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### **Portland Center Stage optimistic about Armory.**

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Byline: Aimee Curl

After pounding the pavement feverishly for two months, Portland Center Stage is hopeful it can raise the \$2 million necessary to secure the Armory as its new home. <P>"We're making progress," said Greg Ness, chairman of the board at PCS. "We're hoping to have the \$2 million by Sept. 30." <P>Ness said a campaign to raise such a large amount of money in a short period of time is about "personal contact on a much expedited basis." <P>He declined to comment on how much PCS had left to raise or whether they were talking to potential large donors. <P>"We're talking to people about it, trying to get them as excited about the opportunity as we are," he said. "As with any bricks-and-mortar campaign, there are naming and sponsorship opportunities associated." <P>Meanwhile, **Gerding/Edlen Development Co.** - who had been shopping around for a commercial use for the 37,000-square-foot space - has put its potential tenant, a fitness center, on hold. <P>"It was a difficult thing to do, but we decided it was the right thing to do to give Portland Center Stage a shot," said Scott Eaton, Gerding/Edlen's director of marketing. "We have to live here, too. Portland Center Stage would be a great use for the building." <P>Bob Gerding, principal at Gerding/Edlen, is also a member of the PCS board of directors. <P>The Portland Development Commission voted in July to try to purchase the historic Armory building and convert the facility into a new performance venue for Portland Center Stage. <P>The \$4.2 million needed to buy the Armory will be borrowed from the city against future urban renewal dollars in that area. The loan will be made through a newly formed entity called the Portland Historic Rehabilitation Fund. <P>If PCS hasn't raised \$2 million by the end of this month, the commission can put up an additional \$2 million to complete the project and look for another tenant. <P>Portland Center Stage currently performs in the Newmark Theatre on Southwest Broadway Avenue and Main Street. <P>Built in 1889, the Armory - which was last used as part of Stroh's brewing operation - has stood vacant since November 1999. The building sits on Block 3 of Gerding/Edlen's Brewery Blocks project. It shares a common wall with The Henry, a 15-story, 123-unit condominium building now under construction. <P>PDC is currently going through due diligence to purchase the building from Gerding/Edlen. Norris Lozano, resource development director at PDC, said they hope to close on the deal in October. <P>Because of the Armory's location adjacent to The Henry, the building must have its wooden roof removed and replaced with steel before owners of The Henry's condos can move in next May. <P>"We are in a position, because of timing constraints, where we may need to start some of this work ahead of final approvals from the commission," said Kelly Saito, a principal at Gerding/Edlen and project manager on the development. <P>"The city and Gerding/Edlen and Portland Center Stage - everyone is trying to work together to make this thing happen. It's a good chance that as we move forward, some or all of us may need to compromise to accomplish the greater good to move forward," Saito said. <P>The commission will vote today on an interim loan of \$170,000 to cover due-diligence-related expenses associated with closing the deal. <P>"The money is for Portland Center Stage's participation in the transaction, to prove their abilities and commitment," Lozano said. "(PDC's) interest remains. We're grinding along, doing what

we need to do to get things done."<P><P>

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