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## ALIS interviews: Hear from Loews, Aimbridge, Davidson

By [Jeff Weinstein](#) on 2/3/2020

From the editor's notebook: HOTELS Editor in Chief Jeff Weinstein sat down with big players at the Americas Lodging Investment Summit in Los Angeles, including Loews Hotels & Co., the newly merged Aimbridge Hospitality and Davidson Hotels & Resorts. Here's what he learned:

### Loews: Go big or go home

Loews Hotels & Co. just keeps growing with big projects. Executive Vice President Alex Tisch told HOTELS that the company is adding 888 keys and a US\$550 million investment beside its Arlington, Texas, convention center project for a total of 1,188 rooms. The company is putting US\$200 million in cash with partner The Cordish Companies and adding US\$24 million in land.

That hotel will connect to the new Arlington Convention Center, which will offer 216,000 square feet of meeting and outdoor function space. The overall project includes a mixed-use residential building with 280 units and 100,000 square feet of retail, entertainment, Spark co-working and business incubator space. The expansion would bring the partners' total investment in Arlington, which includes the new Texas Live! and Live! by Loews – Arlington Hotel, to more than US\$1 billion.

Tisch also said the company will build a 242-key Loews hotel in Coral Gables, Florida, in partnership with Mexico's Beckmann family, the founders of the Jose Cuervo tequila brand. Loews will hold 20% of the equity in the project, which is slated for a late 2022 opening.



A rendering of Loew's planned 888-room hotel in Arlington, Texas

### **Aimbridge integration moving forward**

Greg O'Stean, chief development officer at the newly merged Aimbridge Hospitality, updated HOTELS on the integration of the company with Interstate Hotels & Resorts: It's "in the ninth inning." He added, "hotels and owners are not affected. It's all about corporate office changes."

As owners are saying "show me," O'Stean said he responds that the the new Aimbridge will increase influence with brands and OTAs and generally provide better benefits. He added that with scale in individual markets, the company's internal data also will generate efficiencies and better margins.

"Scale is being sold to attract owners and talent, as we are able to offer even more growth opportunities with eight different verticals," he said.

O'Stean added that a large deal is coming in Europe and he expects more deals to come in Latin America.

### **Davidson in Pivot mode**

Davidson Hotels & Resorts President Thom Geshay referenced the growth of the company's lifestyle and luxury vertical, Pivot Hotels & Resorts, which has 19 open hotels. The 50-unit Davidson portfolio, meanwhile, is focusing more on revenue enhancements. The company, with what he termed "very good growth," recently added 22 team members at the corporate office and some 2,500 new employees in the field.

As REITs move their portfolios away from strict brand management, lifestyle collections like Pivot are gaining traction, Geshay said.

Davidson, which has another six hotels in the pipeline, predominantly will stick to its knitting on the full-service and resort side of the business, where the revenue profile is higher and operations are more complicated. It will add urban select-service hotels selectively, he said.

The company also is leaning into more training and has hired a vice president to aid recruitment and retention, Geshay said, along with launching a global sales office in anticipation of portfolio revenues, which are projected to expand to more than US\$1.4 billion by year-end.