

Official ... sort of Marana is puttin'TM on the Ritz

*By Joe Pangburn
Inside Tucson Business*

The cat is out of the bag officially – sort of – on the poorly kept secret that Ritz Carlton is planning to build a resort at Dove Mountain.

T.L. Roof & Associates announced it signed a contract Oct. 1 to be the general contractor for the Ritz-Carlton Resort at Dove Mountain.

"It's a project that's been in the development stages for several years," said John Hobbs, president of T.L. Roof & Associates. "We have a notice to proceed to start Oct 8."

Site preparation work, including the pad has already been done by the property owner so beginning today (Oct. 8), T.L. Roof says it will start the layout for the foundations and the excavation for the footings of the 300,000 square-foot resort.

Still, though, the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company isn't saying much. When asked to comment about the plans for a resort in Marana, a Ritz-Carlton spokeswoman didn't know where Marana was. But when asked about Dove Mountain, she said "Oh Dove Mountain, we haven't released anything about that project yet."

On Aug. 20, the Town of Marana issued a building permit naming Ritz-Carlton. Also, on its website – www.heritagehighlands.com – the retirement community of Heritage Highlands notes the area includes a Ritz-Carlton and a Jack Nicklaus Signature Series golf course. Also, earlier this year, Tucson Water approved a water main extension, a nearly 300,000 gallon reservoir and booster station for the resort.

T.L. Roof's Hobbs said he knows Ritz-Carlton is involved but, did not know why there has been no official announcement. He just knows he is excited to get going.

"It's going to be a fantastic resort," Hobbs said. "One thing that has been important to Ritz-Carlton recently is building resorts that are unique to their environments."

Due to that, there will be adobe and stone used on the exterior. It will be a low profile structure that blends into the Tortolita Mountains.

The main structure will have roughly 225 guest rooms spread over four stepped levels. There will also be a spa attached to the main building. Detached from the structure in the side canyon will be 10 casita buildings containing 26 casitas.

"They will have a really nice view looking south down the canyon," Hobbs said.

T.L. Roof & Associates is a subsidiary company of O'Neil Industries, a national construction company based out of Phoenix. O'Neil has done several large resorts, but this is the first for T.L. Roof & Associates.

"We're very excited," Hobbs said. "We've been working hard on it for three months now. It is a big project and it has taken a lot of effort from our people."

Ritz-Carlton has only one other property in Arizona, a hotel in Phoenix.

"This project is a step above that one," Hobbs said.

The construction contract is for two years and Hobbs said he believes the goal is to open the resort in the fall of 2009.