

North Hills to get a hotel

Luxury Marriott joins the lineup

BY SAM LAGRONE
STAFF WRITER

A 240-room hotel is the latest addition to the continuing renovation at Raleigh's North Hills mall site.

The Renaissance Raleigh Hotel, which will be part of the luxury brand of Marriott Hotel International, based in Bethesda, Md., will break ground in three to four months, said John Kane, chief executive of Kane Realty, which is developing the North Hills complex.

Concord Hospitality Enterprises Co. will oversee the hotel's construction. Architects are still drafting plans, and a contractor has not been chosen, but Kane and Concord promise an assortment of boutiques and conference space to rival other Wake County locales. They expect the hotel to be completed in late 2005.

"We have the opportunity to deliver what has not been delivered in this city: that is, the best hotel, the best catering and event center that the city has to offer," said Mark Laport, CEO of Concord.

The Renaissance will have 10,000 square feet of convention space and 12 suites. All rooms will have high-speed Internet access, and wireless access will be available in public areas. Guests will also have access to an adjacent Gold's Gym Athletic Club and a day spa.

The Renaissance isn't the only luxury hotel planned for the Triangle next year.

Ann Goodnight, wife of SAS Institute co-founder Jim Goodnight, is planning to open a \$70 million hotel, The Umstead, in Cary late next year. First American Hotels is spending \$30 million to refurbish the old Sheraton hotel at Crabtree Valley Mall into a Westin Hotel. That renovation is slated for completion in the summer of 2005, said president Sanjay Mundra.

All are hoping to snag a four- or

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five-star rating from the Mobil Travel Guide or a similar diamond rating from AAA.

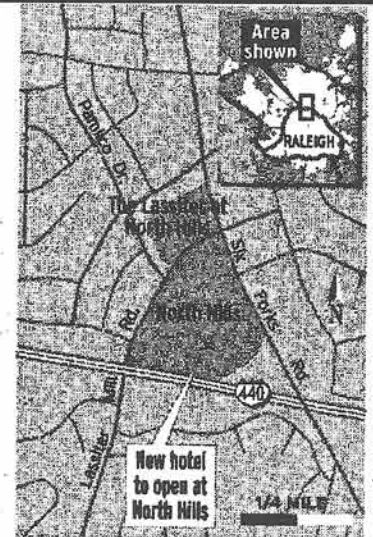
The Triangle has only three full-service hotels with a luxury rating from Mobil or AAA: the Siena Hotel and Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill and the Washington Duke Inn & Golf Club in Durham. The Fearington House in Pittsboro has a five-diamond and five-star rating as a country inn.

Daniel Heinel, president of the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau, said that these luxury hotels are a long time in coming.

"We're catching up with what a community our size normally has," Heinel said.

The Renaissance hotel is the final anchor for the refurbished North Hills shopping center just outside the Beltline at Six Forks Road and Interstate 440. It will be the first Renaissance in the Triangle and the second in North Carolina.

Concord's Laport said that the hotel would employ about 160.



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North Hills Mall was originally built in 1967 and opened as one of the first enclosed shopping malls in the Southeast. The mall was demolished in 2003 to make way for a planned \$200 million mixed-use development, composed of retail, office and residential space.

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