

Austin's Four Seasons to get makeover

\$15 million project beginning in January will renovate the hotel's lobby, restaurant and rooms.

By Shonda Novak
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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When guests arrive at the Four Seasons Hotel in downtown Austin in May, they'll find the same warm Texas hospitality but a new but a new contemporary look to the lobby, restaurant and 291 rooms.

Work will start in mid-January on the first part of a \$15 million makeover planned by the hotel's owners, Chicago-based Lodging Capital Partners LLC. The company bought the landmark hotel overlooking Town Lake in February.



Larry Kolvoord
AMERICAN-STATESMAN

In January, Austin's Four Seasons Hotel will begin \$15 million in renovations.

To start, the spa will be expanded to include eight new rooms for facials and body treatments, updated locker rooms and new steam rooms.

Next will come a redesigned restaurant, giving the existing cafe a modern feel, said designer Steven Didrick with Engstrom Design Group, the San Francisco company working on the restaurant portion of the project with Austin-based Antenora Architects LLP.

Engstrom has designed restaurants including Spago in Las Vegas for famed chef Wolfgang Puck. The firm also designed the Veranda restaurant in the Four Seasons Hotel in Las Vegas and Kent Rathbun's Abacus restaurant in Dallas. It's also designing a Jasper's restaurant for the Domain, an upscale Neiman Marcus-anchored shopping center under construction in North Austin.

The renovation will include new paint, millwork, furniture, and a wine bar with tasting tables and a private dining area.

Michael Antenora, president of Antenora Architects, said the restaurant hasn't been renovated since it opened in 1986.

"They're trying to create a world-class destination restaurant that will draw people on its own strength and merit, regardless of whether you're staying in the hotel," Antenora said.

Antenora said the outdoor dining area will be improved and enlarged, making it more of a year-round eating area. An outdoor lounge will be added.

In late March, work will start on remaking the hotel's rooms by adding new furniture, drapes and plasma televisions. The lobby will get new carpet and chairs.

BBG-BBGM, an interior design firm based in Scottsdale, Ariz., is redesigning the rooms and spa. Antenora Architects also is working on the spa portion.

This month, Conde Nast Traveler magazine ranked Austin's Four Seasons the 17th best hotel in North America and the 92nd best worldwide.