

## TRAVEL



The Miami Herald



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2008 | EDITOR: JANE WOOLDRIDGE jwoolldridge@MiamiHerald.com | 305-376-3629 or 954-764-7026 ext. 3629

THE MIAMI HERALD | MiamiHerald.com/Travel

QUICK TRIPS

A SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2008 | 5J

## New Beachside Resort brimming with old charms

■ Upscale meets cozy — and the culinary arts meet a monthly pig roast — at this Key West conference center hotel.

BY CAROL WEBER THOMAS  
Special to the Herald

If you want a peek into the future of Key West, you'll find it at the new Beachside Resort and Conference Center, at the entrance to the nation's southernmost city.

Beachside sits on the Gulf of Mexico where the Overseas Highway makes its last bridge crossing to its last island in the chain of Florida Keys.

This is a resort where upscale meets cozy, an award-winning chef oversees the kitchen and the daughter of one of the island's most colorful characters is head concierge.

Though the condo-hotel's grand opening is slated for April 29, the hotel is already operating, with 222 rooms and suites filled with designer furniture, flat-screen TVs, Turkish towels and enough marble, it would seem, to reface the Taj Mahal.

The 5,600-square-foot ballroom is ready. A helicopter pad on the lobby roof is available for arrivals of "special" guests (such as a recent rock-star visitor). A 26-slip marina is being prepared to moor guests' boats.

Fancy as that sounds — and is — Beachside has an old Key West feel, from the long, cool lobby to the oversized balconies and outdoor spiral staircases that connect some suites with either the pool area or private rooftop sun decks.

## ON THE BEACH

Wade out off the gulfside private beach, your toes tickled by sea grass, and you can come nose-to-nose with a great blue heron perched just offshore.

Sit at the Blue Bar by the pool and you can talk with a local charter-boat captain about what folks are catching as you finish off a plate of



PHOTOS BY CAROL WEBER THOMAS/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD



**NEW RESORT:** The pool at the new Beachside Resort in Key West, above. At left, the hotel lobby.

throw a pig roast by the outdoor Blue Bar on the third Sunday of each month.

If you want to try deep-sea fishing, catch a sunset sail or find out where the real Conchs go to shop and play, Toni Terracino will fix you up. "Little Toni," who heads up the resort's 24-hour concierge service, is the daughter of Tony Terracino, fisher-

man, Hemingway buddy and founder of the famed Tony's Saloon.

## WHAT'S TO COME

Located on property where a 1950s Holiday Inn once stood, Beachside offers a snapshot of what is to come at the entrance to Key West.

Across the street, where the Overseas Highway meets Roosevelt Boulevard, developer Spottswood Companies plans to demolish four other '50s hotels. The 18 acres will be home to a half-billion dollar convention center, nationally flagged hotel, 12,000-square-foot spa, shops and a transportation hub for tours. Demolition begins this summer; the convention center (with 22,000 square feet of meeting space) opening is set for 2010.

Behind this transformation is the Spottswood family, sixth-generation Conchs long associated with hotels, real estate and a legal practice. (The late Florida Sen. John Spottswood also served a decade as Monroe County Sheriff.)

"We didn't really start out to change the entrance to Key West," said Robert Spottswood, president of the companies bearing the family name. "One thing led to another."

## IF YOU GO

Beachside Resort and Conference Center is located at 3841 N. Roosevelt Blvd., at the entrance to Key West.

● **Getting there:** Several airlines offer service to Key West from Fort Lauderdale and Miami; Key West Express ([www.seakeywestexpress.com](http://www.seakeywestexpress.com), 866-KW-FERRY) operates a ferry from Miami, \$51 each way. The drive from Miami to Key West takes 3-4 hours, depending on traffic.

● **Transportation:** The resort is about four miles from Key West's historic district; regular shuttle service is being planned. Meanwhile, a Beachside van will pick up and drop off visitors from the airport or downtown on request.

● **Amenities:** Private beach bayside, heated pool and fitness center; a spa is being built across the street as part of a sister-hotel/convention center complex.

● **Rates:** Beachside Resort is a condo hotel, with one, two and three-bedroom suites that open from a keyed alcove entrance. Rooms from \$209.

**Information:** 3841 Roosevelt Blvd.; 800-546-0885 or [www.beachsidekeywest.com](http://www.beachsidekeywest.com).

conch fritters or snapper escabeche.

Go inside to the side-by-side Tavern N Town restaurants, and Chef Norman Van Aken will introduce you to one of the recipes that earned him a James Beard chef-of-the-year award and credit — along with Paul Prudhomme, Alice Waters and Mark Miller — for introducing New

American Cuisine to the culinary arts.

Casual Tavern features a bustling open Theater Kitchen that whips out tapas, steak house and seafood served in inventive first plates (\$7-18) and mains (\$29-\$48) such as pecan crusted farm-raised catfish and pork

Havana. When Town opens on March 1, the atmosphere will be set by French china and white tablecloths, with prices similar to Tavern but offering more classic dishes (seared foie gras, sugarcane-marinated grilled duck breast). For a touch of Keys funk, the restaurants will