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Story title: iHotel to open in August near Research Park, New accommodation has Houlihan's on site, now accepting reservations

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The opening of the iHotel and Conference Center and Houlihan's restaurant is set for August 11.

Both of the businesses, located on South First Street, are south of Assembly Hall and are a collaboration between the University and Fox-Atkins Development.

The hotel had been a concept for several years, but no major ground work was discussed until about four years ago, said Andrea Ruedi, chief executive officer for Fox-Atkins Development.

"It has long been a dream of the University and community leaders to be able to hold large conferences in our community and be able to cater to those types of numbers, so the University worked with Fox-Atkins Development to make it happen," said Ruedi.

Hotel and restaurant managements have been busy filling 200 staff positions this summer in order to have full staffs ready to report to the hotel on July 15, and to the restaurant on August 1.

Non-management staff's pay will range from \$9 to \$18 dollars an hour, and all employees who work at least 30 hours a week will be eligible for benefits, said Ruedi.

Jesus Sanchez, the new Houlihan's manager, said on Saturday that training has already begun.

"I am actually in Virginia opening a Houlihan's to get some experience, so it's pretty exciting," Sanchez said.

The chain-restaurant seemed like a practical choice Ruedi said Friday.

"Any hotel must have a restaurant, we just wanted one that could stand independently and serve the whole community," she said.

Fox-Atkins Development expects a warm welcome for the restaurant and hotel. The 126-unit iHotel has regular rooms for \$139 dollars a night and suites for \$209 a night. People

were able to begin booking rooms last summer and it is currently available.

"The hotel is booked all throughout football season and for major weekends such as the University's Dads Weekend," said Ruedi. "A waiting list is available, however, for those looking to acquire a room at the new hotel."