

ATLANTA BUSINESS CHRONICLE

New hotels planned near airport

December 4, 2015

New hotel projects are planned for College Park, helping bolster development around the world's busiest airport.

The latest proposal comes from a joint venture of H.J. Russell & Co. and Air Realty LLC. The team plans a 136-room Aloft hotel as part of a \$25 million second phase of ThePad on Harvard, a walkable, transit-oriented development rising by the College Park MARTA station.



A rendering of ThePad on Harvard, which is rising by the College Park MARTA station.

Other deals are in the works for College Park including metro Atlanta's first Red Lion hotel, a new Renaissance hotel at Gateway Center and a planned four-star hotel at [Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport](#).

It marks more momentum for the airport market, which is home to major corporations including [Porsche Cars North America Inc.](#), [Delta Air Lines Inc.](#) and [Chick-fil-A Inc.](#) A group called the Atlanta Aerotropolis Alliance has made a strong push in recent years to lure investment around the airport.

“College Park is becoming the bedroom for residents of the Aerotropolis business community,” said [Rod Mullice, Colliers International's](#) national director of the Transit-Oriented Development Group and partner of Air Realty. **“They will live and play in College Park.”**

With Phase One of ThePad at Harvard now under construction with 109 apartments, developers are looking to add the Aloft hotel, roughly 50,000 square feet of retail space and 185 apartments to the 7-acre project at Harvard and Princeton avenues.

“One of the major drivers is obviously the airport and the MARTA station,” Mullice said. “But the hidden gem, the anchor for us, is Woodward Academy. They’ve been in this community for over 100 years. We think with that level of focus on good education, parents also want good food and other areas for their kids to experience.”

The College Park Planning Commission on Nov. 30 recommended to approve Phase Two of the project. It’s expected to go before the mayor and City Council on Jan. 4 for final approval.

Construction could kick off in third-quarter 2016. [Niles Bolton Associates](#) is the project architect. DesignONE studio is leading the interior design of the hotel.

It would be the second Aloft hotel in metro Atlanta, a contemporary hotel brand from Starwood Hotels & Resorts. The first opened downtown near Centennial Olympic Park.

As for the retail, the team looks to attract restaurants and services that promote a healthy lifestyle, such as a yoga studio. The team is seeking up-and-coming local restaurateurs for the project.

As for other hotel projects in College Park, [Red Lion Hotels Corp.](#) has acquired the 3 Palms Atlanta Airport North and plans to renovate the property into its first metro Atlanta hotel.

Red Lion paid \$6.3 million for the hotel in a joint venture with an affiliate of Shelbourne Falcon Investors. The team plans to invest \$6.6 million to transform the property into the 246-room Red Lion Hotel Atlanta International Airport.

The six-story hotel on Virginia Avenue is set to reopen in first-quarter 2016.

“In terms of airport properties, the opportunity for the Red Lion brand here is tremendous following a complete refurbishment of this property,” said Angela Landgraf, Red Lion’s senior vice president of corporate development.

In October, Atlanta-based Grove Street Partners started construction on the 204-room Renaissance Atlanta Airport Gateway Hotel in College Park.

The hotel will join two others at Grove Street’s Gateway Center mixed-use project, which is the first stop on the ATL SkyTrain, an elevated railway that connects to the airport. It’s expected to be complete in March 2017.

And, Atlanta officials want to break ground early next year on a new mixed-use project that would include a four-star hotel at [Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport](#). Three development firms are vying for the project.

Hotel occupancy in the airport market is currently among the highest in metro Atlanta. Through second-quarter 2015, occupancy reached 77.3 percent, according to PKF Hospitality Research. That's well above the metro average of 71.8 percent for the same time period.

"We think because of the cheap oil that travel is up and it's going to be that way for awhile," Mullice said.

<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/print-edition/2015/12/04/new-hotels-planned-near-airport.html>