Main @ Broad targets Artisphere

Project should be open for festival

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GEORGE GARDNER / Staff

Real estate developer Bo Aughtry said the new Main @ Broad development is scheduled to open in to for the opening gala of Artishpere.

Greenville developer Paul C. "Bo" Aughtry III answers the question forthrightly: No, he probably would not have proceeded with a $45 million development had he known how bad the recession was going to be.

But he did, and now he's about to bring 53,000 square feet of office space and 135 hotel rooms onto a market that's still licking its wounds.

Aughtry, however, expects the development to succeed ultimately because of its prominent location between City Hall and the Peace Center downtown, which he thinks may be the best site in all of South Carolina.

"The one thing I am confident of is that it will be a good addition to downtown Greenville," Aughtry said Monday.

After more than two years of construction, the public is about to get its first access to Windsor/Aughtry Co.'s Main @ Broad development.

A Courtyard by Marriott hotel and Nantucket Seafood Grill are scheduled to open at the development in time to host the opening gala of Artisphere, the annual arts festival, on May 6.

The gala will take place in the development's courtyard along Main Street, where grass, outdoor seating and a 12-foot "water wall" are scheduled to replace the giant mud puddle there now.

The hotel lobby, which will open onto the courtyard, will include a bistro serving Starbucks coffee and a large-screen "go board" showing headlines, airport information and an interactive map with local attractions.

Guests will be able to manipulate the map through touch-screen technology and print out directions to popular downtown locations such as Fluor Field at the West End or the Greenville Zoo, said Glen Williams, the hotel's general manager.

He said the lobby also will have "media pods" with separate screens where families or small groups of guests can watch whatever they want.

On the development's roof, 60 solar panels will collect sunshine to heat the hotel's water.

Williams said the hotel will start hiring in March for front desk, housekeeping and banquet setup positions paying between $8.50 and $11 an hour.

The six-story development also includes a 240-space parking garage with part of the hotel on top of it.

Aughtry said Main @ Broad has turned out to be more complex than 11 other hotels and two other office projects he's developed.

"It's a big project and it's got a lot of moving parts to it," he said.

The only other tenant so far is Fidelity Investments, which has agreed to lease 2,800 square feet at street level for its first office in South Carolina.

Aughtry said he's negotiating with other potential tenants and offering some of the remaining 53,000 square feet of office space at lower rates than originally planned.