



The math of grapes



Hyoungh Chang | The Denver Post

Architect James Johnson sits with plans for an \$8 million, 80-room wine-themed hotel to be built in the Western Slope town of Palisade. "It's the perfect complement" to the town, Johnson says.

The Palisade area's wine prowess has ripened the area for a theme hotel

By Elizabeth Aguilera, Denver Post Staff Writer

75%

Portion of premium Colorado vineyards that are in the Palisade area

\$14 MILLION

Retail value of the Colorado wine industry in 2005-06

17

Wineries around Palisade

The Western Slope town of Palisade will host the state's first wine-themed hotel, expanding in-town lodging options for tourists drawn to the region's vineyards and tasting rooms.

Richard and Jean Tally plan to open the 80-room Wine Country Inn next spring. The \$8 million project will feature wine-tasting areas, catering facilities, meeting facilities, a health club and an outdoor pool.

"It's something we feel is an idea that has come of age," Richard Tally said. "The wine industry in Colorado is growing."

The Palisade area hosts 75 percent of the state's premium wine grape vineyards, according to the Palisade Chamber of Commerce.

Colorado's wine industry generated more than \$14 million of retail value during the 2005-06 fiscal

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WINE: Palisade "ripe and ready"

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year, according to the Colorado Wine Industry Development Board.

Besides a few small bed-and-breakfasts in Palisade, there has been nowhere else for visitors to the area to stay, said Jim Johnson of JG Architects, which designed the Wine Country Inn.

Those who want to make a weekend out of the experience often have to drive 10 miles to Grand Junction for a hotel.

"It's the perfect complement to Palisade," Johnson said.

Johnson describes the design for the inn as "farmhouse vernacular" with porches, gabled roofs and wood siding.

"It's a contemporary version of a farm- and ranch-house building," he said.

The hotel will sit on 7 acres of active vineyards.

The Tallys, who split their time between Grand Junction and Edwards, have been hoteliers for years but never worked on something so themed or exciting, Richard Tally said.

The couple has been toying with the idea for more than a decade.

Every time the Tallys traveled to California and Italy, they thought about bringing home the idea of wine-centric lodging. Last fall, when land at one of the vineyards went to auction, the Tallys snapped up 7 acres.

"It will have the ambience of being out in the country in the actu-



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al vineyards," Richard Tally said. Palisade has about 17 wineries and a growing downtown with new restaurants, bars and galleries. A study this year by the town identified lodging as the top need in the town.

The Tallys bought their land from Steve and Naomi Smith, who own Grande River Vineyard and were auctioning off parcels of their property.

The Smiths had planned to retire but decided to keep the winery and a portion of the acreage after seeing the plan for the Wine Country Inn.

"The hotel will do wonders for our tourism," Naomi Smith said. "It's really exciting. It's a long time coming for Palisade, but it's a very needed change."

Now, the Smiths have set in motion a plan of their own. With investors, they hope to develop 5 acres into a retail and residential complex to accent the inn and their winery. Grande River produces 5,000 to

7,000 cases of wine a year.

"It's going to be a high-end development," Naomi Smith said. "Palisade is really ripe and ready to take off, and I think these kinds of things are going to help do it."

The Smiths and the Tallys worked with the town of Palisade to annex the county land into Palisade so it could get much-needed city services. In turn, Palisade will collect sales and room taxes from the inn.

For the Tallys, who have owned five hotels over the years, the Wine Country Inn is an entirely different endeavor. The others have been chains, such as their Quality Inn in Grand Junction and the Best Western Denver Southwest that they own with their son.

This time, they are funding the entire project and hope to keep the inn independent.

The Tallys, both 68, have definite plans for how the inn will operate. They envision afternoon wine receptions, big breakfasts and guests sitting around the porches with wine in hand.

"We are doing this because we want to do it and we are excited about doing it," Richard Tally said. "We feel it is the culmination for working very hard and very long to be in the position to do something like this, and we are having a good time doing it."

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