

Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Center to be part of Grand Prairie development

Scheduled to open in 2010

By Michael Smothers

PEORIA (Dec. 1, 2008) - Quietly for now, workers are beginning construction of a full-service hotel and conference center with a top-shelf name that will be a first for this city and add new muscle to its retail and entertainment industries.

The five-story Holiday Inn Hotel and Conference Center appears guaranteed as the latest example of successful synergy between its developer, Petersen Hotels of Peoria, and the Shoppes at Grand Prairie, its neighboring, regionally drawing lifestyle center.

The new hotel and conference/banquet center actually will anchor Plaza West, a 20-acre expansion of the Shoppes at U.S. Route 150 and Orange Prairie Road that also will include Robert H. Michel Veterans Outpatient Clinic and office/retail space.

"It will be the first full-service hotel in North Peoria – really, outside of downtown," said Doug Courier, vice president of hotel operations for Petersen Hotels. Yet, he added, "This is step five in our strategic plan to provide hotel rooms for every need the (area's) development has generated."

The previous four are three current hotels and a fourth under construction, all operating "around the corridor" of the Shoppes, which Cullinan Properties Ltd. of Peoria developed and continues to manage. Cullinan also is Plaza West's developer.

"We firmly believe we have a great relationship between the Shoppes and



our hotels, (with) both ranking high in customer service," Courier said.

The new Holiday Inn will feature 115 rooms on five floors, a full-service restaurant and a conference/banquet center of more than 6,000 square feet that will be attached to the hotel but also feature a separate entrance. Courier said its space will be dividable and, under revised plans, will include an additional board meeting room.

After initial groundwork this fall, full construction will begin in spring with opening expected by early fall 2010. Courier said a ground-breaking ceremony will come this spring.

Petersen Hotels is targeting conference-related business, weddings, banquets and leisure/shopping guests for its Holiday Inn. Courier said the company's four other area hotels were planned to serve specific hotel industry niches as the area's business and residential base grows.

Wingate by Wyndham, he said, serves business travelers in the area that includes Caterpillar Inc's Mossville plant

and Edwards testing ground, guests who previously sought rooms in downtown hotels miles away. Country Inn & Suites caters to residential/family travelers and tourists. Candlewood Suites serves extended-stay travelers and Hampton Inn & Suites, under construction, is a hotel brand highly popular in the medical industry, he said.

