

Posted date: 4/9/2007

## 35-Room Keating Hotel Enters Downtown's Hospitality Fast Lane

*Direct Tourism Spending in North County Reaches \$1.6 Billion Mark in '06*

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The new ultra-chic Keating Hotel, which sports a Ferrari-red interior, looks like it's going 225 mph standing still.

No wonder. It's the first lodging property that Italian automobile designer Pininfarina, famous for the Ferrari and other fast cars, including Maserati, Jaguar, Alfa Romeo and Fiat Spider, has ever put its stamp on.

But it won't be the last. Edward Kaen, whose family owns the historic downtown building that houses the 35-room boutique hotel and lounge, and Paolo Pininfarina, vice chairman of Turin, Italy-based Pininfarina, are taking their act on the road.

They said they plan to roll out several hotels across the country bearing the Keating Pininfarina brand in the next five years. The number is undetermined.

They made the announcement March 29 during a grand opening bash that drew 500 people to drink free Pininfarina wine and mojitos in a huge party tent erected next to the hotel on a blocked off section of F Street. Guests were also treated to tours of the hotel's rooms and exclusive basement lounge. The lowest priced rooms currently go for \$429 on a weekend night. The lounge is open to guests at no charge, but individuals may purchase memberships for \$2,500 a year.

Under the plan, Kaen's family will own the hotel properties and Pininfarina will be in charge of design. No sites have been selected. While the aim is to acquire and renovate historic properties, some may be built from the ground up.

"We're looking in Scottsdale, Ariz., Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, Chicago and New York," Kaen said.

Pininfarina said his company spent nearly three years designing all of the Keating's sleek looking furniture, including chairs, chaise lounges, beds with drawers built into their base that whoosh when you close them, stand-alone closets that pull out like oversized file cabinets, translucent shower stalls and oval hot tubs.

The challenge, he said, "is to create a (hotel) design that expresses the spirit of a city." Red was chosen for the Keating's lobby and lounge because it conveys passion.

The Pininfarina firm has also entered into a five-year agreement with the Florida-based Aero Toy Store to design interiors for private jets and helicopters.

Hang on to your comb-over, Donald Trump, some of the Keating Pininfarina hotels may have heliports.



Paolo Pininfarina, center, vice chairman of Italian design firm Pininfarina, and Edward Kaen, whose family owns the Keating Hotel, talked with guests during the Keating's recent grand opening.