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The two 13-story condominium towers at Emerald Grande rise over the Grande Vista swimming pool that is nearing completion.

A Grande opening

Towers to host coming-out party next week

By **KARI C. BARLOW**

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DESTIN — Makeup, hair and pearls are in place. All she needs is a handbag and heels.

Emerald Grande, the high-rise condo that developer Peter Bos has likened to a woman just out of the shower, is finally ready for her night on the town.

The twin towers, which loom over HarborWalk Village and East Pass, are largely finished and set to host a lavish grand opening next week.

“We’re the hood ornament

of the area,” said Bos, president and CEO of Legendary Inc. “You don’t get a second chance to make a first impression. We really wanted to make a statement.”

The plush 13-story condos come fully furnished, right down to glasses and forks. Guests have access to a spa, outdoor and indoor pools, ballroom, boardroom and upscale retail stores.

“When you get here, it feels like a five-star hotel,” Bos said

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The grand lobby of Emerald Grande is decorated in greens and creams. Developer Peter Bos says it is designed to look like a yacht club from the early 1900s.

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of the grand lobby decorated in rich greens and creams. “Our whole pattern is designed to look like a yacht club that might have been built in the early 1900s.”

A full-time concierge will book reservations and other activities. Guests’ room keys can be used as credit cards throughout HarborWalk Village.

Designed to hide cars, the Emerald Grande basically sits atop a platform that contains the parking and retail areas,

Bos added.

“I just feel very fortunate to have built on this piece of land,” he said, “and I think I’ve done it justice.”

Sure, it’s big — huge, even, Bos concedes.

“I know it’s large,” he said. “We deliberately moved the building very close to the road. We did that so we could have a lot of room near the water. That’s where people want to be.”

So what’s the verdict on the street?

A decidedly mixed review: big and beautiful, out of proportion, expensive, way out of reach.

“We drove into Destin that first day ... over the Mid-Bay Bridge, and we were like, ‘Wow!’” said David Webb, who is vacationing in the area from Sugarland, Texas. “We probably won’t ever stay there, but it’s nice to look at.”

Some folks such as Jackie Davis say Emerald Grande is too much of everything.

“I think it’s disgusting,” said the Fort Walton Beach resident. “It cuts off a beautiful view. It does not add to the area.”

Others, like Tracy, a tourist from Indiana who was staying on Okaloosa Island, say the project is fine for Destin.

“I think it’s beautiful, but keep those big things down there,” said Tracy, who would not give her last name.

For better or worse, larger or smaller, the Emerald Grande is here to stay.

The shops and restaurants planned for street level should be completed by December and open by March.

Many of the units — mostly with three and four bedrooms — have not been placed on the market, Bos said.

“Starting next week with our grand opening is when we’ll really kick off our selling,” he said.

Of the 125 units in the east tower, 19 units have yet to sell, and 10 of those have yet to be

placed on the market.

“Now, are we selling at the speed which we all thought?” said Bos, adding that the Emerald Grande can compete with local condos that offer many fewer amenities. “No, but I think we’re very different. If I had a Buick and a BMW, and they’re basically the same price, which one are you going to buy?”

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