

Good news in Oro Valley: Hotels popping up all over

By Lourdes Medrano

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If current trends are any indication, Oro Valley could experience significant growth in hotel development in the coming years.

The 104-room Wingate by Wyndham Hotel opened recently at 11075 N. Oracle Road in Steam Pump Village, bringing to three the number of hotels in town. Plans are in the works to build at least another four.

"That's a good thing," said Sarah More, the town's planning and zoning director.

In essence, developers are discovering Oro Valley is the kind of place where hotels can succeed, she said.

"They're just seeing that the market is here," said More, alluding to a growing base of biotech companies that increasingly bring in travelers who need nearby lodging.

The Sunway Hotel Group plans to open the Marriott Springhill Suites early next year and the Hilton Homewood Suites after that, said company CEO Donald Culbertson.

The two hotels, each with about 120 rooms, will be at the northeast corner of North Oracle Road and East Linda Vista Boulevard in El Corredor commercial development.

Sunway's research studies show Oro Valley as an effective market for lodging, said Barry Brautman, company president.

"There is sufficient demand for the hotels," he said.

Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort, at 10000 N. Oracle Road, is Oro Valley's oldest hotel, with more than 400 rooms. The 89-room Holiday Inn Express opened next at 10150 N. Oracle Road.

Other hotels chains that are considering building in Oro Valley include Embassy Suites and Hampton Inn, More said.

There's been speculation about other hotels coming into town, but her department has yet to see specific proposals, she said.

Any new hotels would add revenue to town coffers through Oro Valley's 6 percent bed tax, which is a tax on temporary lodgings.

The tax brings in more than \$1.1 million annually, said Stacey Lemos, town finance director.

Under a special agreement with Oro Valley that ends in 2010, El Conquistador gets 2 percent of the town's 6 percent bed tax collected at the resort.

Any new hotels would have to pay the full 6 percent because a unanimous Town Council repealed such economic incentives in December 2007.

Hotels: old, new, planned

- Two new hotels are expected to open in Oro Valley next year: the Marriott Springhill Suites and the Hilton Homewood Suites, at North Oracle Road and East Linda Vista Boulevard.
- The Wingate by Wyndham recently opened at 11075 N. Oracle Road, bringing to three the number of existing hotels.
- The other two hotels in Oro Valley are the Hilton Tucson El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort, at 10000 N. Oracle Road, and the Holiday Inn Express, at 10150 N. Oracle Road.

The policy that allows the resort to share the bed tax was adopted in 1999 to lure the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Co. LLC, which opted to build in Marana, Mayor Paul Loomis said.

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