

**Oakland County hotel construction is at an all-time high with more than two dozen hotels with at least 5,000 rooms in various phases of construction. A small but luxurious example of the hotel construction boom is the Berkshire Hotel (left) at Franklin and Telegraph roads.**

# Hotel boom: more rooms, more inns

By Carolyn DeMarco  
staff writer

**B**RING BACK THE Super Bowl and the GOP convention! The Oakland County hotel industry is ready. Remember the panic created over housing Super Bowl XVII's 70,000 plus spectators in January 1983, and the scramble to handle the spillover to suburban hotels that marked the 1980 Republican get-together?

No more. "Coming soon" signs have replaced "no vacancy" signs on the hotel front.

Oakland County hotel construction is at an all-time high with more than two dozen hotels with at least 5,000 rooms in various phases of construction. Most will be completed by the end of 1987.

Jeff Kaczmarek of the county's Economic Development office said the completed hotels would bring the number of available rooms to more than 12,700 — a 55 percent increase over the 8,177 counted in October 1986. And just a year and a half ago, July 1985, Oakland County had 6,279 rooms.

Colleen Reeves of the Metropolitan Detroit Visitors and Convention Bureau places Oakland County figures slightly higher. Of the 22,153 rooms in the tri-county area, she said, Oakland County has 8,286, behind Wayne County at 11,493. Macomb County has 2,369. Proposed construction figures were not available for Wayne County, but specula-

tions like the Society of Automotive Engineers, they may not see the whole picture.

"There definitely has been a lack in the business-oriented hotels that is now being met," he said. There are few destination resort-type facilities proposed. Most are used Monday through Friday and are located at major intersections.

"THE NEED IS for close-in rooms to support the area's business communities," Kaczmarek said. "In the past business travelers stayed wherever they could. Sometimes in downtown Detroit or Southfield, but business development has taken them farther out."

"The worst scenario was they did not come at all or they just came in and out within the day or they stayed at the airport."

Southfield stands behind only Detroit in the amount of metropolitan Detroit hotel space. Convention Bureau figures show the central business section of Detroit has 2,378 rooms. An October study by the Economic Planning office showed 12 existing Southfield facilities with 2,291 rooms. Another seven are proposed with 1,550 additional rooms.

Southfield's recent and proposed development shows a wide-range of hotel types to meet the varying sizes of expense accounts. Large luxury hotels include the 386-room Radisson Plaza under way at the Town Center. The 12-story hotel will have an exterior of bronze and gold reflective glass, a 90-seat gourmet res-

"We don't have restaurants, lounges and large meeting rooms so we can offer the smart shoppers' buy to travelers who don't need to pay for the extra services."

Troy makes a strong second-place showing in current hotel space with 1,700 hotel rooms in eight facilities, including the Northfield Hilton, built in 1976 and the Troy Hilton, in 1971. Growth after the Northfield was stunted until 1983 when the Drury Inn was completed.

Brand-new Troy facilities include the 148-room Marriott Courtyard at Maple and I-75 and the 125-room Residence Inn at Livernois and I-75. Under construction are a 500-room Ramada Inn and a 250-room Beacon Hospitality.

Most visible target for new hotel space is the Auburn Hills/Rochester Hills area, Kaczmarek said. Auburn Hills has three large hotels under construction. Rochester Hills planning commissioners recently recommended site approval for Quality Inn of Rochester Hills, a 52,249-square-foot motel at the Crooks/M-59 interchange. The 124-room motel is the first phase in a 14-acre development.

Plans for hotel development have been stalled in nearby Rochester, which lists only the small Spartan Hotel as its hotel. Word leaked out in October that a local physician would build a 300-room luxury hotel on the A&P property on Main, possibly spanning Fairview.

A market analysis presented by a Downtown Development Authority to the Rochester City Council showed a need for such a facility, but the controversial plan has met with local opposition. The plan would mean tearing down existing businesses.

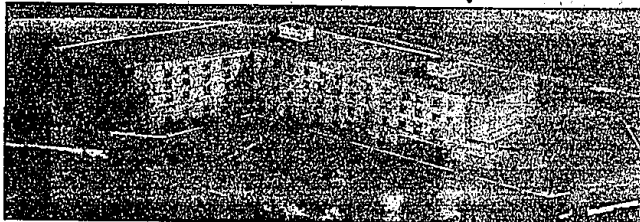
FARMINGTON HILLS ranks third in Oakland County in the amount of hotel space available. A Sheraton Hotel is scheduled for summer completion on four acres at Grand River and Halsted in Farmington Hills. At 140 rooms, the new Sheraton will be less grand than the nearby Sheraton Oaks in Novi, but all its rooms are suites. The new structure is the first Sheraton to adapt to the all-suite trend.

"It's a situation where we offer the comfort of a more home-style as opposed to just a bed," said Jerry Abel a partner in the new Sheraton and general manager of the Novi Sheraton. The hotel also will feature a swimming pool, whirlpool and sauna, but a small restaurant will be aimed at guests only.

The hotel's opening will mark a two-year growth spurt which brought a half-dozen hotels or motels into Farmington Hills to match that community's dynamic business growth. The four-story Sheraton will join a Knights Inn also planned for the intersection.

A Red Roof Inn, Holiday Inn and several smaller, older independents are operating in the same area. Other new motels include two at the 12 Mile/Orchard Lake roads interchange at I-696. The moderately priced motels are the 133-room Dilon and the 166-room Quality Inn. Neither offers convention or meeting facilities.

WEST BLOOMFIELD, where commercial growth along the Orchard Lake corridor approaches that of Farmington Hills, has no hotels within township boundaries, but may



**An artist's conception of an all-suite Sheraton scheduled to open this year in Farmington Hills.**

have one in the future.

A township ordinance bars structures higher than three stories, but Hedco Development Corp. is looking for approval of a five-story hotel at 14 Mile Road and Northwestern as part of a larger development plan. The complete development plan is expected to go before the township board this month.

Downtown Birmingham will soon boast another luxury hotel. The Townsend Hotel is under construction at Townsend and Pierce. The 87-room Townsend joins the Barclay Inn with 128 rooms and the Village Motor Inn with 64 rooms as the city's only lodging.

Both established inns claim capacity or near-capacity occupancy rates Monday through Friday. "Most of our business is corporate, naturally," said Elizabeth Chenier, manager of the Barclay. "We get a lot of people doing business in Southfield, and Troy — K Mart executives and the

like. And, surprisingly, we get a lot of people doing business in downtown Detroit. Though they're going downtown for their business, their bosses and the people they're here to see live out here, and they want to take their people out at night."

Just north of Birmingham in Bloomfield Hills, the independently owned Kingsley Inn, first constructed in 1938, recently has undergone face-lifting and expansion. (The hotel is the only large Bloomfield area inn other than the 120-room Holiday Inn on Telegraph north of Square Lake Road in Bloomfield Township.) Seventy new rooms have been built in a west wing on the Kingsley grounds to bring the number to nearly 250. An enclosed pool and courtyard have also been added to update the site.

"IT WAS necessary to become more competitive," said Ramsey Zawicki, general manager, of the Kingsley and the son of one of the

owners. "I think we're reaching a saturation point in Oakland County, but I'm confident the Kingsley will do well."

"We have a long-standing reputation here and we're in a unique area. It (competition) will cause us to be more careful in management practices to watch our budget, but we're secure."

The Kingsley was one of the most desirable hotels during the Super Bowl. "We were one of the closest to the Silverdome. If we had 5,000 rooms we would have been sold out."

The conventions of the Republican party and those of the Society of Automotive Engineers also produce sellouts, he said. "Anything of a national scope will do it, but that's only a couple of days. Our biggest business is still the business traveler, the customer who has knowledge of the area and knows the location."

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— Jeff Kaczmarek  
of Oakland County's  
Economic Development office

tion is that Oakland will approach or surpass Wayne in rooms within the next few years.

"THE DEMAND was exceeding the supply one, two years ago," Kaczmarek said, "but we are now catching up and are fulfilling it. I expect the pace will continue, but perhaps not at this rate."

Kaczmarek's office makes no recommendations or analysis of need. "Our job is simply to track that activity, but marketing people from major chains do visit our office when in the area to talk about sites."

Asked if metro Detroit was competitive with other major cities in hotel space available, Reeves said, "Our perception is that the number of hotel rooms is low, especially in the downtown area when events are held at Cobo Hall. We could use another 1,000 rooms in downtown Detroit. We do, however, offer shuttle buses to suburban hotels for conventions and will work with the group to coordinate."

While organizations like the Metropolitan Detroit Visitors and Convention Bureau are "event-sensitive," Kaczmarek said, and major areas of concerns are large conven-

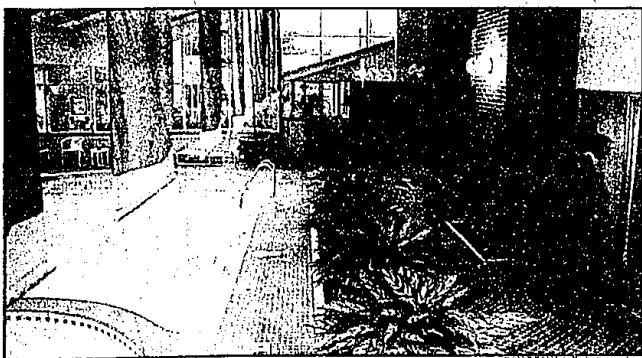
taurant and 17,500 feet of meeting and ballroom facilities.

ANOTHER LUXURY unit, the nine-story, 240-suite Embassy Hotel, will open soon at I-696 and Franklin. Amenities proposed in each suite include two color TVs, a refrigerator, a wet bar, three telephones and electronic room locks.


Smaller, but no less luxurious, is the recently completed 109-room Berkshire Hotel on Telegraph at Franklin Road. The attractive hotel resembles a fashionable European hotel and serves afternoon tea in the lobby. The hotel is under the same ownership as Birmingham's successful Barclay Inn.

On the other end of the spectrum is the Hampton Inn, which opened in spring of 1986 at 11 Mile Road east of Telegraph. It shows another trend in hotels attracting corporate business. The facility has no restaurants, lounges or large meeting rooms, but is an all-suite hotel.

BRENDA STAHL, general manager of the Hampton, said in an interview early last year. "Our new lodging product is designed to give cost-conscious travelers a superior hotel room with select services at an exceptional value."




**The long-established Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills has recently undergone a face-lift and expansion to keep it competitive with newer counterparts.**



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