

Work to start on downtown Tulsa hotel, retail center

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The Brady Hotel Center LLC is set to break ground on an \$11 million, four-story hotel and retail center in the heart of the Brady Arts District. (Courtesy Photo)

TULSA – The Brady Hotel Center LLC will break ground at 9:30 a.m. Thursday for an \$11 million, four-story hotel and retail center in downtown Tulsa.

SJS Hospitality will operate the 104-room Fairfield Inn and Suites by Marriott when it opens in the fall of 2012.

Sitting just off Main Street between Archer and Brady streets in Tulsa’s Brady District, the 11,000-square-foot property will feature retail, restaurant and entertainment space at street level, officials said in announcing the

groundbreaking Wednesday afternoon.

With the 200-room Aloft Hotel planned by The Old City Hall LLC, the Fairfield would position downtown Tulsa just short of 1,700 hotel rooms – or some 100 rooms shy of the minimum target convention and tourism studies suggested Tulsa needed to take full advantage of the renovated Tulsa Convention Center and the BOK Center.

Toss in the 120-room hotel still under discussion for the One Place development just across the street from the BOK Center, and a higher level of contention planners may start considering Tulsa a few years down the road, as the economy improves and convention business picks up.

Hospitality broker Mike Craddock thought the real opportunity for the Fairfield lay in SMERFs, an industry composite acronym for several key markets: social, military, education, region, and fraternal.

“You have the SMERF market and then you have the transient market and the walk-in market, the reservation market,” said Craddock, vice president and the Tulsa market representative for the Oklahoma City-based hotel brokerage HotelBrokerOne. “The SMERF market is really strong in Tulsa because we do have the religious; we do have the fraternal. We have many market segments we can tap into.”

While the Fairfield will have one of the longest downtown walks to Tulsa’s convention complex, it also will claim the closest rooms to Oneok Field, the Brady Theater and Cain’s Ballroom.

“This property is not really going to rely on conventions,” Craddock said of the Fairfield. “It will be your typical business traveler that’s going to be staying at this property.”

Its setting puts the Fairfield in one of Tulsa’s most active construction zones. The Kaiser Foundation is supporting renovation of the Matthews Building complex into an art museum and education center led by the University of Tulsa, the Philbrook Museum of Art and the Gilcrease Museum.

On the same block, the Arts and Humanities Council of Tulsa has started its \$11 million Hardesty Arts Center. On down Archer, American Residential Group works toward a December launch for the first units in its \$11 million Metro at Brady Arts District apartments.

Just across the street from the Matthews Building, Manhattan Construction has drilled 120 geothermal wells to power Kaiser’s arts district and the planned 11,000-square-foot retail and entertainment center fronting the \$8 million Park on Brady development.

North of that, Manhattan is hard at work on Griffin Communications' \$20 million Brady District home for KOTV Channel 6, CW 12/19 and Griffin New Media.

Craddock said the Fairfield adds a valuable element to all that arts and entertainment growth.

"That's going to be a great first step to continue the progress of all the developers going into that corridor," he said. "You basically are going to have a really great energy down there and a nice footprint for continued development.

"The nice thing with the Marriott brand, they have very strong brand recognition, brand following," said Craddock. "You don't necessarily need to say, where's the sign? People are going to be able to put in their GPS and get there. It's in a good position with other night life and the whole area."

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