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Hotel plans new concept for Cool Springs

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FRANKLIN — It may look like just another construction project from Interstate 65, but the under-construction hotel near D1 Sports Training in Cool Springs is intended to look quite distinctive when it opens in early September.

The space is the site of Starwood Hotels and Resorts' newest brand of hotel, called simply "aloft."

The 143-room, loft-style hotel will be the first of its kind in the state, said Kristen McBryde, director of sales for aloft Nashville-Cool Springs.

Starwood, which also manages hotel brands Sheraton, W and Westin, created aloft to pull in a younger, more design- and tech-savvy crowd, according to McBryde.

At about \$150 a night, rooms in the hotel feature 9-foot-high ceilings and a flowing, open feel, along with a plug 'n' play center to charge and use cell phones, laptops and MP3 players. The entire facility has complimentary wireless access, and each room features the ability to link electronics to the room's 42-inch LCD-screen television.

"We don't want it to be a cookie-cutter hotel," said Jeff Charo, the general manager of aloft.

The hotel models itself after the blueprint of Starwood's pricey W hotel, where rooms start at about \$250 per night. It "will allow the traveler to have the same type of experience, but it will be more affordable," according to McBryde.

The hotel is "a huge win" for nearby D1, according to Matt Toy, the sports training center's spokesman.

The sports center sold the land where the hotel will sit to The John Buck Co., a Chicago-based developer who identified Cool Springs as a high-growth area, according to Paul Novak, the managing director for the company.

Novak said Nissan's announcement to move its North American headquarters to the area confirmed The John Buck Co.'s decision about the area.

Although the company looked at different sites in the county, Novak said the company "chose to work with D1 because of the location. It will be tremendously visible because of the side of the interstate it is on."

Toy said D1 is hoping aloft will bring more traffic to the 25,000-square-foot facility, co-owned by Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning.

The hotel will complete D1's campus, said Toy, enabling athletes access to "everything from therapy or training to the rest that is needed to be the best athlete possible."

There will also be room for fun in the hotel's common areas, which will include "wxyz," aloft's full bar; re:mix, a lounge area; and re:fuel, which will provide around-the-clock gourmet snacks, light meals and a make-your-own cappuccino bar.

"It has a very hip and urban feel to it, and it will bring a significant type of travel group that's hip as well," said Mark Shore, executive director of the Williamson County Convention and Visitors Bureau. "They are looking for a uniqueness in their stay, and the historic assets that Williamson County can offer will fit with the traveler that will be staying in an aloft hotel."

Shore said the fact that aloft is the first of its kind in Tennessee is exciting for the county.

"It's a new product on the market, so we are going to see an impact on the area," he said.

The aloft concept already is in operation in a handful of states, and 88 more alofts are in development across the nation, with 18 scheduled to open before the end of the year.
