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## Shovel ready

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### Ground officially broken for Holiday Inn Express

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

DUNCAN — In July 2011, an old building on North U.S. Highway 81 was bulldozed to make room for Duncan to expand its hotel and residential base, with the addition of a Holiday Inn Express and a housing development.

While the land-clearing part of that plan began at mid-summer, an official groundbreaking ceremony was conducted over the weekend by the Duncan Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Apollo Hospitality Firm owners Vasant Patel and his wife Kanchan, and their son Mitesh and wife, Pratima, were welcomed officially by Chamber President Chris Deal and the Red Coat Ambassadors.

The “gold shovel” event took place near the sign at the front of the property, which sits between the newly-renovated Pizza Hut on the south and the Urgent and Family Med buildings to the north.

As the shovels sank into the soil, in the background to the east, bordering the Duncan Golf and Tennis Club, concrete and the first floor framing for the hotel were already visible.

Vasant Patel said over the next five weeks the other three floors will go up quickly.

Mitesh Patel said the hotel will be open Aug. 1, and noted that WW Builders/Randy Wilson were overseeing the site construction.

Based in Ardmore, Apollo Hospitality Firm purchased 8.61 acres of prime highway real estate for this venture. The hotel will include 40 rooms, 40 suites and 4 extended stay suites.

It's not a new experience for the Patels, who own other property in Ardmore, including a La Quinta, which Vasant Patel said has nearly a 98 percent customer satisfaction rating and it was recently rated No. 1 in the industry for service.

“We deal with complaints immediately,” he noted. “We are about customer service and making sure our customers are happy. If there is a problem, we deal with it right away.”

Surrounded by sounds of air guns and bulldozers, Patel described how the interior of the building would look when completed.

He outlined that a boardroom would face south toward the golf course, and a conference room would be located to the north.

The hotel is estimated to cost \$5 million to construct, including landscaping the exterior.

“It will all be finished by Aug. 1,” Patel said, confidently. A mild winter has allowed the project to be ahead of its original Spring 2012 construction start date.

The Patels hope to see a chain restaurant and other retail ventures move onto the property.

When construction of the hotel was first announced in 2011, Mitesh Patel said a developer's feasibility study on Duncan resulted in the city being a target market for economic stability and growth. So far, the Patels find that to be on the right path.

Since the hotel groundwork began last summer, Duncan has added two new businesses along North U.S. Highway 81, CherryBerry and My Dentist. There have also been major renovations at Pizza Hut and Mazzio's Italian Foods, and there could be other projects coming for that area over the coming year.

“I think Duncan is changing and you're helping facilitate that,” Deal told the Patels.

During the past year, Deal has often said Duncan's economic future hinges on bringing in more retail and services, especially with the number of larger events being booked at the Stephens County Fair & Expo Center, and the Simmons Center.

He said both facilities serve as premier venues to host a variety of events and conferences.



Groundbreaking ceremony was conducted by Duncan Chamber of Commerce & Industry for the Patel family, owners of the Duncan Holiday Inn Express & Suites. From left, Teri Holmes, Billie Price Strutton, front row, Kanchan and Vasant Patel, Mitesh and Pratima Patel, Cindy Robertson, Randy Wilson, Jake Charnoch, Zac Pogue, Jack Barnes and Chris Deal. Back row, from left, Jenna Jeffords, Jackie Haines, Rick Guthrie, Stacy Heare, Susan Camp, Haljean Gilliespie and Susan Nubb. Toni Hopper



Chamber of Commerce President Chris Deal gets a tour of the site of the Holiday Inn Express from owner Vasant Patel. Toni Hopper



Ambassador Stacy Heare welcomes Kanchan, Vasant, Mitesh and Pratima Patel to Duncan. Toni Hopper

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