



New Hampton Inn is hiring

01:00 AM EDT on Tuesday, July 1, 2008

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The Hampton hotel is under construction at the site of the former Saint Francis Chapel.

PROVIDENCE Amid skyrocketing fuel prices that are strangling the economy, and unemployment rates that are inching ever higher, First Bristol Corp. of Fall River offers two simple words: Now Hiring.

First Bristol, a real-estate development and management company run by Fall River entrepreneur James Karam, took preliminary steps yesterday toward hiring about 50 people to staff the company's new hotel under construction in Providence's Financial District.

First Bristol yesterday morning began taking down the names and addresses of people who hope to land jobs at the company's Hampton Inn & Suites on Weybosset Street, at the site of the former Saint Francis Chapel.

Among them was Morteza Abdul-Karim, 20, of Providence. He said he wants to supplement the income he generates through his main business, Disciples Entertainment, which provides live entertainment at clubs and events.

So after reading an item in The Providence Journal that the hotel is now hiring, he set aside time yesterday morning to visit the hotel's temporary office downtown on the second floor of The Arcade to arrange for an interview later on.

"I just like working, like to keep busy," he said.

First Bristol is renovating and expanding the former chapel building with plans to open an "upscale, limited-service hotel" with 110 rooms, said Elaine Murphy, area director of sales.

First Bristol, which has developed more than 3 million square feet of space into shopping centers, hotels and office space in Southern New England, is developing and will manage the hotel under license by Hilton Hotels Corp., she said.

First Bristol already operates a Hampton Inn & Suites in Middletown, and a Hampton Inn in Raynham, Mass.

Although construction projects have stalled for some companies amid the slumping economy, First Bristol is forging ahead with its project, hoping to open in December, when it will offer 40 standard rooms, 32 king-size rooms and 38 suites.

The hotel will also feature some space for meetings and functions, free airport valet service, a fitness center, business center and free high-speed Internet access.

Despite the struggling economy, First Bristol's plan makes sense, said Edward M. Mazze, distinguished professor of business administration at the University of Rhode Island.

"The economy is going to return to normal sooner or later, and they're going to provide travelers with another option," said Mazze, an author and expert on retailing and business branding.

The hotel will be "strategically located . . . within walking distance" to downtown attractions, corporations and universities, he said.

In addition, the Hampton Inn brand "will be very helpful because it ties into an international reservation network," Mazze said.

The new Hampton Inn & Suites will price its rooms at a "much lower rate" than full-scale hotels, he said. So when it opens, "They're going to have the lowest rates for the newest hotel" in Providence, Mazze said.

Brian Perry, 51, of East Providence, said he worked as a clerk for a Providence law firm until he was laid off recently.

So yesterday, he stopped by The Arcade to line up an interview for the hotel. "It's tough out there," he said of the job market.

Murphy said she expects that the interviews she is now scheduling will take place later this month — for management, front-desk work, maintenance, security and other hotel positions.

She said she hopes to have "everything settled" by early September, so that training can begin sometime in October. The hotel's scheduled opening is Dec. 1, she said.

Abdul-Karim said he recently obtained his bartending license and would like to get a job as a bartender in the new hotel. But he said he could also work as a waiter, or in just about any other job that the hotel offers. "Whatever's open," he said.