

Timber Cove Lodge has new owners

By Elaine Goodman
TAHOE BUSINESS MONITOR

Best Western Timber Cove Lodge & Marina Resort was sold last month to Atlanta-based Urbana Holdings LLC.

The new owners have already made some changes, including hiring a wedding director, throwing pool parties with live music and re-opening the restaurant on the pier.

Longer term, plans are to refurbish the 262-room property across from the Safeway store in South Lake Tahoe. The emphasis, according to Urbana Holdings principal Ed Nolan, will be providing guests with additional outdoor amenities and turning Timber Cove into more of a resort rather than just a hotel.

Timber Cove Lodge is the first project at Lake Tahoe for Urbana Holdings, which specializes in renovating or redeveloping properties considered under-performing, and "repositioning" them as investment-caliber projects. Their investments have included hotel, offices and mixed-use projects across the U.S.

Timber Cove caught their eye because of its lakefront site — with a 500-foot beach and 1,000-foot pier — and high visibility on Highway 50. "We think this is just a great location," Nolan said.

Timber Cove had been under the same ownership since it was built in 1973. Nolan said the property was owned by two families, and after the patriarchs passed away, the heirs decided to sell. He declined to state the sale price.

Nolan said it's too early to say whether Urbana Holdings will hang onto Timber Cove long-term.

Two restaurants on site

Timber Cove plans to operate the two restaurants on site.

The restaurant on the pier — formerly the Blue Water Bistro — has reopened. It's now called Bistro on the Pier and is open for lunch and dinner. Sandwiches, salads and fish tacos are on the lunch menu; the dinner menu focuses on seafood.

A restaurant inside the lodge, formerly Mama's Red Tomato, is now called simply the Lobby Cafe, until a more creative name is found. It's open for breakfast and dinner, with seating available outdoors on

the patio. The dinner menu features a number of pasta dishes and pizza.

So far the changes at Timber Cove have been well-received by regular guests, said Kimberly Sundt, Timber Cove's marketing and sales director.

"We know we're moving in the right direction," Sundt said.

With its lakefront location, Timber Cove is a popular spot for weddings and other special events, which are planned and catered in-house.

Lisa Gallup has been hired as the new wedding director. Weddings at Timber Cove can range from smaller affairs — the end of the pier is a popular location — to larger gatherings. Sundt said the idea will be to offer options for a range of budgets.

Under evaluation is whether to add more meeting space at Timber Cove Lodge, which now has about 1,700 square feet of indoor meeting space.

One thing that hasn't changed is Timber Cove's general manager. Peter Evenhuis, who came to Tahoe from the Bay Area about a year ago to manage the property, remains in the position.

"Peter's doing a great job," Nolan said. "We have a great working relationship."

The 262 guest rooms include two

honeymoon suites and six family suites. "Updating" of the rooms is planned, Sundt said, but the property will stay open through all renovations.

The new owners also plan to keep the Best Western flag for Timber Cove. The well-known brand provides central reservations, marketing services and perks such as a rewards program.

New enthusiasm

In investigating the South Shore, Urbana Holdings felt a sense of increased activity and new life in the area — despite the "hole in the ground" project at state line.

"There's enthusiasm coming back to the area," Nolan said.

In a news release, Urbana Real Estate Advisers President Allan Gutierrez said he's "thrilled" with the purchase of Timber Cove Lodge.

"This property and the location are extremely special and unique and we are excited to develop Timber Cove into a property that will increasingly attract our market and be a gem in South Lake Tahoe," Gutierrez said.

Urbana Holdings is not currently looking at any other Tahoe properties, Nolan said.



Photo provided

New owners of Best Western Timber Cove Lodge in South Lake want it to be more of a resort, rather than just a hotel.

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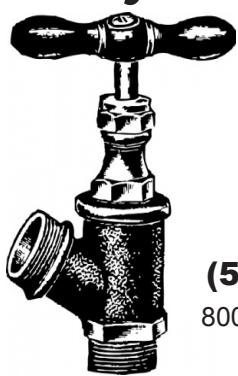
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