

Gordon 'Butch' Stewart to Convert Mas Camp

Sandals Resorts International (SRI), the operators of the Sandals and Beaches hotels, is looking to enter the corporate hotel sector arena in Kingston, which is dominated by the likes of the Jamaica Pegasus, the Kingston Hilton and the Hendrickson-run Courtleigh Hotel. The hotel will be called Sandals City and will be located on Kingston's Oxford Road. It will mark a departure from SRI's very successful all-inclusive concept.

Speaking with Caribbean Business Report from Kingston, SRI chairman Gordon 'Butch' Stewart said: 'We plan to build our own Sandals City hotel on Oxford Road, Kingston. The plans are in the works right now. It will be a corporate hotel with conference and banqueting rooms and a host of other facilities like spas, raquetball courts, tennis courts, gymnasium, you name it.

'I recently had a tour of the newly-opened Spanish Court Hotel and I was most impressed. Christopher Issa has done a marvellous job with it. He has defied the odds because it is a small lot yet he has managed to offer comprehensive facilities. It has the most beautiful pool. Christopher Issa has joined the Hendrickses as a leading corporate hotelier and I hope there is room for us as well.'

Sandals City will be placed where Mas Camp is currently located on Oxford Road. Stewart is of the view that this is a prime location and that the hotel will do well. The Sandals strategy may well be to take advantage of the fact that relative to the rest of the Caribbean, real estate prices are lower in Jamaica. According to the head of Coldwell Banker Jamaica, Andrew Issa, 'You get a larger home and a larger lot than you would get in another island for one-fifth of the price.'

Therefore, it makes sense to purchase land now and then look to develop it once this economic and financial depression passes.

The current global crisis has not prevented Sandals from expanding and refining its product. Over the last two years it has developed the Mediterranean Village, a-188-family suites expansion at its Sandals Antigua hotel, and added the Italian Village to Beaches Turks & Caicos with an additional 180 suites with accompanying top class services. Only last month it acquired the Four Seasons in Great Exuma, the Bahamas, which it will now be called Sandals Emerald Bay.