

Glendale's first 4-star luxury hotel is ready to roll

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The new Renaissance Glendale Hotel & Spa, which opens today at Westgate City Center, is just another indication that the West Valley city is getting ready for its moment in the spotlight.

Not only is the 320-room property Glendale's first four-star luxury hotel, it is expected to be very much on display during the week of Super Bowl XLII, which will be played Feb. 3 at nearby University of Phoenix Stadium.

The 12-story property hasn't had any overnight guests yet, but by some measures, it is already a success. The Renaissance, which features a two-story spa, a full-service restaurant and 135,000 square feet of meeting space, has booked nearly \$20 million in [business](#). And it is completely full during Super Bowl week, when guests are required to reserve a 10-night minimum, up to \$999 a night.

The property also represents hotelier John Q. Hammons' first foray into the Valley market. The Missouri billionaire has developed nearly 200 hotels in 40 states across the country, from Coral Springs, Fla., to Reno, Nev., to his company's headquarters in Springfield, Mo.

The Republic recently sat down with Hammons at his new \$40 million property to discuss the Valley market, his business strategy and his love of sports.

Question: You flew in from Springfield this morning and got your first glimpse of the completed hotel project. What is your impression?

Answer: It's too rich; it's extremely [nice](#) and well done. We're certainly not disappointed but the cost was more than I wanted. In the summer time, when there is so much activity going on, you have to spend some extra dollars to accomplish what you want but that's the name of the game. Costs have risen terribly over the last two years. The foreign markets have got into it demanding critical materials like steel.

Q: It seems like you have your finger on the pulse of the economy.

A: Well, I've noticed corporate business slipping in the latter part of August and first part of September. Last Friday, we found that corporate business has been down these past two weeks of October. Business had fallen off about 14 to 18 percent in the past two weeks in corporate traffic. That is pretty substantial. I sat with a gentleman from Wal-Mart when President Bush gave a speech (last) week at one of our hotels in Rogers, Ark. He said they've (recently) cut back 50 to 60 percent on air travel. I was glad to hear him make that statement because I was catching the same thing. I own the company, so I don't depend on others. I go find out myself.

Q: The Renaissance is Glendale's first four-star luxury hotel. Why did you feel this area was ready for an upscale hotel?

A: The younger generation demands more and expects more and we've experienced a period where

money is plentiful and they get used to spending money. . . . There are two things I do. I never build unless the market's there, and this market's here. And you have to have the experience to be able to judge that market and what it needs so you can design and size and shape the hotel so it meets the void. We put the luxury in here; we put (tremendous) meeting space in here, as well as the parking capability.

Q: You can rattle off every one of the interstates that run east-west across the country. How does the interstate system fit into your business strategy?

A: With the growth of the interstate system, I began to see where the rapid construction was taking place, mainly in the Carolinas, Georgia, Mississippi, Texas and Tennessee. That's where I started putting my hotels first because the interstate highways were more completed there. Then I took note of the New England states. . . . I looked at the Phoenix beltline at (Interstates 17 and 10). It's a way you can get here from various places; it's pretty easy to navigate. You can't locate where people can't go. You can't locate where people can't get there on a timely basis.

Q: You're now 88 years old. Most people would have retired 20 years ago if they were in your shoes. What keeps you going?

A: I haven't got time to retire. I'm gonna keep going. I've got \$320 million under construction right now.

Q: I read that you are a sports nut and own a minor-league baseball stadium in Missouri. What does it mean for you to build this hotel in an emerging sports district where the Super Bowl will be played next year?

A: The hotel is just about business, that's all I'm interested in here. But I'm interested in baseball and basketball. This will be my 59th year going to spring training for the Cincinnati Reds. As for the Final Four (NCAA men's basketball tournament), I've been to 58 without a miss. But I've never been to the Super Bowl in my life.

Q: Is there a possibility we might see you at Super Bowl XLII in February?

A: I don't know. If the price is too high, I won't be able to afford it (laughs).