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Noannet and Saunders are developing Raffles Boston - by Gary Saunders

June 05, 2020 - Owners Developers & Managers



Gary Saunders
Saunders Hotel Group

After a seven-week shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were pleased to resume construction for Raffles Boston Back Bay Hotel & Residences on May 18th. The Noannet Group and Saunders Hotel Group, along with our partners, Cain International, are developing the 33-story, \$400 million hotel and residences, which will be the first mixed-use property in North America for the world-renowned and iconic hospitality brand.

Raffles Boston broke ground in September 2019, and began site demolition in December 2019. Although we ceased construction in mid-March per the mayor's orders, our team is still on track to deliver in 2022. Overall, we are fortunate to have had a very mild winter in Boston, free of the snowstorms and Nor'easters that can typically delay work. Apart from the COVID-19 shutdown, construction was full steam ahead between fall 2019 and winter 2020.

Over the next six months, Raffles Boston will be focusing on excavation and foundation work. As we proceed with construction, however, several new measures will be implemented to ensure the safety of all workers on site.

Our contractor, Suffolk Construction, is following all guidelines as set forth by the mayor. In the first week of our restarted work, the site made extensive modifications to create a safe workspace for all construction workers, including taking such steps as modified site access so that all workers will enter the site through a temperature reading tent, hosting an on-site safety office, employing multiple generator-powered hot water hand washing stations, infrared cameras monitoring body temperature ranges, and segregated areas for different trades. Until COVID-19 is safely in the rear-view mirror, our workers' safety will remain our and Suffolk Construction's top priority.

While it is unclear what post COVID-19 looks like, our specific construction timeline affords us the unique opportunity to explore technological and spatial design areas and changes. While we were exploring several of these areas prior to the pandemic, they have become all the more relevant, and will push our design substantially further than what is required by code.

We are currently exploring reducing the number of touchable transactions with NFC (near-field communication) systems, allowing, for example, guests to enter their rooms with smartphones, thereby eliminating the need for multiple people to touch credit cards or room keys. Similarly, we are exploring fully touchless elevators. Because of our building's focus on health and wellness, the building was already designed with a greater degree of fresh air circulation than older buildings. Now, we are analyzing whether these systems can be enhanced even further. Similarly, we are looking at air systems that filter out particles even smaller than those required by current codes. We are also exploring a lobby layout that allows for more expansive space so that if people are waiting for taxis and ride shares, they do not feel compressed.

We have full faith in the real estate and hospitality industries, and the many talented companies we are collaborating with as we confront such unprecedented times. We look forward to coming out of the pandemic with a more innovative, more thoughtful approach to development than ever before.

Raffles Boston Back Bay Hotel & Residences will be located at 40 Trinity Place, Boston. Featuring 147 guestrooms, 146 branded residences and six food and beverage venues, Raffles Boston Back Bay Hotel & Residences joins Raffles' prestigious collection of 14 individually unique and timeless properties located in the world's most fascinating cities and vibrant destinations.

Gary Saunders is the chairman of Saunders Hotel Group, Boston, Mass.

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