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# Aspen Daily News

## W Aspen eyes Aug. 29 start

Andre Salvail, Aspen Daily News Staff Writer 10 hrs ago



The exterior of the new W Aspen hotel on East Durant Avenue, as pictured in late July.

Craig Turpin/Aspen Daily News

Employee training sessions have started at the city's newest hotel, the W Aspen, which is scheduled to open Aug. 29.

"Our plan is to have the hotel open and fully operational for Labor Day weekend," said Greg Durrer, general manager of the W Aspen and the Sky Residences at W Aspen. "We are at the final stages of our pre-opening process, finishing up details as related to construction and embarking on the beginning of our training process with our talent members."

Construction on the 88-room hotel and the property's 11 fractional residences, located at the same East Durant Avenue location as the former Sky Hotel, took a little more than two years following May 2017's groundbreaking ceremony.

In an interview earlier this week, Durrer expressed excitement about the future of the property and the response he's received so far.

"A lot of time and effort was put into making sure that the look and the feel of the hotel — this modern day chalet if you will — would fit into the local neighborhood and the community and [add] to the overall Aspen aesthetic," he said. "I think we invested a lot of time on that. Overall, in speaking with different neighbors of the hotel and individuals around town, everyone's very pleased with the way it turned out."

The property is owned by Northridge Capital LLC of Washington, D.C., the same group that took control of the Sky Hotel in 2001. The W Hotel brand is affiliated with Marriott International, which will manage the lodging operation and residences.

Last spring, it was reported that the hotel would open in July. Durrer said "there was a desire to accelerate construction and potentially open the hotel at the beginning of summer." The pace of construction didn't allow it.

"One of the things we didn't want to do is sacrifice the level of quality," he said. "Now we have a tremendous world-class product. I think all of the local community as well as guests from around the United States and the world will agree when they see it. It's world-class in terms of design, architecture and the overall hotel experience."

Durrer said the property's workforce will fluctuate between 140 and 200 employees. Like other businesses in town, the company has experienced some challenges in finding the right people to fill positions.

"I think staffing, and finding employees, in the Roaring Fork Valley is always a challenge. What we've tried to do is take a three-pronged approach: first, to tap into the local talent pool, up and down the valley.

"Second, we approached the Front Range as well as other key markets where we feel we can tap into talent and pull those individuals into the valley. And third, we are supplementing the operation with a very robust internship program with people from abroad."

Local residents were fond of the Sky Hotel's ground-floor outdoor swimming pool, which was available for public use. The new four-story hotel will feature a rooftop pool called the "Wet Deck," situated next to a year-round, all-weather bar with a DJ booth and dance floor. The new pool area will offer panoramic views of Aspen and surrounding mountains.

Yes, Durrer said — the public will have access to the pool.

“That’s probably the most frequent question I get as I walk around town and talk with locals,” he said. “One of the legacies of the Sky Hotel was being able to access that pool area, and it created a great connection with the local community. We want to continue that legacy and even build further on that.”

However, there will be occasions in which the pool is reserved for private events, he noted.

“I’m sure there will be particular instances [in which] we wouldn’t be able to have locals there or anyone for that matter that’s not part of that event,” he said. “For the most part, as long as we haven’t reached the capacity the fire department gives us in terms of the head count of people on the wet deck, we absolutely would welcome locals to join us.”



The mod interior of the W Aspen is a nod to the swinging 1960s/'70s era.

Courtesy W Aspen

Reservations are being accepted through [Marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com). While the property is being marketed as Aspen’s “first new luxury hotel opening in 25 years,” Durrer said it is being priced competitively with other local lodging properties.

A search of the Marriott site on Thursday showed that the regular rate on Saturday, Aug. 31 — for a room with one king bed and no view — was priced at \$419. On the same night, a room with two queen beds and a city view was priced at \$619.



The advanced booking rates appear to come down a bit in the fall off-season. On Saturday, Oct. 5, the king room was priced at \$399, the two-queen room at \$599. On Saturday, Nov. 2, the king-room rate was \$269 and the two-queen room was \$449.

The hotel also contains special, ultra-luxurious rooms that are specific to the W Hotel brand, Durrer said, referring to four "WOW" suites and one "Extreme WOW" suite.

Marketing materials describe the two-bedroom "Extreme WOW" suite as being inspired by Aspen's mountain culture. It features modern industrial touches, rich skiwear fabrics, a central fire pit surrounded by curved seating, a hot tub open to the living area, a circular bed on a pivoting platform and a DJ booth.

"If I had to draw an analogy, the 'Extreme WOW' suite is like a presidential suite. It's our largest and most luxurious suite at the hotel," Durrer said.

Not only will food-and-beverage service be available on the rooftop, he said, but the second-floor will be the site of The Living Room, a full-service dining experience offering breakfast, lunch and dinner — and adjacent to a terrace. The restaurant also will include a DJ booth.

On board as executive chef will be Jackie Siao, who is familiar with the local market, having formerly worked at the St. Regis Aspen Resort.

"She's extremely talented, and will bring a lot of international cuisine with a locally sourced flair to The Living Room," Durrer said.

Fans of the 39 Degrees bar that was next to the Sky Hotel pool, take note: 39 Degrees is back, but it will be located underground.

"It will be a fully enclosed space, with a DJ booth, and open late into the evening," Durrer said. "It will be more of an intimate experience. I think the guests who enjoyed 39 Degrees at the Sky will enjoy this new version."

Marketing materials describe 39 Degrees as a grotto inspired by Aspen's red-light district of yesteryear. "Outfitted with platform and pit seating, crushed velvet touches, cheeky Gonzo-style posters and pillows, and a W-commissioned, Gabriel Alcala mural that portrays an Aspen landscape through the lens of 'excess,' this hidden spot will keep the energy going late into the night," the materials state.

The property also will have a 54-space parking garage beneath the hotel, accessible via valet service.

## More on the W Aspen

- The W Aspen will be the W hotel brand's second "Mountain Escape" property globally, following the W Verbier in the Swiss Alps.
- Located at the base of Aspen Mountain, W Aspen will have ski-in/ski-out access.
- Designers of the hotel include Nemaworkshop of New York City, Aspen-based architects Rowland + Broughton and Marriott International's award-winning design team. According to marketing materials, the design blends "alpine luxury with bold adventure through a mixed lens of historical, physical and social contexts," inspired by generations of Aspen inhabitants and visitors: from the Utes and the silver miners of the late 19th century to the swinging counterculture of the 1960s and '70s and the current crop of globe-trotting billionaires.
- All guest rooms and suites are playfully marked with room plates in a style reminiscent of the pop-culture icon Bob Ross, while interiors reference the cozy warmth of Swiss chalet architecture through the use of rustic wood finishes, sloped rooflines and a fireplace-inspired mini-bar.
- Select rooms feature a W design "first" — quad-queen bunk beds — which sleep up to eight in order to cater to a younger clientele, "as well as offer a wink to the more hedonistic qualities of Aspen's past," the W Aspen says.