

New hotel coming to Rancho Bernardo; Hooters will close

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By Elizabeth Marie Himchak

An Aloft hotel is coming to Rancho Bernardo next door to the Hooters restaurant, which is closing by the end of this month, officials said.

Aloft Rancho Bernardo will be part of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. It is tentatively set to open in July 2016 at 16929 W. Bernardo Drive. That is the site of a motel that prior to closing several years ago was a Travelodge and most recently a Roadway Inn.

Sumeet Parekh, principle at HP Investors LLC, said the two-story building will be razed so a four- or five-story hotel can be built on the site.

Parekh's family-owned HP Investors formed in 2010, but his family has been involved with San Diego's real estate market for more than 35 years, he said. It owns the 3.5-acre parcel that contains both the motel and Hooters restaurant, plus the center just down the hill at the southwest corner of Rancho Bernardo Road and West Bernardo Drive. It features a Starbucks, dental office and Love Boat restaurant.

Parekh said other assets include the Sophia Hotel in downtown San Diego, which they manage, and the plan is for them to also manage Aloft Rancho Bernardo.

"It's pretty exciting," Parekh said of becoming part of Starwood's hotel chain that in addition to Aloft includes St. Regis, The Luxury Collection, W, Westin, Le Méridien, Sheraton, Four Points and Element.

Aloft select-service hotels started in 2008 and according to company officials, is on track to open its 100th location with the next year. There are four in California, in Cupertino, Millbrae (San Francisco Airport), Newark (Silicon Valley) and Rancho Cucamonga. One is set to open in Santa Clara in June 2015. Aloft Rancho Bernardo will be the sixth California location.

Per the website, Aloft is described as "a sassy, refreshing, ultra effortless alternative for both the business and leisure traveler."

Parekh said design plans are still being created, but the hotel will feature a lot of glass and wood, offer 4,000 to 5,000 square feet of meeting space, 100 to 150 hotel rooms, a swimming pool and landscaped rooftop deck that will offer expansive views and be available to locals for private events.

Due to its proximity to the Rancho Bernardo Industrial Park and companies based there, such as Sony, Hewlett-Packard and Soitec, and Aloft's modern, hip focus, Parekh said it should be a good fit for the Rancho Bernardo and 4S Ranch communities since it caters to all ages, is a family hotel with a younger slant and tech focus.

In conjunction with the hotel project, Parekh said HP Investors also wants to provide several dining options to hotel guests and locals. Doing that meant reaching a deal with Hooters management to end their lease.

Melissa Fry, Hooters' marketing director, said the restaurant at 16911 W. Bernardo Drive will close by the end of February, though a date has yet to be announced. She said it will relocate to the Nordahl Marketplace in San Marcos.

Rancho Bernardo Hooters opened in March 2007. When residents first heard it was coming, more than 600 voiced opposition, saying it did not fit with the family-oriented community. By the time Hooters opened almost a year later, however, the vocal opponents dwindled to around a dozen.

Parekh said HP Investors will likely renovate the 6,500-square-foot restaurant. "We are seeking a good family-friendly restaurant, perhaps with a brewery or pizza concept," he said, adding there could be two or three restaurants developed since the property has room for at least one more building. The restaurants will likely open prior to the hotel.

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