

Embassy Suites Announces Largest Development Pipeline in Upscale Hotel Brand's 24-Year History

2008-08-19

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Embassy Suites Hotels(R), currently with 192 hotels, is experiencing its strongest development pipeline in the brand's 24-year history. Currently 62 franchised hotels are scheduled to open in the next three years, many of which will be the highly anticipated Design Option III prototype.

The Design Option III prototype allows developers to build an Embassy Suites on less land, with more efficient use of space and lower construction costs. The first Design Option III hotel, the Embassy Suites Jackson-Ridgeland, is scheduled to open in November 2008, and will mark the brand's entrance into the state of Mississippi.

'We could not be happier about the state of our growth,' beamed Jim Holthouser, senior vice president, brand management, Embassy Suites Hotels. 'We went from five approvals a year in 2005, to 22 in 2006, up to 30 in 2007, and this year we expect to do more than 30, largely in part to the new prototype. Embassy Suites has always been a category-of-one, and in the last 20 years has proved to be consistent in all phases of the business cycle. We are well on our way to exceeding our goal of 300 hotels open, under construction or in the pipeline by 2010.'

Achieving Flexibility with Diversity in Development Pipeline

Embassy Suites Hotels is fueling development, through a combination of new builds, conversions, adaptive reuse, and mixed use properties. While focusing on downtown and urban locations domestically, Embassy Suites is also expanding its growth in Latin America. In the next three years, the brand is expected to see unprecedented growth internationally, with the scheduled openings of properties in Valencia, Venezuela, San Jose, Costa Rica, Tijuana, Mexico, and Panama City, Panama. Urban, downtown locations in primary markets include Denver, CO, New Orleans, LA, Memphis, TN, Houston, TX, St. Louis, MO, and Miami, FL. Airport locations will also be a major focus, in both secondary and tertiary markets, including: Columbus, OH, Jacksonville, FL, Tucson, AZ, and Indianapolis, IN. Aiding this growth is an immense broadening of the developer base, with approximately two-thirds of the 60 properties in the pipeline being first-time Embassy Suites owners.

Brand Innovations Driving Pipeline Growth

Propelling the growth behind Design Option III is the brand's innovative restaurant concept, Flying Spoons. Part European-style café and part American coffeehouse, this concept in hotel food & beverage expands upon the 'fast casual' concept made popular by Panera Bread and other bakery-cafes and creates a new segment deemed 'Hip Casual.' Embassy Suites is accommodating the changing needs of guests by providing a range of convenient, fresh dishes and beverages to fit a variety of schedules: from eating on the go to eating smaller, more frequent meals.

'We know that our primary guest base has traditionally been boomers, but that is beginning to change as Gen X, Y and Millennials come into their own and identify with the Embassy Suites culture and value proposition,' remarked Holthouser. 'With Flying Spoons, we are giving our guests the choice to eat when and how they want to, while giving developers a competitive F&B option, with a Flying Spoons estimated at 30 percent less to develop than a traditional restaurant. Nearly one-fifth of our current pipeline has opted to include a Flying Spoons.'

Upgrades to Existing Hotels Enhancing Brand Quality

Now with Embassy BusinessLink(TM) Business Centers installed in all 192 properties, Embassy Suites is poised to deliver an even more consistent experience to business and leisure travelers, which account for 60 percent and 40 percent of the brand's business, respectively. Powered by Uniguest(R) and PrinterOn(R), the original rollout of Embassy BusinessLink Business Centers began in 2005 and is now complete. PreCor Fitness Centers, which began installation in 2006 in all full-service Hilton Family hotel brands, are now in more than 50 percent of all Embassy Suites properties.

Additionally, the second phase of the Embassy Essentials™ Bedding Collection is rolling out to 81,000 beds in the brand's portfolio, in conjunction with Robert Allen Contract, who is designing, producing and testing the new top of the bed program. It consists of a duvet cover in modern graphic motifs and a solid bed skirt in suede effects. As decorative accents, a coordinating throw and pillow are offered. The bedding is available in a range of six complementary color schemes: Polar Silver, Beige, Lagoon, Topaz, Seaglass and Sienna.

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'Our brand is positioned as a top industry performer, with highest margins in full service, in excellent condition from a quality standpoint, and growing at unparalleled speed,' concluded Jim Holthouser, senior vice president, brand management, Embassy Suites Hotels.

This article comes from Hotel News Resource

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