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Hotel design uses natural water features



Photo provided by ELLIOTT LODGING LLC

A natural stream will run alongside hotel developer Gordon Elliott's Candlewood Suites. The property is under construction at North Glenstone Avenue and Kerr Street, off of Interstate 44, and should be complete in January.

by Lacey Friedly ·
Contributing Writer

When hotel developer Gordon Elliott bought the lot to build Candlewood Suites, he found what some might consider to be a problem.

The property is divided by a small creek, a spillway coming down from North Town Mall. The way it cut across the land did not leave enough space to build the hotel and parking lot. The most common solution would be to direct the water into a subterranean drainage ditch, diverting its flow underground and allowing builders to level the entire lot.

Elliott had other ideas. He decided to make the creek part of his plan.

Construction recently began on the new Intercontinental Hotels facility at Glenstone Avenue and Kerr Street. Candlewood Suites is designed primarily for corporate clientele,

with an open floor plan that allows maximum use of space within each room.

The 43,000-square-foot, \$4.5 million facility, designed by Springfield firm Slone Architects, is being built by Elliott Lodging LLC. The hotel is slated to open in January.

The creek cut across the planned location of the corner of the building, so Elliott worked with engineers and architects to change the course of the stream and make it run in a straight path alongside the building. This left enough room for the building and the lot, and made an attractive addition to the grounds, Elliott said.

Springfield's Candlewood Suites is similar to the Candlewood Suites Elliott developed in Joplin; both are designed to serve extended-stay visitors. Intercontinental Hotels is the parent franchiser that owns the rights to the names Candle-

wood Suites, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express. Elliott is a local franchisee.

At the Springfield Candlewood Suites site, the stream, about eight feet wide, will flow between the hotel and its parking area with three footbridges providing access to the hotel. At the end of its course it will feed into a small pond, which will be set up with a fountain system to aerate the water. Overflow from the pond is to be directed into a runoff creek.

While the city only requires 20 percent of a property to consist of open space, Elliott has provided 40 percent. His company has planted trees, and added a running path around the hotel, along the creek and through the green space.

Elliott got the idea to use the water from a space he encountered in 1991, when he bought the Chardonnay apartment complex, part of a gated community with an interior lake. The lake boasted a fountain system and a hardy fish population and ducks.

Residents loved it, he said, and would protest any time the fountain was turned off for maintenance, saying that they couldn't sleep without the sound of the water.

Since then, Elliott has wanted to design a system that included a water feature, and the natural creek on Candlewood's land fell right in with his plans.

However, the feat posed some obstacles.

"The major problem was to work out the requirements of what I wanted for open space, and a natural look, and what the city had to have for water retention and hundred-year flood," Elliott said. "So, we had to meet (the requirements) and still make it look pretty."

After construction was under way, the space reserved for the pond was found not to be dirt, but solid rock. They had to blast down about three feet to make the pond deep enough to hold water.

It also was a challenge to meet the city's requirements for flood control and soil stability. A retaining wall was built to keep the stream from flooding toward the building and rock reinforcements were installed

around the pond to prevent soil erosion. Heavy rainfalls present a risk of widening the exit channel, a dry creekbed that will drain the pond when the water level rises past a certain point. To prevent this widening, the channel had to be reinforced as well. A

rock wall runs underneath around the circumference of the pond, and more concrete barriers flank the streambed.

Above the water surface, grassy banks will slope down to the stream, hiding all the reinforcements from view and providing a natural look.

"It's a shame to waste the natural features that you have," Elliott said. "Since Candlewood is an extended-stay facility, we were looking at making it more like home."



Gordon Elliott