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Harris Rosen shares more details on future 1,300-room hotel expansions

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Harris Rosen plans to provide more accommodations for International Drive's more than 12.5 million visitors.

The president and COO of [Rosen Hotels & Resorts](#) told OBJ two of his signature properties — the Rosen Centre and the Rosen Shingle Creek — are in early stages of future growth plans. The expansion may add a total of nearly 1,300 rooms and possibly more than 300,000 square feet of meeting space between the two properties.



The catalyst for this growth? The future estimated \$500 million expansion at the Orange County Convention Center, that's currently in early planning. Dubbed "Phase V," the expansion includes the much-discussed multipurpose venue and grand concourse additions to the North-South Concourse. Construction on the expansion will start in February 2020 if approved by the county. The expansion adds the ability to welcome 25 new events and 250,000 more attendees each year.

"What's happening in the market is wonderful, especially the convention center expansion. There's a need for that and we think the need for the convention center's expansion also creates a need for more rooms," Rosen said.

While Rosen said the plans for the expansions could change, here's how the company currently breaks down the expansion:

The 1,334-room Rosen Centre is slated to get at least 600 new rooms and 150,000 square feet of new meeting space. That expansion will absorb the land currently occupied by two smaller hotels the company bought last October — the 134-room Midpointe Hotel Orlando Convention Center, formerly the Red Roof Inn; and the 222-room Clarion Inn & Suites. The cost on that project is undetermined, but the project could begin within the next five years. The 1,501-room Rosen Shingle Creek will build The Reserve at Shingle Creek Resort — an expansion that includes 150,000 square feet of new convention center space added to the west side of the existing resort; and a 16-story, 640-room condo tower. That condo tower will have connections to a spa, bar and grill areas; a zero-level walk-in pool and a lazy river; and a 2,250-space, multilevel parking garage, according to plans filed with the county. The timeline and cost on that project is still unknown, but will begin after the Rosen Centre's expansion.

Rosen said the details on both projects are still up in the air, but movement is happening with early stage planning and approvals. He added that the reason the timeline is fluid is because those expansions will be built only when there's enough cash to fully fund the projects.

"The expansions at Rosen Shingle Creek and Rosen Centre will be multimillion-dollar projects. I suspect our planning will be done within the next year and a half, but we will sit on it and hone the plans a little bit. And, as you know, we are debt free and we want to make sure we have enough money in the piggy bank to take care of everything — we won't build unless we have enough cash on hand to build," he added, noting he believes the company will have the cash within the next five years.

Also in the works are new modernized back-of-house operations buildings at Rosen Shingle Creek, which include operations and laundry centers that will help improve efficiency. Those projects are expected to go up before the Shingle Creek room expansion project.

The mention of possible future expansion at the Rosen properties came out June 26 when the company announced the Red Roof Inn would be rebranded into the Midpoints. Rosen bought the hotel in October 2017 along with the Clarion Inn & Suites for approximately \$24.3 million, based on taxes paid to Orange County. The Midpoint name signifies its location in the middle of Orlando's tourist attractions and will sport a renovated new look for guests.

Here's what Rosen said in June when the rebranding was announced: "It's highly plausible that we may increase inventory to Rosen Centre and Rosen Plaza, both connected to the convention center. So in the next four or five years, it's possible that our company will grow to more than 7,000 guest rooms and several years after that, close to 8,000 guest rooms."

Rosen Hotels & Resorts' portfolio spans across nine properties and 6,694 hotel rooms. The additional near-1,300 rooms from the Rosen flag is a huge get for the region as it not only provides more accommodations for the region, but it will also require more hires in the future.

Harris Rosen is one of the region's top players in both hospitality and philanthropy. The Orlando-based hospitality empire of Rosen Hotels & Resorts Inc. is a \$317.56 million, 4,600-employee, privately held powerhouse. The company also is known for its charitable work, including spending millions of dollars providing free college and preschool educations for children in the Tangelo Park neighborhood, as well as providing health care for its employees — all which helped Rosen become Orlando Business Journal's 2017 Philanthropist of the Year.

Orlando, the world's top theme park destination, last year welcomed a record 72 million visitors, boosting the local tourism industry to \$70 billion.

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