

## ROYAL REGENCY HOTEL

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### The lobby fish go as hotel goes boutique

The Royal Regency Hotel in Yonkers plans an estimated \$3 million renovation in early 2014. ...

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By: [John Golden](#) Posted date: December 27, 2013 In: [Featured](#), [Food & Beverage](#), [Hospitality](#), [Westchester](#) | comment : [0](#)

If the Royal Regency Hotel is known beyond its Yonkers doors, it might be for what's just inside its lobby doors: splashing rock pools swimming with carp beside a sweeping staircase. It's what greets the weary, budget-minded interstate traveler stopping for a conveniently located room at 165 Tuckahoe Road.

And then there's the Crystal Ballroom, a 4,000-square-foot, vanity-reflecting hall of mirrors and massive chandeliers where the Royal Regency's owners cater many of the nearly 100 wedding receptions they book in an average year.

After the holiday season and over the slow winter months, the lobby water show and its resident goldfish kin will be replaced by an elegantly modern floating-LED-light-themed lobby entrance and staircase at the Royal Regency. LED chandeliers and French doors will be hung and glass wall panels removed in the refurbished Crystal Ballroom.

The major renovations are part of an approximately \$3 million redesign and repositioning of the family-owned hotel in what is expected to be a more competitive hospitality market in Yonkers in 2014 and beyond, where [hotels](#) are being planned for the Cross County Center and Executive Boulevard. The makeover includes the three-story hotel's 88 guest rooms and five suites.

Maria Pampafikos, vice president and hotel co-owner, said the transformation from interstate waystop to boutique hotel is expected to be completed by May. The Royal Regency will remain open throughout.

And what is that shade of purple on walls, fabrics and furnishings that ties together lobby, ballroom and guest rooms in the new design?

"Aubergine," interior designer Therese Virserius said over the phone from her Manhattan office. "It's a color that in a way is actually a neutral. ....It's a very soothing color as well."

Then there's the brighter neon shade of purple on the sliding glass doors that open from guest bathrooms onto bedrooms. "The wow factor," said Virserius, whose dozens of renderings for the Yonkers renovation were stacked against chair legs in the hotel owners' office during a recent [conference call](#).

With offices in New York City and Paris, her Virserius Studio has designed commercial and residential interior projects that include the Caribe Hilton Resort, Hyatt Regency hotels in Montreal and Rochester and Chelsea Loft. The new hotel lobby in Yonkers, with aubergine wall coverings and guests passing under LED-lit globes at the entrance and an artfully shaped LED light ring mounted over the grand staircase, will be "sleek, trendy, modern, boutique," said Pampafikos – and "sexy" too.

"We want to look non-franchise," she said. "We want to get away from the cookie cutter. We want to stand out."

"It's a distinct departure from where they are today," Virserius said, "and it will place them in a completely different market than where they were before."

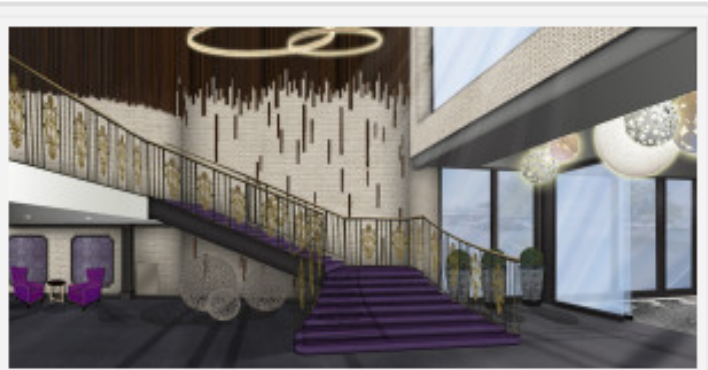
Pampafikos said the owners do want to attract more business travelers and corporate events to their higher-priced boutique hotel. "We do want to be able to cater to the corporate clientele and in general to a less price-sensitive guest," she said.



Co-owners Maria and Nick Pampafikos at the Royal Regency Hotel in Yonkers.

Pampafikos is the daughter of the hotel's president and CEO, Konstantinos Paxos. Emigrating from Greece at 16, he found work as a dishwasher at a New York City diner and worked his way up in the industry to become owner of Royal Coach Diner in the Bronx.

Paxos in 1992 acquired the three-story building on busy Tuckahoe Road in Yonkers. It was vacated by Carvel Corp. in 1991, two years after founder Tom Carvel sold the company to Investcorp for more than \$80 million. For 24 years it had been corporate headquarters for the ice cream franchise business.



Royal Regency's new lobby designed by Virserius Studios.

Westchester County land records show Paxos' company, Nikolaos Realty Corp., paid \$2.4 million in 1994 when the property deed was transferred by the estate of Tom Carvel, who died in 1990.

Like Paxos a Greek immigrant, Carvel – born Carvelas – had started his soft ice cream retail business in Westchester. Carvel Corp. in 1967 bought the Westchester Town House Motel on Tuckahoe Road and renamed it the Carvel Inn. The building reportedly continued to operate as a public hotel while serving as Carvel headquarters and a company conference center for visiting franchise owners.

Pampafikos said Carvel housed franchise trainees in the headquarters hotel. A vestige of the drive-through service window in what was a Carvel ice cream shop in the building remains in a front salon of the Royal Regency.

The hotel employs about 30 workers. Pampafikos, who holds a master's in human resources management from Fordham University, started in the family company as an assistant banquet manager, learning the business from the ground up at her father's insistence.

In the Yonkers hotel market, "There's definitely more competition," Pampafikos said. She said the Royal Regency is developing a "staycation" package for not-too-distant-traveling guests with Empire City Casino at Yonkers Raceway.