

Bruce Thompson unveils downtown Norfolk project

Updated: May 22, 2014 - 7:25 pm

Posted: May 22, 2014

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Virginia Beach developer Bruce Thompson officially unveiled his plans for a downtown Norfolk project called "The Main" last week, a conference center and entertainment and dining destination anchored by a Hilton hotel.



The development will sit at Granby and Main streets at the former site of the public park known as The Plot. Since agreeing with the city to build the roughly \$126 million development through a public-private partnership last spring, Thompson repeatedly said he was not interested in building "just another hotel." Last week, he detailed what he meant. **The 23-story hotel will feature 294 rooms, 24 luxury suites, and two presidential suites.**

"Our goal is to create an iconic terminus in downtown that rivals those in major metropolitan cities along the East Coast," PHR Hotels & Resorts CEO said in prepared remarks. "We are very clear that this is not just a hotel but will clearly be a business and leisure destination for business and leisure travelers as well as locals. The Main will be a regional destination and a gathering place for downtown and business leaders after work.

"This destination will acknowledge Norfolk's past, and build on its momentum," he said.

The 23-story upscale hotel, called the Hilton Norfolk at The Main, will feature a two-story atrium with an outsized glass facade and second-floor lobby. Its 294 rooms include 24 luxury suites and two presidential suites, the company said in a press release. Views of the Elizabeth River and downtown Norfolk.

The site will house three restaurant venues, including an urban seafood bistro on the ground floor. Here, the company said, a bar will flow into a dining area, and a 2,000-bottle wine display will overlook the bar and entry. The bistro will feature lobster tanks and a fish-cutting room will serve as backdrops.

On the second floor will sit Varia, an Italian-inspired venue with a piano-anchored wine lounge, an open kitchen with an espresso station and a chandelier reclaimed from the Cavalier Hotel in Virginia Beach.

"The dining room culminates in a large millwork library featuring hidden doors in the bookshelves leading into an ultra-private lounge," the company said.

Saluna will be a roof garden and lounge on the fifth floor, the company said, designed "to bring the outside in and the inside out." Garage doors on both sides of the venue will open to terraced patios, and a large fire pit will double as a live-performance area.

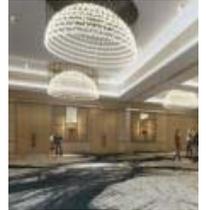
The core of the entire development will be the 100,000-square-foot conference center, to be called The Exchange at The Main. The technologically advanced center will have the largest ballroom in town at 20,000 square feet, enough to accommodate 1,000 people.

As part of the deal with the city, Gold Key is responsible for the \$64 million hotel and the city is covering the 600-space parking garage.

and the conference center. The city had been looking to have such a project built since the early 2000s. City officials ask Key incorporate the nearby historic Decker building into the hotel, and Thompson said that building's brick façade will be first- and second-floor dining venues.

When asked why he chose the name The Main, Thompson replied in an email, "It's short. It's on Main. A group of young Downtown Norfolk selected it."

A groundbreaking was scheduled for late Thursday afternoon, after press time for Inside Business.



Plans call for a square-foot ba



The hotel is als to have a roof



A ground-level also planned.

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