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Surfers Paradise scores touch of Hilton glamour

By Greg Stolz

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THE Glitter Strip is about to get even more flash, with the development of the Gold Coast's first Hilton hotel.

Prominent developer Jim Raptis will knock down the landmark Dolphin Arcade in central Surfers Paradise to build the \$700 million, twin-tower project.

It will be the first international hotel for Surfers in two decades after a room glut created by the 1980s Japanese development boom and a rash of new apartment projects.

But Mr Raptis, who unveiled the Hilton plans yesterday, said thriving tourism had soaked up the glut and more hotels were now needed.

He said Hilton's arrival showed the Gold Coast was growing up and becoming more sophisticated.

"The creation of Hilton Surfers Paradise Hotel and Residences is the next step in reshaping Surfers Paradise from a traditional tourist town to a metropolitan, urban-chic beach city," Mr Raptis said.

"Hilton is a very important brand to have on the Gold Coast because it's an international brand.

"The more international brands we have, the better for the city and for tourism."

The Hilton project will boast two towers – one 57 storeys and the other 32 storeys – with 170 hotel rooms and 340 apartments.

Mr Raptis said Surfers Paradise had been "a tired old place" but was being rejuvenated with projects such as the Raptis Group's Chevron Renaissance, the Q1 supertower and Circle on Cavill.

With tourism from countries including China and India on the rise, the time was ripe to expand in the hotel market, he said.

Gold Coast-based Raptis also owns or part-owns the Sheraton Mirage, Holiday Inn and the Gold Coast International hotels.

Robert Scullin, vice-president of Hilton Hotels Australasia, said the Gold Coast had "done a lot of things to put itself on the map internationally".

The Surfers Paradise Hilton is expected to open in 2010.