



PULSE / SCENE

# LOFTY SITUATION

## ONE HOTEL CHAIN WORKS AGAINST THE ECONOMY

by JULIE STONE

"We know we're in for a period of some rough times," says Steve Moore, chief executive officer of the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau in a recent *USA Today* article about Arizona's hotel occupancy and airport traffic declines. But that's not stopping aloft Hotels, the new vision of Starwood Hotels, from expanding everywhere — including Arizona. Opening its first Arizona location on Tempe Town Lake's north shore on February 5, the company also plans to open aloft Phoenix in September of this year and aloft Chandler by April 2010.

The hotel chain only opened its first location in Montreal in 2008 and they state in a press release that they plan to have 500 aloft Hotels open around the world by 2012, which averages to opening 10 new locations a month. Currently there are 20 aloft Hotels in the United States, one in Montreal and one in Beijing.

It's an ambitious plan in an economy full of people who aren't going on as many vacations. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics, the amount of passengers flying in 2007 from 2008 fell 1.6 percent. This is only the fifth time travel has decreased since the government started keeping records 35 years ago. The future doesn't look bright, either. A recent Allstate poll stated nearly half of all Americans plan to cut back on how much they travel in 2009. But this isn't keeping the contemporary chain from booming their business.

"We continue to have a strong pipeline and are opening hotels with the long view," says Brian McGuinness, senior vice president of aloft Hotels. "We are building, opening, renovating and innovating for the recovery and beyond."

aloft is the modern and high-tech branch of the Starwood chain. Michael Mahoney, CEO of Triyar Companies says, "It's the newest, most technologically-advanced project," which he states is why he wanted to be apart of this project. "The minute you walk into the hotel, if you choose not to talk to someone, you simply swipe your credit card and the computer shows you the hotel layout, where your room is, and then the computer prints the key for you."

The hotel offers plenty of amenities including re.fuel, the hotel's 24/7 grab-and-go eatery, and their lounge, w xyz. Mahoney



describes w xyz as "Starbucks on steroids during the day" and a swanky bar at night. With a fitness facility, outdoor heated pool and 42-inch, flat-screen televisions in every room, aloft Tempe has the luxuries covered. All 136 rooms have a contemporary design, with oversized shower heads, custom amenities by Bliss Spa and their "ultra-comfortable" signature beds. "This is geared toward people who enjoy clean, efficient rooms," says Mahoney.

aloft hotels are so with the times that they even have their own blog. Stay informed on their deals, events and more at [aloftagogo.typepad.com](http://aloftagogo.typepad.com). We're hoping they'll list plenty of staycation specials for this summer.

Get in on the action at [www.aloifthotels.com](http://www.aloifthotels.com)