

Conrad Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort to open in early 2016 [Sun Sentinel]

McClatchy-Tribune 10/15/2015 12:01 AM ET

Oct. 15--Fort Lauderdale's newest luxury hotel -- the Conrad Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort -- is expected to open early next year, a few months later than expected.

The 290-unit nautically themed condominium-resort will be Conrad Hotels & Resorts' second property in South Florida, joining the Conrad Miami in downtown Miami.

Conrad is a luxury brand of Hilton Worldwide that bills its properties as destinations for a new generation of luxury travelers for whom business and pleasure intersect.

"The other Conrads are urban properties, and this will be its first resort property in the U.S." said Martin Wormull, general manager. "We're very excited and eager to get going."

The Conrad's residential component is being marketed as The Ocean Resort Residences and includes a mix of studios, one-, two- and three-bedroom suites and three penthouses. Each room has a kitchenette with refrigerator and touch screen stovetop. Bathrooms feature marble soaking tubs and rainfall showers.

The prices for the residences range from the \$400,000s to \$700,000s for studios and up to more than \$5 million for the penthouses, according to Andreas Ioannou, CEO of developer Orchestra Hotels & Resorts.

In a condo-hotel, units are professionally managed and rented to visitors when their owners aren't staying there. The hotel will have mostly studios.

The Fort Lauderdale resort will also have a 4,000-square-foot spa and fitness center; 20,000 square feet of meeting space and four dining options, including a northern Mediterranean restaurant, gourmet market and Prohibition-style bar.

The resort's elevated pool area will offer cabanas, a bar area and a Sky Beach filled with Caribbean pink sand.

The 24-story property, at 551 N. Fort Lauderdale Beach Blvd., once was earmarked for a condo-hotel project with ties to developer Donald Trump. In December 2013, an affiliate of Orchestra purchased the vacant property for \$115 million and later announced plans to spend more than \$34 million to transform it into a Conrad.

Since the renovation began in early 2014, the cost has grown at least 50 percent in part because of design changes about a year ago, Orchestra's Ioannou said.

The property -- originally built by architect Michael Graves -- is designed to reflect the area's waterways and yachting heritage, thus its porthole windows.

"Greater Fort Lauderdale is going through an evolution now as a luxury destination so we saw the need to upgrade our property significantly," Ioannou said.

The property update was done by Garcia Stromberg in partnership with interior design firm Stephen G Interiors and designer Julia Chi, Ioannou said.

A handful of other luxury residential and resort properties have entered the market since the Conrad property was purchased, he said.

Those include the Four Seasons Hotel & Private Residences to its south and Auberge Beach Residences and Spa, set to open over the next few years.

Orchestra expects construction to be completed by mid-December to deliver residences to owners at the end of the year.

Barring no construction delays, Ioannou is optimistic the hotel could open as early as January.

Conrad has confirmed only "early 2016" for an opening but expects to announce a definite date in coming months, Wormull said. When that decision is made, reservations will open to the public.

QUINN