

Developer plans hotels

\$6 million project fulfills need in Augusta, builder says

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Augusta's 66th hotel is under construction on Gordon Highway near the Bobby Jones Expressway interchange. The same developer will create No. 67 later this year.

The two projects, representing a capital investment of \$6 million, will result in a 64-room Wingate Inn on Gordon Highway and a 70-room hotel next to the Guest House Inn, formerly the Motel 6, on Center West Parkway, said Jugal Purohit, the developer of the two projects.

He said the Center West Parkway project will be either a Holiday Inn Express or a Comfort Suites.

Mr. Purohit, who also owns the Ramada Limited Suites on Washington Road and the Best Western Augusta Inn off Belair Road, said Augusta is in need of new hotels.

"People are always looking for more and more fresh air," he said. "If people have to pay \$55 or \$60 a night, they would rather stay at a new hotel."

The three-story Wingate Inn is expected to be completed by November. The hotel, which will be marketed to business travelers, will offer free high-speed Internet access in each room and a 24-hour business center with access to free fax machines, printers and photocopiers.

The hotel on Center West Parkway will open during the first quarter of 2003. Mr. Purohit will make room for the 70-room hotel by demolishing one of the two Guest House Inn buildings that occupy the 2.6-acre parcel, sometime within the next two weeks.

The Guest House property was developed as a Motel 6 more than 25 years ago.

"You can renovate a property, but you can't give the same quality as you can when you build a new one," he said.

Augusta has 65 hotels and 5,688 rooms, second in the state behind Atlanta.

HOTEL CONSTRUCTION

Richmond and Columbia counties

1997: 1

1998: 4

1999: 4

2000: 2

2001: 1

2002: 1*

(* Does not include Wingate Inn construction project or proposed hotel next to Guest House Inn)

Source: Augusta Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau