that, but that’s basically in a nutshell what our challenge was. And there were all sorts of tunnels underneath. It was a challenge, and I pretty much learned more about engineering than I thought I’d ever know.”

Contractor Midas Construction also had to shore up the Chase's parking garage as part of construction. Building the actual hotel was a much smoother process, Koplars said. And he's happy now to be able to focus on other developments.

"There's obviously a lot of family history there," Koplars said of the KPLR site. "We're just very excited about it and looking forward to continued growth in the area."