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High-end hotel in Charleston's tourist center sold; new owners plan to 'reinvent' it

BY EMILY WILLIAMS EWILLIAMS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

DEC 19, 2019



The King Charles Inn at Meeting and Hasell streets will be under the management of Davidson Hotels and Resorts. File/Provided

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A high-end hotel in the heart of Charleston's tourism center has been sold after 36 years of continuous ownership, and the incoming management firm plans to revamp the property in the new year.

The King Charles Inn, a longtime holding of Charleston-based hospitality management firm Charlestowne Hotels, was acquired by Atlanta-based High Street Real Estate Partners and WHI Real Estate Partners out of Chicago. The sale price was not immediately available.

Davidson Hotel and Resorts, a hospitality company headquartered in Atlanta, will manage the property under its luxury segment, Pivot Hotels and Resorts.

The 91-room hotel is at the corner of Meeting and Hasell streets, just south of Belmond Charleston Place and the historic City Market.

Caroline Dyal, vice president of operations for Pivot, said the new ownership group plans to retain the King Charles Inn name but “reinvent” different aspects of the lodging to make it “a little more current and a little more exciting.”

“I think it’s going to be a wholesale property change,” Dyal said. “We want to to dip back into the property’s iconic roots.”

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BY EMILY WILLIAMS EWILLIAMS@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

The corner where the hotel sits has hosted tourists as far back the early 19th century. Charleston’s Pavilion Hotel was built on the site in the early 1800s. The hotel was later renamed the St. Charles Hotel and, after that, the Argyle Hotel.

The historic lodging was eventually torn down, and the current structure was built in its place.

Sometime in late 2020, renovations will start on the guest rooms and public spaces, Dyal said. Pivot is also planning to make changes to the hotel’s food and beverage program and is working with a local restaurant partner that Dyal said she can’t name yet.

The King Charles Inn is the second Charleston hotel that Davidson has added to its portfolio this year. In June, the company assumed management of Hotel Bella Grace, a 50-key property that opened on Calhoun Street in 2018.

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Dyal, who was in Charleston last week to help with the transition process at the King Charles Inn, said their company “would love to” pursue other projects in the Holy City.

Pivot’s parent, Davidson Hotels, manages about 45 hotels and resorts in about two dozen states. The company also handles about 100 food and beverage venues.

Former operator Charlestowne Hotels still manages multiple properties in downtown Charleston, including the French Quarter Inn, the Andrew Pinckney Inn and The Spectator. The Mount Pleasant-based firm also will operate a new boutique lodging that’s under construction next door to The Spectator.

The King Charles Inn has been under the same ownership since 1983, when King Charles Associates acquired it for about \$2.8 million, according to public property records. The Charleston County tax assessor has placed the hotel’s market value at \$18.5 million as of last year.

The property was once associated with Best Western, but, in early 2014, it officially severed ties with the flag to reposition as an independent, boutique property.

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