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Delta in downtown Kitchener to become a Crowne Plaza hotel

KITCHENER — The Delta Hotel in downtown Kitchener is being turned into a Crowne Plaza hotel and is undergoing an extensive multi-million dollar renovation.

Amin Visram, chief executive of the Vista Hospitality Group, the company that bought the hotel last year, said he has officially signed on with the InterContinental Hotels Group, which owns the Crowne Plaza brand name as one of its top-tier hotel brands.

Although the Delta name will no longer be on the face of the Kitchener hotel, Delta Hotels and Resorts will operate a new hotel in the Barrel Yards development in uptown Waterloo.

The conversion of the Kitchener hotel to a Crowne Plaza involves an extensive top-to-bottom renovation valued at about \$8 million, Visram said.

It includes remodelling all of the more than 200 rooms, as well as redoing the entrance, lobby, conference and meeting room facilities, restaurant, recreation centre and other amenities, he said.

The first phase of the project, including the room renovations, entrance, lounge, front desk area, restaurant and other public areas will be completed by about October.

The second phase, which involves remodelling all of the conference and meeting rooms and the commercial space facing King and Benton streets, will be finished by next April, Visram said.

Visram said Kitchener's downtown core is now at a point where it can use a much more upscale hotel.

The Tannery building has become a thriving high-tech business cluster and there is also a University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy. The new consolidated courthouse is bringing in lawyers, judges and others, and the new light rail transit system will be coming through the core soon, he said.

With people coming downtown for court cases, corporate meetings and the high-tech sector, as well as sports teams, general travellers and tourism events, there will be a lot of traffic, Visram said.

"There is no other brand like the Crowne Plaza in the Kitchener and Waterloo area," he said. "We are not talking about a midmarket hotel, we are talking about an upscale hotel."

All of the rooms are being gutted and redone from floor to ceiling and from wall to wall, Visram said. "That means everything from the wall vinyl to the carpets, the ceilings, the bathtubs, commodes, closets and everything will be brand new."



Yari Khan, general manager of the Delta Hotel in downtown Kitchener, shows off a newly renovated suite in the hotel. The hotel is undergoing a multi-million dollar renovation as part of its conversion to the Crowne Plaza brand. Robert Wilson/Record staff

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The conference and meeting rooms will get the latest in audiovisual facilities and the recreation centre, pool area and the rest of the hotel will undergo extensive upgrades. "It is a huge renovation for the area," Visram said.

The Delta has been a landmark at King and Benton streets since the 1970s and has gone through several name and ownership changes over the years. It started out as the Inn of the Black Walnut, run by the Zuber family, and then it operated as the Valhalla Inn for more than two decades. After that, it was a Four Points by Sheraton and then it became the Delta.

The Vista Hospitality Group is a locally based company. It operated the downtown Kitchener hotel for a number of years back in the 1990s, sold it and then bought it back last year.

Vista has corporate offices in Kitchener and Binghamton, N.Y. It owns hotels, retirement homes, shopping malls, offices and medical building properties in both Canada and the United States.

It owns another Delta hotel in Saguenay, Que., the Radisson Hotel in Sudbury and a Holiday Inn in downtown Windsor, as well as a number of hotels in Florida and New York

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