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Five-story hotel set to open in February

AmeriSuites will cater to business travelers

By VALERIE LILLEY
of the Journal Star

PEORIA — Cohen Development Co. of Peoria and First Hospitality Group Inc. of Chicago broke ground Tuesday for a five-story hotel expected to contribute \$3.4 million to the Peoria economy.

The AmeriSuites Hotel on West Lake Avenue behind the Westlake Shopping Center will feature 124 suites one-third larger than typical rooms.

"An all-suites hotel, I think, is very much needed in the Peoria market," said Mayor Bud Grievess during the groundbreaking ceremony.

The hotel will cater to the traveling business class through upscale suites featuring kitchenettes, digital Internet connections and a work area. AmeriSuites' competitors in other cities are the Hilton Garden Inns and Courtyard by

Marriot, said Les Cohen, the hotel's developer and executive vice president of Cohen Development Co.

"The market is saturated with economy hotels, and Peoria can't sustain a luxury one," he said. "The business traveler wants what the Marriot Courtyards have. AmeriSuites was developed as a category killer."

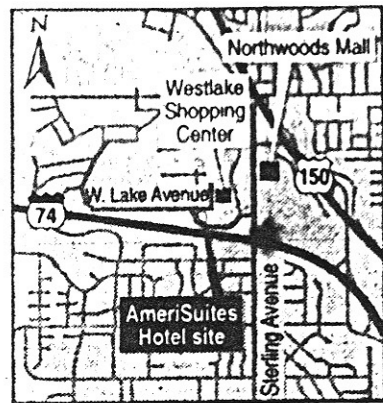
The hotel will offer a complete 24-hour business center, a fitness center with heated pool, and breakfast in the lounge area of the two-story atrium lobby.

"The product is second to none," said Stephen Schwartz, chairman of First Hospitality Group Inc. "It'll be a

great improvement over other hotels here in Peoria."

The hotel is projected to add \$220,000 in real estate taxes, based upon its construction cost of \$8 million to \$10 million, and pay \$122,000 in hotel, restaurant and amusement taxes each year. It is not receiving financial assistance from the city and is being financed through Central Illinois Bank.

Suites will cost between \$79



and \$89 a night, Schwartz said. Scheduled to open in early February, the hotel will provide 80 construction jobs and 34 permanent staff positions.

"This is also going to be great as we continue to do our marketing program to attract more businesses to the area," said Bill Browning, president of the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce.

The hotel's location will allow for quick access to a dozen restaurants, entertainment and shopping. It is accessible to most of the parts of the city and is minutes from Wildlife Prairie Park, Weaver Ridge Golf Course, Northwoods Mall, the central business and riverboat districts, Pete Vonachen Stadium, the Peoria Civic Center, the Peoria Art Guild and other sites.

Schwartz said Peoria had been on the company's list of growing but underserved cities. The company has 100 hotels in markets similar to Peoria, such as Columbia, Mo., and Bloomington, Ind.

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Les Cohen of Cohen Development Co.