



Hotels head toward completion across St. Augustine

By Colleen Jones
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There are about a half dozen hotel construction projects in various stages of progress across St. Augustine, and it looks like at least two properties could be open as soon as summer 2020.

Those closest to completion are the Renaissance Marriott at 28 San Marco Ave. and a Holiday Inn Express at 140 Vilano Road in Vilano Beach. Both are being built by two well-known local hoteliers, Kanti Patel and Farid Ashdji, respectively.

The Renaissance broke ground in August 2018, incorporating parcels that formerly housed a Best Western hotel and Barnacle Bill's restaurant. The Victorian-style hotel will be a three-story, 89-room complex with a restaurant and bar. The project dates back to 2006 and initially was delayed by the recession. It is anticipated to begin filing rooms sometime next summer.

"It seems to be on target," said Tom Manno, vice president of operations for Jalarem Hotels, Inc., which is Patel's development company.

Jalarem has built numerous other chain hotels in St. Augustine and has in the hopper a Hilton Garden Inn and a Marriott SpringHill Suites, both of which will have between 80 and 100 rooms. The Garden Inn will be at 185 Matanzas Ave., just off Ponce de Leon Blvd., and the SpringHill Suites will be constructed a little farther north, at 1850 North Ponce de Leon. Manno said both projects would begin in 2020.

Also planned by Patel is a boutique hotel at the old cigar factory building at 88 Patel St., just off King Street.

Ashdi is also a big name in the St. Augustine hospitality business. He is currently developing a Holiday Inn Express and a Hyatt right across the street from each other within the Vilano Town Center.

Contractors recently began work on the second floor of the three-story Holiday Inn that Ashdi said would open next summer. The 50-room hotel will include a coffee shop and diner on the ground floor, both which will be independently run, according to Ashdi. The project had been slated for completion by this December, but issues with labor and structural systems caused some delay.

Work is also being done on a Hyatt nearby at 125 Vilano Road. The 120-room hotel should open by the end of 2020 and will include underground parking and a restaurant/rooftop bar. No tenants

have been named yet, Ashdi said, but he said the rooftop venue would be “trendy, fun, kind of like a Salt Life — a place for locals to come to, too. ... It will be 41 feet high so you can see out to the river, the ocean and downtown St. Augustine.”

Another hotel under construction is the Lotus Inn & Suites at Prawn and King streets, the former site of Fazio’s Seafood Market. The Lotus will offer boutique-style accommodations in 50 units and is being developed by the same restaurant group as a hotel of the same name in Ormond Beach in Volusia County.