

# New \$17 million hotel banks on architectural focus to set itself apart

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The Sarasota Modern hotel is bent on doing things with a bit of a design twist.

The hotel's shuttle is a 1970s Volkswagen bus. Suites feature clawfoot bathtubs on the balconies. And the hotel restaurant is dubbed "Rudolph's" after Paul Rudolph, the famed architect who designed several Sarasota landmarks and once served as the dean of the Yale School of Architecture.



Courtesy. The Sarasota Modern held a soft opening in mid-December in Sarasota's Rosemary District.

The Modern held its soft opening in mid-December — joining a downtown Sarasota hotel surge that's brought hundreds of new rooms to market. Others include the Art Ovation Hotel, The Westin Sarasota and Embassy Suites.

But Jason Cincotta, president of Boston-based The Cincotta Co. and owner of The Sarasota Modern, isn't afraid of competition. "There are a lot of new hotels," he says, "but we think we're unlike anyone else in the market."

The hotel, in Sarasota's Rosemary District just north of downtown, aims to stand out by touting its focus on design, architecture and a boutique feel. The 89-room hotel also allows for a high level of personal touch, Cincotta adds. "I think it's an almost perfect number," he says. "We have something that's personal."

The hotel is staffed as if it served more guests, Cincotta says, with 80 employees and plans to hire more. The staff's ability to focus on fewer guests gives The Sarasota Modern an advantage, he says. "We don't want to be huge, it's very much a boutique hotel," says Cincotta. "We don't think anybody's a direct competitor to us."

Sarasota was on Cincotta's radar because his family has been coming here for more than a decade, and now his parents and sister live here. Cincotta, an architecture and design buff, says on trips to Sarasota, he made his parents go on detours to see Sarasota School of Architecture buildings. The Sarasota School of Architecture was a modern architecture movement during the mid-20th century based in and around Sarasota. "The first thing I do when I

go to a town,” Cincotta says, “is see if there are buildings worth seeing.”

His parents who told him to check out the Rosemary District. Cincotta says he liked the neighborhood’s walkability and atmosphere. When he drove by and saw the site that would later become the hotel, he said, “OK, let’s do something fun here.”

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The Rosemary District has seen a boom in development projects and new businesses in recent years. Cincotta says he knew they were investing in what he calls “one of the coolest parts of town.” He also purchased property adjacent to the hotel for possible expansion options. That space could be used for condos, more hotel rooms, additional event space or gallery space in the future.

Site work for The Sarasota Modern started in April 2017 with a year-and-a-half build schedule. Hurricane Irma, Cincotta says, added eight weeks, with steel shipments delayed by the storm. Hotel construction costs came to \$17 million. The contractor was Gilbane Building Co., and the architect was Stephen Chung of Boston, with Hoyt Architects in Sarasota as production architects. “It’s a Swiss watch of a building the way it fits together,” Cincotta says.

The hotel has a pool, restaurant, lounge, patio and 10 different room types. In-season room rates range from \$229 to \$699.

The core challenge now, Cincotta says, is communicating the hotel's attributes to potential guests through the internet, front desk and other strategies.

The Sarasota Modern is a Tribute Portfolio hotel that's a soft brand of Marriott, developed as an independent concept and design. The hotel's franchise agreement allows it to use Marriott infrastructure such as the company's reservation platform. It also helps with marketing, employee training and gaining access to the business traveler market.



Courtesy. The Sarasota Modern hotel took design inspiration from the Sarasota School of Architecture.

In return, The Sarasota Modern provides a brand loyalty fee in the form of a percentage of revenue. Cincotta says the arrangement solves some of the problems of running a hotel. "We can tap into Marriott's abilities," he says.

The Cincotta Co.'s other projects include a 160-key hotel in Boston, projected for a groundbreaking later this year. He plans to turn his attention to the next phase of the Sarasota project, too, saying the "Modern" hotel concept pioneered in Sarasota could be replicated in other cities.

Cincotta started in development by rehabbing brick buildings in Boston. Developing a hotel has been a dream of his, he says. "I loved to travel as a kid and stay in hotels. There's nothing like being in the hustle and bustle of a hotel."

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