

More life for Franklin gateway

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A key piece of the Franklin gateway will undergo a dramatic transformation in the coming year as a new hotel is built, a liquor store is demolished and new restaurants and shops are built.

City officials marked the start of construction of a new \$13.6 million Hampton Inn & Suites Hotel off Paris Drive, behind Burger King, at the King Street exit off Interstate 65 on Tuesday. The project has been years in the making and will include as many as seven developments, including restaurants and shops.

Mayor Steve Barnett, city employees and economic development boards have been working on the deal with Sprague Hotel Developers and multiple landowners for more than a year. Discussions about how to revitalize the entryway into the city have been underway for 15 years.

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Franklin City Council member Richard Wertz speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony on Tuesday for a new Hampton Inn and Suites near Interstate 65.



Franklin Mayor Steve Barnett speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony on Tuesday for a new Hampton Inn and Suites near Interstate 65.



Johnson County Development Corp. Executive Director Dana Monson listens as Sprague Hotel Developers CEO Janeen Sprague speaks during a groundbreaking ceremony on Tuesday for a new Hampton Inn and Suites near Interstate 65.

As part of the deal with the city and multiple landowners, the development company and CEO Janeen M. Sprague are getting \$500,000 for roadwork or to offset the cost of buying the remaining parcels on the site and ownership of the former Red Carpet Inn property and Vandiver Spirits, which is moving to a new location. The existing building will be torn down to make way for new development on the site, which is 12 acres total.

“This is a big moment for our community,” Barnett said.

This is the second hotel to come to the interchange exit. A Fairfield Inn is under construction to the west of where the 92-room four-story Hampton will be built.

Franklin has long needed quality hotels. The new developments will help the city attract and retain other businesses, who need places for their executives or potential clients to stay, said Dana Monson, director of economic development for the Johnson County Development Corp.

Sprague grew up in the county and attended Franklin College. She has fond memories of her family visiting Franklin. She’s honoring her grandfather by naming a street in the development after him. She also owns and operates Hilton Garden Inn and the Holiday Inn Express in Greenwood. Her brother is the late Jonathan E. Byrd, who owned and operated Jonathan Byrd’s Cafeteria as well as race cars.

“With Franklin’s economic growth and its investment in the King Street interchange, we feel that this hotel is well positioned to service the key business travel segment and Franklin’s growing business base. Additionally, we look forward to serving Franklin College and its visiting sports teams, students and parents,” Sprague said.

The hotel will revitalize the interchange and attract top-notch businesses, Sprague said. The other properties are already being marketed to potential tenants, she said. No new businesses have been announced yet.

The city is expecting multiple outlots – including a sit-down restaurant – to be developed into restaurants and shops. They have put in place protections so that the mayor and leaders of other city boards get to approve or deny the specific businesses so that the gateway develops the way leaders envisioned.