



The Westgate Las Vegas Resort & Casino announced a new partnership between the property and the Las Vegas Aces on March 19. The partnership includes Westgate sponsorship of featured segments during local broadcasts of Aces games in the 2025 season. Additionally, Westgate will allow fans to play in-game slot machine activations at Aces home games and is the presenting partner of one of the Aces' 11 home game giveaways in 2025. "We are proud to partner with the Las Vegas Aces, an incredible team that embodies excellence, determination, and the spirit of our great city," said Cami Christensen (middle row center, to the right of the basketball), President and General Manager, Westgate Las Vegas. Pictured to Christensen's left: Nikki Fargas, President of the two-time WNBA champion Las Vegas Aces.

## Implementation of U.S. Travel Ban May Be Imminent

By Jonathan Trager

The Trump administration seems poised to impose a new travel ban on foreign citizens from targeted countries entering the United States following a March 21 deadline for finalizing the proposed measure (after USAE went to press).

The *New York Times* had reported earlier this month that the administration was working on developing the proposal, which the news outlet said could affect citizens from 41 countries.

Drafts of the list obtained by the *Times* and others suggested the included countries be divided into three tiers: red, orange, and yellow. The red tier—which indicates a flat ban on entry—would include Afghanistan, Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen.

"The proposed ban includes different levels of restrictions, which appear to be calculated to deal with expected legal challenges or implementation challenges, including those related to the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, due process, and discrimination, as seen with the 2017

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## Alcoholic Beverage Industry Association Rallies Against Tariffs

By Todd McElwee

WineAmerica, the lone nationwide wine industry association in the United States, posted a photo from the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) stating that because of the tariffs on Canadian products by the

United States, American goods would not be sold. The association said other provinces are following suit.

"In other words, it's a national boycott of American wine by the largest export market we have, with \$1.1 billion of annual sales," the association said. "And it's only because of the

25% tariffs the U.S. imposed on many Canadian products."

LCBO's reaction to American tariffs and other deferential effects of the levies on the alcoholic beverage industry have led sector associations to speak out and band together to

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## Pendry Breaks Ground on First Nashville Property

By Jordan Bradley

Luxury hotel brand Pendry Hotels and Resorts broke ground on its first hotel in the Nashville market on March 13.

The 180-guest-room-and-suite Pendry Nashville—which will also feature 146 Pendry Residences in Nashville's Paseo South Gulch district—is expected to open in 2027.

"It's an exciting moment for us to be able to bring the Pendry brand to Nashville," said Alan J. Fuerstman, Chairman and CEO of Montage International,

the Pendry brand's parent company.

The forthcoming Pendry Nashville will feature two food and beverage concepts: a ground floor restaurant and lobby bar and a rooftop garden restaurant and bar. The property is set to offer guests a rooftop pool, an indoor and outdoor fitness center, a writer's room and library which will also function as a meeting space. Other meeting space includes a junior ballroom with a show kitchen, and a ballroom with a private outdoor terrace.

"The Paseo South Gulch

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## Nevada Considering Mandatory Daily Hotel Room Cleanings

By Jordan Bradley

A new bill proposed on March 17 in the Nevada state senate would require daily room cleanings at hotels with more than 200 rooms in Clark and Washoe counties.

Introduced by Sen. Lori Rogich (R-Las Vegas), the bill, SB360, would require the Nevada State Board of Health to adopt regulations that would see every occupied guest room at a hotel in a county whose

population exceeds 100,000 receive daily room cleaning.

The bill, dubbed the Hotel Safety Act, would also require that every occupied guest room be visually inspected not less than every two days "to ensure the safety of the guest and the public" in the event that a guest opts out of or declines daily room cleaning.

If a complaint is filed, the bill also gives "a health authority" the clearance to inspect a hotel room wheth-

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# NEWS

## Visit Baltimore Announces Kireem Swinton as Interim Leader

By Jonathan Trager

Visit Baltimore has unveiled its initial leadership transition plan, with Kireem Swinton assuming the role of Interim President & CEO effective July 1.

Swinton currently serves as Vice President of Sales & Customer Experience at the organization. The transition plan was unanimously approved by the Baltimore Convention and Tourism Board (BCTB) on March 19.

“The transition committee of the BCTB developed the ideal plan for ensuring Visit Baltimore moves forward in a seamless and positive way,” said BCTB Chair Charles “Chuck” Tildon III. “The decision to elevate Kireem to Interim President & CEO reflects the board’s commitment to maintaining a strong, award-winning organizational culture while ensuring continued success in driving critical economic impact for the city.”

A Washington, D.C., native, Swinton has built a career spanning two

decades in senior roles with Marriott Hotels and Visit Seattle. At Visit Baltimore, Swinton has been instrumental in securing major citywide bookings, including the highly anticipated 2023 American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Annual Meeting & Exposition.

“I’m honored to step into this interim role to lead a dynamic team that continues to position Baltimore as a world-class destination,” said Swinton. “As we move forward, I am

**“I’m honored to step into this interim role to lead a dynamic team that continues to position Baltimore as a world-class destination,” said Swinton.**

committed to amplifying Baltimore’s positive stories, fostering relationships across the city and driving innovative strategies that attract major conventions and leisure visitors at this exciting time in our city’s history.”

Outgoing President & CEO Al Hutchinson announced earlier this year he wouldn’t renew his contract after June 30. He’ll remain with the organization for at least six months in a consulting role to support a smooth transition.

“I commend the BCTB for selecting

Kireem Swinton as Interim President & CEO of Visit Baltimore,” said Hutchinson. “His skills, expertise and industry knowledge make him the perfect choice. I’m proud of what we’ve built together so far, and I look forward to supporting the board, Kireem and our best-in-class team through this transition to ensure that Baltimore’s tourism industry continues to thrive.”

The BCTB will assess the success of the transition plan before the end of 2025 and make adjustments as needed, according to Visit Baltimore.

“Under Al’s transformative leadership, Baltimore’s tourism industry has thrived, bringing visitors, investment and new opportunities to our city,” said Baltimore Mayor Brandon M. Scott. “We are grateful for Al’s many contributions to Baltimore. His commitment



Kireem Swinton

to telling positive, community-focused stories that showcase the breadth and diversity of our neighborhoods has set the stage for a bright future.”

## Tariffs

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protect the industry.

The Toasts Not Tariffs Coalition consists of 54 U.S. trade associations representing the entire three-tier chain of the U.S. beverage alcohol sector—producer, importer, wholesaler, and retailer levels—united in opposition to U.S., European Union (EU) and UK, tariffs on beverage alcohol products. The Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. (DISCUS) is piloting the effort.

Responding to to President Trump’s threat of a 200% Tariff on EU Spirits in mid-March, Chris Swonger, DISCUS President & CEO, shared the harm of when in 2018, the EU imposed a 25% retaliatory tariff on American Whiskey, “Due to the EU’s retaliatory tariff.

American Whiskey exports to the EU, the largest American Whiskey export market, plunged 20%, from \$552 million to \$440 million (2018-2021),” he said. “During the last three years that the tariffs have been suspended, American Whiskey exports to the EU surged nearly 60%, climbing from \$439 million in 2021 to \$699 million in 2024.

“The U.S. spirits sector supports more than \$200 billion in economic activity, 1.7 million jobs across production, distribution, hospitality and retail, and the purchase of 2.8 billion pounds of grains from American farmers. We urge President Trump to secure a spirits agreement with the EU to get us back to zero-for-zero tariffs, which benefits the hospitality industry and U.S. craft distillers who export their products. We want toasts, not tariffs.”

Writing for the Brewers Association (BA), Katie Marisic, Director of Trade, Tax and Federal Government Relations, Diageo, commented on the damage steel and aluminum tariffs could have. She said early 2025 sales data showed aluminum cans accounted for approximately 75% of packaged craft beer’s volume and revenue. Tariffs could have a broad impact on aluminum prices across the world and a direct impact on domestic manufacturing companies that make a variety of steel products, she added.

“U.S. small and independent brewers have already started to see retaliatory effects even without tariffs on beer,” she said. “Brewers that export beer to Canada have had products pulled off the shelves and had shipments cancelled. Canada imports 37.5% of American craft beer exports, making it our industry’s largest export market. If other trade partners decide to retaliate, breweries could see similar impacts in markets like the European Union (EU) and China.”

## Travel Ban

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travel ban,” according to *National Law Review*.

Trump had signed an executive order on January 20 calling on several agencies to identify countries from which travel should be partly or fully suspended because their “vetting and screening information is so deficient.” It gave the agencies — including the departments of State, Justice and Homeland Security — 60 days to produce the list.

The new travel ban would be an expansion of one the administration issued in 2017. That ban—which targeted the Muslim-majority nations of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria,

and Yemen—was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2018.

The White House has yet to publicly comment on the proposed measure. However, more than 30 Democratic members of Congress have sent a letter to Trump that called the proposed travel ban “reckless” and argued it would be economically damaging.

“There is absolutely no national security imperative to wholesale ban travelers from large swaths of the globe,” according to the letter. “Nationality is simply not correlated with threats to our security.”

USAE will provide more information regarding the impact of such a ban on the travel and tourism industry as it becomes available.



Posted notice of Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) Policy. Credit WineAmerica

# HOTS

*HOTS See Ya Later, Alligator...* On March 15, a group of several dozen neighbors at a Daniel Island, South Carolina, apartment complex gathered to remember fondly the life of an unlikely longtime resident of the complex: Walter the alligator. Walter was reportedly baited and killed by South Carolina Department of Natural Resources on March 14 due to concerns that the reptile was a threat to the community. Walter was known to sun himself near a pond in the neighborhood for more than a decade without incident, according to the Associated Press. Attendants of Walter's vigil said that the Daniel Island Village neighborhood was "shaken" by Wal-

ter's death, who had coexisted in harmony with the community for years, according to local reports. Rebekah Cole, organizer of the vigil, said people with pets and children could walk by Walter undisturbed and unconcerned for their safety. "He was a piece of the community," Cole said. "Even though he was a cold-blooded animal, we all loved him and [his death] tore us all up." HOTS is sending virtual flowers to all of Walter's mourners.

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*HOTS Golden Throne...* The nabber of an 18-carat golden toilet from an English palace—yes, you read that right—has been convicted in the theft alongside an accomplice, the Associated Press reported on March 18. The work of art was insured for almost 5 million pounds (that's more than \$6 million to us Yanks). The thief, Michael Jones, had apparently used the golden John at the Blenheim Palace



Ron Eifert, Director of Sales, Destination Dayton, and Brenda Baker, Sales Manager, Destination Dayton, welcome players, coaches, fans and more to town for the First Four of the 2025 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.

(the country mansion where Winston Churchill was born) on September 13, 2019, while casing the joint ahead of his intended burglary, according

to prosecutors. Jones described the experience of using the golden throne as "splendid," prosecutors said. Just

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WEEKLY NEWS OF ASSOCIATIONS CVBs AND HOTELS **USAE**

PUBLISHER & EXECUTIVE EDITOR 1982 – 2021  
Anne Daly Heller

PUBLISHER-EMERITUS  
Ross E. Heller  
ross@usaenews.com

PUBLISHER  
James Heller  
james@usaenews.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER  
Todd McElwee  
todd@usaenews.com

MANAGING EDITOR  
Jonathan Trager  
jon@usaenews.com

HOTEL EDITOR  
Jordan Bradley  
jordan@usaenews.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
Diane Nichols  
dkn@usaenews.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
Danielle Erbe

MARKETING & CIRCULATION DIRECTOR  
Christy Pumphrey  
christy@usaenews.com

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## ASAE Launching Inaugural Small Staff Summit

By Todd McElwee

ASAE's inaugural Small Staff Summit, a two-day virtual event designed for small staff association leaders, will take place on April 2–3 under the Small Staff Associations Advisory Committee.

"Small staff associations often face unique challenges, such as limited resources, which can hinder their ability to grow and thrive," organizers said. "ASAE's Small Staff Summit provides the leaders of these organizations

with the tools, strategies, and insights needed to overcome these obstacles and build a solid foundation for future success. By addressing key issues such as risk management, technology, and board relationships, the Small Staff Summit empowers small staff leaders to make informed decisions and drive their organizations forward."

ASAE said the program will address the unique challenges small associations face and provide strategies to help improve operational success. A series of expert-led dis-

cussions and practical insights are on deck, with the association stating attendees will gain valuable tools to enhance their organization's effectiveness and growth.

Topics will include risk, digital technology, board relationships, ethics and more. The event kicks off with an in-person networking reception on April 1, at the ASAE Conference Center.

Members pay \$405, with non-member registration costing \$505. Find more information at [asaecenter.org](http://asaecenter.org).

## NCBMP and EIC Partner to Curate Exclusive CMP Curriculum

By Todd McElwee

The National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals (NCBMP) is collaborating with the Events Industry Council (EIC) to enhance educational programming with exclusive CMP content and experiences for its 2025 Annual Conference. Portland, Oregon, will host from November 19–22.

"Our partnership with EIC marks a significant milestone in our commitment to fostering education and professional development for meeting professionals," said Jason Dunn, Sr., CEO, NCBMP. "By collaborating with an organization that sets industry-wide standards and benchmarks, we're ensuring that our members and conference attendees receive world-class education that is both relevant and impactful."

The partnership will deliver updates and thoughts related to the updated CMP International Standards, as well as insights, best practices, and thought leadership tailored to the evolving needs of business event professionals and the broader events industry.

NCBMP will work closely with EIC to curate an educational lineup aligning with the conference's three core pillars: Empower, Innovate, and Act. The organization said with these guiding themes, the 2025 conference will equip attendees with the knowledge and strategies needed to drive meaningful change and excellence in the events industry.

EIC will help develop exclusive education and experiences designed specifically for CMPs. Through interactive sessions, case studies, and workshops, CMPs and all attendees will gain insights to implement in

their careers and organizations. The content will be tied to the updated CMP International Standards, which were released in February 2025, and the EIC Futures Landscape Report, released in March 2025.

"We are thrilled to partner with NCBMP in shaping the educational experience for their 2025 conference while also providing focused content for the CMP community," said Amy Calvert, President & CEO, EIC. "This collaboration will bring forth valuable insights and opportunities, equipping the NCBMP community with the knowledge and tools they need to innovate, lead, and take decisive action in their careers and serve as a way to inform and inspire new candidates for the CMP program."

Find more information at [ncbmp.com](http://ncbmp.com).



# NEWS

## DI Announces Encore as Preferred Global Event Production Partner

By Jonathan Trager

Destinations International (DI) has selected Encore, a long-time provider of event technology and production services for the organization's events, as its "Preferred Global Event Production Partner."

"Through this collaboration, Destinations International aims to introduce its members to the high-quality services and innovative solutions

Encore provides in destinations where they operate, reinforcing a shared commitment to excellence in the tourism and events industry," according to DI.

Encore has provided services for DI events such as main stage lighting, audio, video, and technical support for presentations. The expanded collaboration, announced on March 19, will highlight the additional services Encore offers such as creative

content development, event design, and post-production editing, thereby providing enhanced solutions to elevate events and engagement.

"Destinations International is thrilled to deepen our partnership with Encore and showcase its full range of capabilities," said Don Welsh, President & CEO of DI. "Their expertise and commitment to excellence align perfectly with our mission to deliver top-tier experiences for our members and the broader destination community."

Encore will attend DI's CEO Summit in Savannah, Georgia, from March 23–25, as well as present at

DI's Convention Sales & Service Summit from April 9–10 in Alexandria, Virginia, and DI's Annual Convention in Chicago from July 9–11. Encore is a global event production partner for more than 350,000 events every year.

"We have enjoyed working with Destinations International for many years and are thrilled to expand our partnership," said Ben Erwin, President & CEO of Encore. "Being able to offer our full range of services and technical know-how will allow Destinations International

and its members to elevate their event experiences and leave their event participants feeling energized and inspired."

**"Destinations International is thrilled to deepen our partnership with Encore and showcase its full range of capabilities," said Don Welsh, President & CEO of DI.**

## Hyatt Creates Wellbeing Advisory Board

By Jordan Bradley

Hyatt Hotels Corp. announced on March 18 that it has created a new Wellbeing Collective Advisory Board to guide the hotel brand's holistic wellbeing offerings.

Comprised of a collection of industry leaders, Hyatt expects the advisory board to first focus on "innovating around how people gather for meetings and events," before moving to focus on wellbeing offerings for leisure travelers.

Hyatt also announced the inaugural Wellbeing Collective Advisory Board members: Dr. Alfee Breland-Noble, psychologist and mental health expert, Founder of The AAKOMA Project, a nonprofit focused on mental health, author, and contributor at Miraval Resorts & Spas, a wellness brand from Hyatt; Ally Love, CEO and Founder of

Love Squad, a wellness community focused on improving health habits, Peloton instructor, and on-air contributor to the Today Show; David Stewart, Founder, Super Age and AGE-IST; Deepak Chopra, M.D., author of several books centered on mental and physical wellness; IN-Q, Emmy-nominated poet, and songwriter; Dr. John Scott, Head of Learning Design and Strategy for MasterClass; and Juliet Funt, author of "A Minute to Think," a Fortune 500 advisor, and creator of Hyatt's "Mindful Meetings" guide.

"The new Advisory Board unites leading voices across various industries to help us innovate around the way people gather and elevate the travel journey through intentional wellbeing offerings, with a focus on ensuring our guests and customers leave feeling rejuvenated and fulfilled,"

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## Room Cleanings

continued from page 1

er a customer wants the inspection or not. In the event that a guest complains about an inspection, the bill also protects hotel workers from retaliation.

Ahead of the Hotel Safety Act's introduction, Rogich said one motivation for the bill is to address illicit cannabis use in a February 4 interview with *The Nevada Independent*.

In Nevada, it is illegal to consume cannabis outside of a private residence or a cannabis consumption lounge, but sales of illegal and unregulated cannabis out of Las Vegas hotel rooms has been on the rise in recent years, Rogich said.

"I've been always very open about it, all these industries working together to get this illicit market out of the way," she told the *Independent*. "Room cleaning is the way to do it."

Rogich also said reinstating mandatory daily room cleanings would ease workloads for hotel housekeepers who face significantly more work when hotel rooms are not cleaned daily.

In May 2023, the Nevada Senate passed SB441, a measure that ended daily room cleaning mandates that had been implemented in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic as a health and safety standard.

The Culinary Union, which represents more than 145,000 hospitality workers in Nevada, was strongly opposed to the measure at the time.

However, over the course of several large contract negotiations with Las Vegas Strip properties throughout 2024, the union negotiated contracts that would reinstate mandatory daily room cleaning at properties where Culinary Union employees worked.

"Culinary Union fully supports the health and safety of guest room attendants in Nevada and applauds Senator Rogich for introducing SB360 in the Nevada Legislature," said Ted Pappageorge, Secretary-Treasurer for the union.

The Las Vegas Hospitality Association did not reply to *USAE* request for comment by press deadline.

The bill was referred to the Committee on Health and Human Services, where it awaits discussion.

## HOTS

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before dawn on September 14, 2019, Jones returned to the mansion with sledgehammers, crowbars, and an accomplice. They smashed through a window and pried the toilet from its plumbing in under five minutes, *AP* reports, flooding the bathroom as they escaped with their bounty. The pair were caught on CCTV foot-

age. The toilet was never seen from again, and prosecutors suspect the burglars cut up the plumbing feature and sold it. The pair were convicted of burglary in the Oxford Crown Court. Despite the fact that the (fully functioning) toilet was actually a piece of satirical art created by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan poking fun at excessive wealth, HOTS still wants to know: Who the heck needs an 18-carat gold toilet?



Maura Healey, Governor of Massachusetts, speaks at the Massachusetts Governor's Conference on Travel & Tourism in Springfield. The event ran from March 18–19. Credit: Healey/X

# NEWS

## Choice Updates Identities for Two Brands

By Jordan Bradley

Choice Hotels International is refreshing the identities of two of its upper midscale brands: Comfort by Choice Hotels and Country Inn & Suites by Radisson, Choice announced on March 18.

As part of the brands' reinvigoration, Choice is rolling out new, "value-engineered" prototypes for Comfort and Country Inn & Suites by Radisson properties, Choice said. The new prototypes are designed to increase revenue and optimize costs to support owner profitability.

"Choice Hotels is committed to growing and strengthening both Comfort and Country Inn & Suites by Radisson by ensuring we are providing incredible value and return for both owners and guests," said Judd Wadholm, Sr. Vice President and General Manager of Choice Hotels' Core Brands, which include upper midscale, midscale and economy brands.

The changes to the Comfort and Country Inn & Suites prototypes come after Choice sought extensive owner feedback, and include a 10–15% reduction in construction costs, Choice said, through refinement of the properties' interior spaces, including

updates to breakfast offerings, and furniture, fixtures and equipment packages.

"With an average 90% brand recognition for both brands, deep expertise in the upper midscale segment, and newly refined brand identities—combined with the power of Choice Hotels' franchisee support system—we're creating an environment to help drive hotel performance," Wadholm said.

Comfort properties have been designed to provide "guests with a sense of belonging" through an open lobby that allows for a "clear line of sight" to Comfort breakfast areas and lounge space "so that guests immediately feel familiar with their location," Choice said.

But with the updated prototype, Choice lobbies, breakfast and lounge spaces have been given "a more intuitive design" that creates a "cheerful, energizing" space for guests, Choice said. The updates also include three additional guest rooms "within the



Choice Hotels International has upgraded and refined the prototype of its Comfort brand hotels to create a warm and inviting lobby space.

existing property footprint," and an opening timeframe for new hotels that is shortened by 30%.

The Comfort brand is "one of the most well-known hotel brands in the U.S.," Choice said, and has more than 2,100 properties throughout. At present, there are 122 Comfort properties in the development pipeline.

For Country Inn & Suites, Choice said the properties will maintain their signature chocolate chip cookies. Meanwhile, prototypes for Country Inn & Suites will see an increase of 18 rooms per property as a result of "optimization of the public space and back of house layouts." The change will also result in reduced land required to develop the property. The new prototypes will also have lower implementation costs for property's furniture,

fixtures and equipment packages.

"Comfort and Country Inn & Suites by Radisson share an inimitable legacy of hospitality and value done right and these updates position each brand for even greater success in today's evolving business landscape," said Jenny Aboudou, Head of Upper Midscale at Choice.

Aboudou added: "Choice Hotels has given its brands an edge because we prioritize the voices of our franchisees and are obsessed with studying the dynamic preferences of today's travelers. These insights have been crucial in shaping our next steps for our upper midscale brands so they can remain the ones customer favor and return to for many years to come."

For more information, visit [choicehotels.com](http://choicehotels.com).

## Hyatt

*continued from page 4*

said TJ Abrams, Vice President Global Wellbeing, Hyatt.

The seven advisory board members "will work to strengthen Hyatt's event philosophy, Together by Hyatt," to help planners curate meetings and events in a way that seamlessly includes holistic wellbeing offerings at meetings and events.

"Whether traveling for business or leisure, now more than ever, our guests are seeking meaningful experiences that foster connection, build community and enhance their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing," Abrams said.

Together by Hyatt currently offers a small collection of wellness meetings and event offerings at a selection of Hyatt hotels, including a curated wellbeing menu at the Andaz 5th Avenue in New York City and immersive culinary experiences in partnership with Le Petit Chef at the Grand Hyatt Nashville, Grand Hyatt Atlanta Buckhead, and the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Downtown SOMA.

The advisory board will also work to expand on Miraval Resorts and Spas' wellness retreat offerings, with select hotels soon to offer wellbeing

retreats for group customers. These retreats are designed to "foster deep connections, enhance collaboration, and empower groups to achieve their collective goals through mindful practices and tailored wellness activities," Hyatt said.

"In the way people gather at hotels, we discover not just places, but opportunities for connection, transformation, and renewal," said Chopra. "I'm honored to be part of this initiative to enhance travelers' experiences. By nurturing the mind, body, and spirit, we can create immersive experiences that leave individuals feeling rejuvenated and inspired, fostering a deeper connection with themselves and those around them."

Hyatt also announced that qualifying group bookings at participating Hyatt properties in the Americas contracted by June 30 for events taking place through December 31 could be eligible for a limited promotion. "With wellbeing of the organization, planner and participant in mind," Hyatt is offering additional savings and rewards, including up to 5% off the master bill, complimentary room rental, up to 20% off AV rental equipment, a daily wellbeing care station, and a complimentary health break. For more information, visit [hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com).

## Pendry

*continued from page 1*

is such a dynamic and desirable location, already home to a collection of fantastic and acclaimed brands and concepts," Fuerstman said. "We look forward to capturing the true sense of spirit that's so unique to the city, and showcasing all that Pendry has to offer."

The new Pendry hotel will be designed by Earl Swensson Associates (ESa), a local architectural firm, and Post Company, a New York-based interior design studio, Pendry said.

Inspiration for the hotel's vibe and design comes from celebration of "the soul of Music City" through "lively" and "upscale" design of the hotel's interiors, its restaurants and bars, as well as its event programming.

The Pendry Nashville's 146 Residences will be available for purchase

later this year, and include "spacious floor plans, bespoke finishes, and breathtaking city views," Pendry said.

Residence layouts will be available from one to four bedrooms.

Pendry Nashville Residences will also offer a dedicated staff, exclusive residential amenities, including a private pool, a unique rooftop experience with a dining room, whiskey and billiards room, security, parking, personalized services, and property management.

"Nashville is one of the most exciting cities in America, bursting with vibrant energy and soul, and The Gulch neighborhood feels like the epicenter of it all," said Michael Fuerstman, co-founder, Pendry Hotels & Resorts. "We are honored to bring Pendry to this great city and look forward to creating something spectacular that pays respect to Southern Hospitality and features our unique perspective on contemporary luxury."



# NEWS

## Vegas LGBTQ+-Owned Hotel to Reopen Following Contractor Dispute

By Jordan Bradley

The Bent Inn, one of Las Vegas' two LGBTQ+-owned and operated hotels, announced it will reopen on April 4 following a legal dispute with its contractor.

Business partners and married couple Greg Kafka and Mark Hunter closed the Bent Inn and Gastropub in late September 2024. The 33-room hotel had been open less than a year before the property's general contractor, ADJ Contracting and Development, filed a lawsuit against the hotel's operating company, Escape Resorts, which brought down financial woes and shuttered the property.

At the time of the closure, Kafka and Hunter said: "It is with profound sadness that we announce the closing of Bent Inn & Pub. As many of you are

aware, we have had ongoing battles with our general contractor, ADJ Contracting & Development, which are now the subject of two pending lawsuits...These battles have taken their toll financially, forcing Bent Inn to close."

Both ADJ and Escape Resorts filed lawsuits against the other in late June 2024 ahead of the boutique hotel's closure.

ADJ claimed that Escape Resorts owed the contractor approximately \$916,000 plus interest for unpaid work done to renovate the property, placing a lien on the property and preventing Escape from converting their construction loan, according to court documents.

Meanwhile, Escape Resorts refuted the claim, calling the lien filed by ADJ "nothing short of frivolous and recorded in bad faith," and filed a countersuit days later.

**Both ADJ and Escape Resorts filed lawsuits against the other in late June 2024 ahead of the boutique hotel's closure.**

be authorized without an approved change order to their contract.

Hunter and Kafka told the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* they had found a silent investor with a background in hospitality to refinance the hotel's construction loan at a better rate. This would allow the property to reopen following recent court decisions that barred the inn's original lender from moving forward with foreclosure on the property.

"We had to close our doors for a while due to a contractor dispute that took a toll on us financially and emotionally," Kafka and Hunter said in an emailed statement. "But, thanks to favorable court rulings and a massive amount of perseverance, we've been able to address the issues and clear the way to reopen. The financial drain we experienced wasn't easy, but we've come out stronger on the other side."

The time Bent Inn spent closed allowed the pair to refocus, Hunter

and Kafka said. All the guest rooms have been upgraded with new TVs, luxury brand bath products, individual room heating and cooling systems, and remodeled decor, and all of the property's pool-facing rooms now include desks and mini-fridges.

"Over the past two years, we've had the chance to reflect on what really matters," Hunter and Kafka said. "We've always valued our community, but the support and love we've received has shown us just how deep those connections go."

The property is now relaunching with an updated name. Formerly the Bent Inn & Pub, the boutique hotel property is now the Bent Inn & Lounge Bar to better align "with our original vision."

"It's going to be a relaxed, comfy gathering spot with high-quality food, unique entertainment, and an overall lounge feel," Hunter and Kafka said.

The hotel opened in 1965 under the name Moonlight Motel before transitioning into an apartment complex. When Escape Resorts took over the property in January 2020 the pair redesigned the property to feature pulp fiction-style decor from the 1950s and 1960s, according to the *Review-Journal*.

"We're emboldened by our resilience as a small, marginalized business fighting past a well-funded adversary—and we're so excited to share this new chapter with all of you," Hunter and Kafka said.




Ross E. Heller, Publisher Emeritus of *USAE*, met with members of Visit Salt Lake earlier this month during his honeymoon cross-country travels from Seaside, Oregon, to Chevy Chase, Maryland. Left to right: Gera Blanco, Human Resource Coordinator; Cassie Lentz, Social Media Manager; Ryan Mack, Vice President, Communications; and Stu Webber, Director of Convention Sales, Health and Medical, Government, and Public Administration; and Heller.

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