



This artist's rendering shows what the pool area at Westin St. John Resort and Villas might look like after the first phase of a \$35 million renovation is complete.

# First phase of restoration begins at Westin St. John

When work is complete, \$35 million makeover will include restaurant and pool updates, new timeshare units

By ALDETH LEWIN  
Daily News Staff

The Westin St. John Resort and Villas is investing \$35 million to give the property a major makeover. General manager Mike Ryan said the number of hotel rooms will be reduced, replaced by newly renovated luxury timeshare units called Coral Vista Villas. The project also includes a face-lift to the public areas, restaurants, pool, meeting space and remaining hotel rooms. The first phase of the project is a “refresh” of the beach, pool and the 96 poolside guest rooms, Ryan said. That work already is under way and

is scheduled to be completed by mid-December. “Everything as of today is on schedule and moving along nicely,” Ryan said. The six poolside buildings are currently closed, as is the pool deck. “We wanted to get that done in time for season, as it really is the focal point,” Ryan said. The next phase is a conversion of 79 existing hotel rooms into 54 luxury villas, which will be part of the resort’s vacation ownership program. The new project, overlooking Great Cruz Bay, will include 30 two-bedroom villas, six two-bedroom lofts and 18 studio villas. Construction on Coral Vista Villas

will start Dec. 1 and continue into next year, according to Ryan. The second building will start at the beginning of January, and the third building will start at the end of January. The entire project is expected to be completed by the second quarter of 2015, with the first building’s anticipated occupancy in January 2015. Starting the first week of January, the renovation of the resort’s public spaces will begin as well, Ryan said. The meeting rooms, watersports area, fitness center, dockside check-in area, spa, Westin airport lounge and dining facilities all will be given new life, he said. The renovations are expected to be done by the end of 2014, he said. The public spaces renovation will affect availability of some of the meeting space, but Ryan said it would be minimal. “We’re trying to be as flexible as we can,” he said. “It should not impact a lot of the local business

that we do.” Starwood Vacation Ownership, a division of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc., owns the St. John beach resort. Ryan said the \$35 million renovation is simply keeping the property up to date and relevant in an ever-changing tourism industry. “We’re really just increasing our presence and commitment to the island,” Ryan said. “The project really ensures the continued success of the resort into the future.” The vacation club units of Bay Vista Villas were renovated in 2007, and the Virgin Grand Villas did an upgrade in 2008. “This is a continuation across the rest of the resort,” Ryan said. Upon completion, the resort will boast a total of 200 villas and 96 hotel rooms. Ryan said the resort has been working with the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources as well as with the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers to get all the permits in place for the construction. The existing Coastal Zone Management permit had to be modified slightly, Ryan said. “Everything is moving along well,” he said. The resort also plans to go green with the installation of solar panels throughout the property, upgrades to the wastewater system and improved turtle lighting on the beach, Ryan said. “The Westin St. John Resort & Villas is one of the most successful resorts in the Caribbean. As the resort and the on-site vacation ownership continue to play a pivotal role in St. John’s expansive tourism market, we are thrilled to enhance our presence and commitment to the island,” Starwood Vacation Ownership chief operating officer Steve Williams said in a prepared statement. — *Contact reporter Aldeth Lewin at 714-9111 or email alewin@dailynews.vi.*

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Contact us
Publisher
Jason Robbins
714-9107
jrobbins@dailynews.vi
Executive Editor
Gerry Yandel
714-9106
gyandel@dailynews.vi
Editor At Large
J. Lowe Davis
714-9138
lowedavis@dailynews.vi

Advertising
St. Thomas-St. John
714-9141 or 714-9147
Fax: 774-6886
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Classifieds
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