Hotel work to begin in October

BY NORMAN CANNADA
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SENECA — Work is set to begin Oct. 1 on the new 100-room Hampton Inn and Suites and the developer said he hopes to have the hotel completed before Clemson University's first home football game in September 2013.

City officials announced plans for the new hotel at a press conference Tuesday. The hotel, which will employ approximately 38 people, will include 33 suites and a meeting room facility that will seat 40 to 50 people. It is expected to be the anchor of a 5-plus acre mixed-used economic development project featuring restaurants, office space and retail shops with access to the U.S. Highway 76/123 bypass and S.C. Highway 130.

Seneca City Administrator Greg Dieterrick said the 38 new jobs are just the beginning with the potential of "hundreds of new jobs" coming as a result of other businesses that will locate there.

"This is a great day for Seneca and Oconee County," said Dieterrick. "This hotel is just the beginning. Further announcements will be coming. We are working on a development that will put hundreds of people back to work."

Sanjay Desai, the developer of the $10 million to $12 million hotel project, runs the Hampton Inn in Clemson just on the other side of the Seneca River from the Oconee County line. He said the timeline for completing the hotel is ambitious, but "doable."

"It is a little faster than usual," said Desai. "But, I've been a developer and know the ends and outs of what is involved in a project like this."

HOTEL: 'I am excited about this new development ...'

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The announcement culminates more than two years of planning to bring a high-end hotel to the city. Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander said the city listened to input from people, which included a desire for a hotel with larger rooms and suites.

"I am excited about this new development on the east end of town, an area where there has not been much development," said Alexander.

Desai said several factors led him to have an interest in the hotel project.

"This area is just beautiful and has a lot of natural resources," said Desai. "Corporate business is also strong here."

He added city and county officials have worked with him as the plan has been put together.

"I never would have realized how great these people are," said Desai. "Everybody has done a tremendous job to make this happen."

The City of Seneca and Oconee County are putting about $1 million each into the project, with the developer providing the rest of the funding.

"This is an exciting time to be able to be a part of something that will bring growth and provide jobs," said Oconee County Councilman Joel Thrift. "This development is a positiv thing for the county. We want to work with all of our municipalities to bring growth to the county."

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Sanjay Desai, developer of the new Hampton Inn and Suites coming to Seneca, discusses plans for the hotel at a news conference announcing the hotel Tuesday at Seneca City Hall. Work on the project is scheduled to begin Oct. 1 with the hotel scheduled to open in September 2013.