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The Valley Press

Hotel project cheering economy

By: Jim Skeen



PALMDALE - In a hopeful sign for the Antelope Valley economy, developer Rob Martin is planning to start construction of a hotel in Lancaster and has reclaimed a significant portion of a Palmdale retail and office project he lost during the recession.

Martin said he anticipates breaking ground in a few weeks on a Marriott Town Place Suites hotel at 20th Street West between avenues J-8 and J-13. The \$10 million hotel will have 100 rooms and stand four stories tall.

Martin said the hotel will take about a year to complete.

"There is still a very large demand for hotel rooms," Martin said. "It (the Antelope Valley) is underserved."

Mondays through Fridays are the height of the hotel room demand in the Antelope Valley. Martin said weekends are getting stronger with the soccer and softball tournaments the region attracts.

The hotel will be the anchor of a project Martin Properties, based in Westlake Village, has been working on for five years - the Lancaster Spectrum. Martin is developing 15 acres to include the hotel, restaurants, and retail space.

"We are negotiating with a couple of restaurants and a couple of retailers," Martin said. "There's more interest now that the hotel is there."

In Palmdale, Martin has reclaimed 25,000 square feet of the Challenger Business Park at Fifth Street West and Palmdale Boulevard. The business park has five one-story buildings totaling 34,300 square feet and is set on 5.73 acres just east of the Palmdale Regional Medical Center.

Martin Properties developed the project in 2008 - right before the bottom fell out of the economy. The project has passed hands a couple of times. In October, 2011, Meridian Property Co., a San Francisco based developer and investor of medical office buildings, announced it had acquired the business park from General Electrical Capital Corp. At that time, Meridian officials said they planned to turn it into a medical office complex.

When Meridian bought the project, the company also acquired three adjacent acres of vacant land. The vacant property has entitlements to allow for the construction of a building up to 49,000 square feet in size.

The company also owns the Meridian Professional Center, a 74,000-square-foot medical office complex in the 600 block of West Avenue Q.

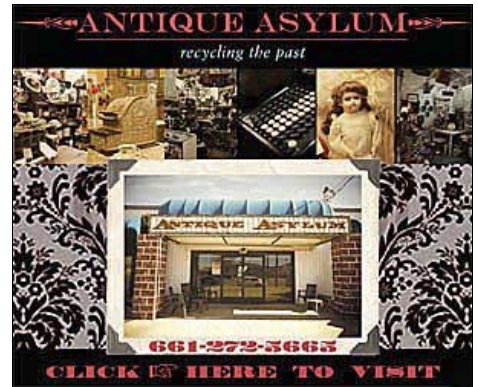
Martin said he reacquired the majority of the business park in December. His company has three tenants lined up when the project re-opens in March after remodeling. Martin is negotiating with a potential fourth tenant.

"It was just the right time," Martin said of reacquiring the project.

At its grand opening ceremony in October 2008, the business center was described as one of Palmdale's first Class A medical and

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professional office facilities. It was envisioned as a multi-phase, \$35 million center that was to have included a hotel, but the plans never came to fruition, and the complex stayed largely vacant.

A Camille's Sidewalk Cafe closed in January 2011 after two years of operation at the center, with the owners citing the fact the complex failed to attract tenants.

jskeen@avpress.com

To begin **March 25, 2013.**

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