

# Channelside Project



## Hotel Proposed for Channel District

By Janis Froelich

TAMPA - A Sarasota company is proposing a 150-room hotel in the Channel District that would include up to 10,000 square feet of retail space and 20 to 30 condominiums.

The structure, if approved, would replace Amazon Hose & Rubber Co., a hose supplier that recently shifted operations from its building at 222 N. 12th St. to Ybor City.

The proposed project by Finergy Construction is the fourth new hotel proposed in the Channel District and brings the number of new hotels proposed for downtown to seven. There are eight hotels operating downtown.

If all the projects are built, they would add 1,350 rooms to the approximately 2,200 currently available in downtown and the Channel District.

"I really don't see the number of projects on the board as a problem," said Norville Smith, vice president of sales for the Tampa Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"What's ideal about these planned projects is they will bring variety. Downtown will be able to appeal to both the individual traveler and the transient corporate traveler," he said.

Eric Collin, an executive with Finergy Construction, a subsidiary of a French and Italian real estate development company, said the company likes the location of the proposed hotel because it offers close access to downtown.

The project would be at the corner of Kennedy Boulevard and 12th Street, just blocks from the downtown office district.

Collin said the company plans to seek a rezoning of the property to allow for a structure up to nine stories high. The company is also working on targeting a strong mix of retail shops.

"We want to serve the downtown workers as well as our travelers, so I think a small convenience store, hair salon, those kinds of businesses would work," he said.

Genie White, president of the Channel District Community Association, said the community would welcome such an addition.

"I've been assured this is a quality project," said White, who owns Artists Unlimited, a co-op across the street from the proposed hotel site.

Finergy did not disclose a construction timetable should the project be approved.

So far, only two developers have started work on hotel projects downtown. Construction has commenced on a new Embassy Suites across from the Tampa Bay Convention Center, and a restoration of the vacant Floridan Hotel is under way.

