



Convention center hotel topped off in Palm Beach County

By Arlene Satchell
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Palm Beach County's new convention center hotel has reached a construction milestone with the topping out of the roof of the 12-story building.

Officials of the Related Cos., the developer of the 400-room Hilton West Palm Beach hotel, marked the occasion Friday by hoisting a ceremonial palm tree at the top of the hotel.

The Hilton West Palm Beach hotel marked a construction milestone with the topping out of the roof of the 12-story building. A palm tree was hoisted to the top to mark the occasion. (O'Donnell Agency/Courtesy)

The hotel under construction at 650 Okeechobee Blvd. is expected to open in early 2016 adjacent to the Palm Beach County Convention Center.

In a statement announcing the milestone, Related Urban President and CEO Kenneth A. Himmel said the Hilton "will be a great amenity for the region and ensure West Palm Beach's competitive edge in the meetings and hospitality sector."

The roughly \$110 million hotel will have two ballrooms, eight conference rooms and other event space. Plans include a 225-seat restaurant, bar, fitness center and landscaped pool area with cabanas.

The hotel is expected to generate more than 1,500 building-related and hospitality jobs and \$1 billion in economic activity over 10 years, according to county officials.

The Hilton West Palm Beach will be the first on-site convention center hotel in South Florida. It is expected to bring 36,000 new customers spending about \$30 million annually to the destination, tourism officials have said.

Broward County has made three unsuccessful attempts to expand its convention center and build a hotel there. Now its fourth attempt appears on track as county officials have reviewed designs and are seeking potential developers for the project, which could be completed by 2018.

In Miami-Dade County, a \$592 million renovation and expansion of the Miami Beach Convention Center has started and is expected to be completed in late 2017. Officials are also looking to add a hotel there in coming years.

Efforts to build West Palm Beach hotel began in 2004 shortly after the convention center opened. In 2010, Palm Beach County commissioners selected Related to build the hotel. Related also developed CityPlace — West Palm Beach's popular downtown retail, restaurant and entertainment venue.

Friday's topping out ceremony was attended by executives of the hotel's general contractor, Coastal Construction, and Hilton Worldwide as well as meeting planners and county and city officials.

"It is an important day for both Palm Beach County and the city of West Palm Beach as our vision to create a distinctive, contemporary meeting and convention hotel with resort amenities is becoming a reality," said Ted Ratcliff, a Hilton senior vice president. "After years of planning and working closely with Related and Coastal construction, we will soon open our doors to accommodate both leisure and convention guests."

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