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SUNDAY NEWS

Business

'Boutique' goes up in city Lancaster Arts Hotel reaches for August opening

BY PAULA WOLF

*Sunday News Staff Writer
pwolf@inquirer.com*

While the downtown convention center/luxury hotel project is still on the drawing board, business travelers and other visitors won't have to wait much longer for an upscale place to stay in Lancaster city.

Seven months after its groundbreaking, the Lancaster Arts Hotel is making steady progress and expects to open in early August.

A 19th-century tobacco warehouse at North Mulberry Street and Harrisburg Avenue is being converted into a "boutique" establishment, which will feature 47 rooms and 16 suites. Art work, primarily from local artists, will be displayed throughout the hotel.

Getting ready

A month ago, 30-year hospitality industry veteran David Payne was brought on as general manager. Lisa Bedenbaugh, director of

the Lynden Gallery in Elizabethtown, has been hired as project manager.

Payne previously was general manager of the Comfort Inn Sherwood Knoll; the Netherlands Inn & Spa, Strasburg; and the Hotel Brunswick.

A luxury, or boutique, hotel is unique to Lancaster, he said, and should fill a niche. "It's going to be really beautiful."

The Lancaster Arts Hotel, 300 Harrisburg Ave., is in the James Street Improvement District and within a couple of blocks of Clipper Magazine Stadium. Franklin & Marshall College is close by, as well.

The five-story, 35,000-square-foot edifice, on the National Register of Historic Places, will house all the suites and most of the rooms; 10 rooms will be in a second, smaller building that's about 50 years old.

Twelve of the 16 suites will boast whirlpool tubs, and all suites and rooms will be equipped with flat-screen TVs. Some suites are as large as 700 square feet.

Nightly rates have yet to be determined,

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Blaine T. Shahan/SUNDAY NEWS

This stone wall will be the lobby of the Lancaster Arts Hotel, a "boutique" establishment that will showcase local art work.

Hotel: Niche operation creates 'buzz'

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said John de Vitry, one of the five developers of the \$5 million enterprise. The other four are Peter Egan, Bill Stull, Gary Neff and Brad Gearhart.

The first floor of the hotel will have radiant heat and include a lobby; a business center; two conference rooms; an art gallery; and a restaurant with outdoor, patio seating overlooking Northwest Corridor Linear Park. Wireless Internet access will be available in all the rooms and suites, and elsewhere, Payne said.

"We want to be competitive with the best hotels in the region,"

he said.

Most of the furniture in the hotel will be made by Pennsylvania artisans, de Vitry said. Traditional pieces by New Holland furniture maker John Martin, including four-poster beds, will be showcased on the fifth floor, he said.

De Vitry even has designed "tobacco chairs," decorated with tobacco leaves, for the hotel lobby and one of the suites; they're being crafted by Martin, he said. Beyond furniture and artwork, de Vitry said the hotel also will focus on performing and literary arts such as music and poetry.

Drywalling is now being done, and all the electrical and mechani-

cal systems are in place for the guest areas, he said. Almost all the brick walls will be exposed, de Vitry said, and some original wood floors, too.

De Vitry is director of design at Stuart & Associates Architects, which is the architect for the project. Caldwell, Heckles & Egan, of which Peter Egan is president, is the general contractor.

Consulting with Stuart & Associates are Lancaster's DePaul Planning & Design; Whirlwind Creative of New York City; and Carver & Associates of Atlanta. Growth Properties Investment Managers, Philadelphia, will manage the hotel.



Todd B. Spidle/SUNDAY NEWS

Preparing for the opening, Payne said he's in the process of setting up a Web site, www.lancasterartshotel.com, which should be operating within a month, and a



From left, David Payne, general manager; John de Vitry, owner; Jim Kendall, Stuart & Associates Architects; and David Lackey of Whirlwind Creation look over plans at the site of the Lancaster Arts Hotel.

reservations system.

Business and leisure travelers are the main target, de Vitry said, but the establishment also can host social gatherings such as small weddings and receptions. It would be ideal for out-of-town skybox guests at Lancaster Barnstormers'

games, he said.

The hotel, on the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention & Visitors Bureau Web site, is already generating a lot of interest and has gotten inquiries from people in New York and New Jersey, Payne said.

"There's a buzz," de Vitry said. ■

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