

New Fort Lauderdale, Miramar hotels to target business travelers

By Doreen Hemlock | South Florida Sun-Sentinel

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Two new hotels geared to business travelers are in the works for Broward County — a 150-room *Crowne Plaza* near Fort Lauderdale's airport and a 122-room *Hampton Inn and Suites* at the Miramar Park of Commerce, a local hotel group announced Friday.

Fort Lauderdale-based *Luckey's Management Inc.* said it has started building the Crowne Plaza at the intersection of State Road 84 and Federal Highway to offer high-end accommodations in the airport area. Completion of the 11-story hotel — complete with 6,000 square feet of meeting space — is set for mid-2009.

"There are lots of upscale properties opening at the beach, but there's really not an upscale hotel close to the airport," said Sandy Patel, vice president of the hotel development and management company that already operates five hotels in southeast Florida.

Luckey's also plans to break ground early next year on the Hampton Inn in Miramar, with a debut set by 2009, she said.

The expansions come as Broward County posts gains in business travel and tourism overall, thanks partly to added routes at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport and rising ocean freight at Port Everglades. The seaport is poised to become the world's largest cruise port, surpassing Miami, after *Royal Caribbean* bases both of its two new super-size cruise ships at Port Everglades starting in mid-2009.

Tourism officials welcomed the news as proof that Broward County is diversifying from a beach destination to include more convention and meeting business as well as pre-and postcruise travelers.

"Once those big Royal Caribbean ships put in, a lot of smaller hotels around the airport area are going to start getting new business," said Nicki Grossman, president of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Luckey's already operates three hotels in the Fort Lauderdale airport area: the 54-room *Best Western*, 71-room *Candlewood Suites* and the 100-room *Holiday Inn Hotel Express and Suites*, all on State Road 84 in Fort Lauderdale and catering largely to airport and seaport users. It also operates the 77-room *Comfort Suites* in Davie, serving many university-related clients.

Outside Broward, it runs the 56-room *Best Western Sebastian* located between Melbourne and Vero Beach.

The company started in 1991 by buying *Luckey's Motel* in Dania Beach and renovating the 15-unit property.

Broward County already has more than 32,000 hotel rooms. Growth plans also include a 1,000-room *Hilton* hotel to serve the Broward County Convention Center.