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## Hotel space could double by next season

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Visiting relatives have two hotel options for a total of 119 rooms this holiday season in Mansfield. Next year there could be twice that amount.

Three hotels have broken ground along U.S. 287, and two more are in the planning stages.

The hotel boom is being fueled primarily by the Methodist Mansfield Medical Center, which opens with 80 rooms Wednesday, and the Big League Dreams sports complex, which is expected to bring tournaments when it opens in June, said Richard Nevins, assistant director of the Mansfield Economic Development Corp.

Future service road improvements and Texas turnarounds will put visitors in prime position to access The Shops at Broad Street, 1.2 million square feet of retail space expected to open in fall 2009 at the northeast corner of U.S. 287 and East Broad Street.

La Quinta Inn & Suites has broken ground on a 67-room hotel on East Debbie Lane behind the Mexican Inn Café. The 45,000 square foot hotel will have a 1,200-square foot meeting, an indoor swimming pool, a Jacuzzi room, gym, wireless Internet and a business center, said Dan Vafa, owner of Design-build Contractors.

The hotel is expected to open in July, he said.

Best Western is building a 71-room hotel on the southbound U.S. 287 service road near the Wal-Mart Super center.

Dirt is also moving for a Holiday Inn Express on the southbound U.S. 287 service road just north of East Broad Street by the existing Comfort Inn and Suites. The 70-room hotel is scheduled to open in late 2007, said Monica Smith, spokesperson for the Intercontinental Hotels Group.

Plans are also in the works for a Hampton Inn & Suites on the northbound U.S. 287 service road by Cotton Patch Café. The 88-room hotel will have a pool, hot tub, meeting space, wireless internet and satellite television, said Walt Myers, chief executive officer of K Partners USA, a San Antonio-based company that develops hotels.

"It's going to be a very nice hotel," Myers said.

The 55,000-square-foot hotel will open in November, he said.

Hampton Inn was the first of the new crop of hotels to announce plans to build in Mansfield. The Mansfield Economic Development Corp. helped lure the hotel to town by contributing \$83,000 for infrastructure. Hampton Inn will also get a five-year tax abatement from city property taxes.

"At that time there weren't any hotels," Nevins said. "We were using that as an attraction tool."

Myers will also be building a Fairfield Inn and Suites on the northbound U.S. 287 service road west of Walnut Creek Drive. The 93-room hotel is expected to open in March 2008.

Two to three restaurants could also be located on the site, Myers said.

The City Council prepared Mansfield for the onslaught of hotels by beefing up its hotel design regulations in April. The upgraded ordinance prohibits exterior room access and requiring screening for outdoor recreational facilities, said city planner Art Wright.

Hotel rooms can only be accessed from interior hallways or courtyards while pools, playgrounds and other recreational facilities must be on the side or rear of the hotel.

"That's to make them less obtrusive," Wright said. "They want to show the front lawn and landscaping."

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