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A western photo mural makes a bold statement in the entrance lobby at the new Holiday Inn Express which opened Tuesday. Toni Hopper/The Duncan Banner

Toni Hopper
The Duncan Banner (<http://duncanbanner.com>)

DUNCAN — While traffic backed up on U.S. Highway 81 as work continued on a new median cut Tuesday just past the Duncan Plaza traffic signals, few locals were aware that the newest business in town was opening its doors.

Holiday Inn Express went "live" around 3 p.m. but workers inside the facility were still adding last minute touches and preparing for training with HIE trainers, said co-owner Mitesh Patel. He and wife, Pratima, along with his parents, Vansant and mother Kanchan, own the hotel. They are Apollo Hospitality Firm owners and began their venture into Duncan more than a year ago.

The hotel's decor is in keeping with the western history of Duncan and Stephens County.

A picture mural on the lobby wall features in black and white, wagon wheels, with three longhorn cattle in color composited onto it.

The hotel also features numerous glass sculptures and vases, and other large colorful art.

The opening of the Duncan HIE makes their fifth hotel. In February, the official groundbreaking ceremony with Duncan Chamber of Commerce & Industry was held. Since then, WW Builders/Randy Wilson and the Patels have been working nearly round the clock to have an opening in September. Earlier this year, they had hoped to hit the Aug. 1 deadline, but as Mitesh said Tuesday, they anticipated it would be closer to mid-September and he's satisfied of the timeline.

"We're excited for the opportunity to be a part of Duncan, this community. It is the perfect place to have a hotel and then the partnership with Applebee's and Duncan Chamber of Commerce, just makes us glad to be here," Mitesh said.

So far, about 13 employees have been hired, but there's still a few more positions that need to be filled, he said. The hotel is four stories with 80 rooms. Patel credits city officials, WW Builders and realtor Cindy Robinson for working to get them into the community.

Work for the hotel began in July 2011 when an old building was bulldozed, instantly improving the landscape of the central business sector of Duncan.

Apollo Hospitality Firm is based in Ardmore. They originally purchased 8.61 acres of the prime highway real estate. It was sectioned off, and Applebee's Neighborhood Grill and Bar recently began construction to the west of the hotel, directly off the highway.

The remaining land was sold to WW Builders, said Mitesh Tuesday. It is expected that will be enhanced with a shopping retail venture.

Mitesh said Tuesday he hopes everyone gets a chance to see the hotel at night with its blue lights.

"It looks really nice. We're glad to be here in Duncan."

He also believes there is a waiting list already for rooms during the PRCA Chisholm Trail Ram Prairie Circuit Finals Rodeo in October. The meeting room is also now available to book.



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