

BA extended-stay hotel is open

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The new TownePlace Suites by Marriott in Broken Arrow marks the hotel brand's arrival in Oklahoma — a few months early at that.

"We opened this in December, earlier than Marriott thought we would," said Jeff Hartman, operating partner of local developer SJS Hospitality. "They were expecting April."



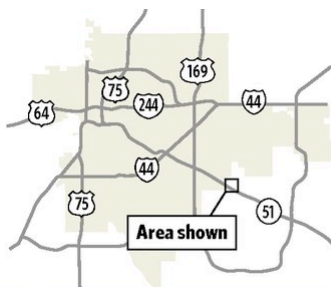
The 97-suite, \$6.5 million extended-stay hotel near Bass Pro Shops is also one of the first in the nation to feature the chain's Generation III floor plan, a design much more contemporary than its rustic retailer neighbor would suggest.

Hartman, whose company is also converting the Atlas Life building in downtown Tulsa into a Courtyard by Marriott hotel, said the success of his Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites just south of the TownePlace Suites made additional hotel development in the area an opportunity he couldn't afford to miss.

He said that when he approached Marriott, the company — wanting to expand into Oklahoma — suggested the TownePlace Suites concept to him. Planning started in earnest last year, but then the recession hit.

Hartman forged ahead anyway.

"We wanted to continue to build in a down cycle so we'll be ready when the economy comes back," he said.



Winters are typically a slow time for hotels, and occupancy has been modest since TownePlace Suites opened. But Hartman said he's confident that the nearby St. John Broken Arrow hospital under construction will give him a ready-made market, as visiting or new doctors will need a place to stay.



The TownePlace floor plan focuses on modern, open designs. The breakfast area in the lobby resembles an apartment rather than a hotel, the lobby features an information kiosk with newspapers and magazines to browse, and a large map dominating one wall points out area restaurants and entertainment venues.

Rooms are designed to appeal to the tech-savvy, as they have iPod docking stations and LCD HDTVs. In fact, the two-bedroom suites have three HDTVs — one each for the bedrooms and a third for the common area.