



As Part of Threesome, Golfing Legend Invests in Green SpringHill Suites

9/14/2012 By Glenn Hasek

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If you are a golf fan and interested in green building, be sure to stop by the SpringHill Suites Pittsburgh Latrobe hotel the next time you are in the Pittsburgh area. The 109-room hotel is highly unique in that its majority owner's likeness and memorabilia are evident throughout the hotel. The majority owner is none other than Arnold Palmer, the golfing great whose career includes 92 national and international championships. I attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony this past week at the hotel where both Palmer and Marriott International executive chairman Bill Marriott were in attendance. ([Click here](#) for related article.)

The hotel is a joint venture of Palmer Hospitality, L.P., Concord Hospitality Enterprises, one of the nation's leading hotel developer/owner/operators, and private investor Keith H. McGraw of Sewickley, Pa. Concord Hospitality developed and will operate the hotel.

Prior to the ribbon-cutting event, where green turf (not ribbon) was cut, Timothy E. Osiecki, executive vice president of development for Concord Hospitality Enterprises, gave me a tour of the hotel. The SpringHill Suites property is one of four LEED-designed hotels that Concord has opened so far. Five more are under construction and 11 additional hotels are in some phase of development. By hotel count, Concord is certainly among the top developers of LEED hotels in the United States. The SpringHill Suites is a LEED-certified prototype that was pioneered by Concord in conjunction with Marriott. The hotel is not being certified as part of Marriott's LEED Volume Program.

Focus on Energy Conservation

What is different about the SpringHill Suites Pittsburgh Latrobe starts at the rooftop where a white rooftop helps to deflect the sun's heat away from the building, reducing cooling-related costs. Also on the rooftop is a heat/cold recovery system linked to bathroom exhaust vents. Heat or cold is pulled from the "old" exhaust air to pre-condition new air coming into the building. A sensor-based guestroom energy management system with a thermostat with an ecoMode button also helps keep heating and cooling costs in check. The system can be accessed from the front desk as part of the hotel's property management system. An additional sensor in the guestroom prompts a master switch to turn off guestroom lighting 30 minutes after a guest has left the room.

LED lighting is used in bathrooms and as a reading light connected to the headboard of the bed. Other energy-efficient lighting such as compact fluorescents is used in other hotel areas. The faucet in each guestroom bathroom allows .5 gallons a minute of water flow. The quiet, pressure-assisted toilet uses just one gallon per flush. The showerhead uses two gallons per minute.

Windows are high performance and most carpeting and drywall has recycled content. The pool uses saltwater. An ozone laundry system significantly reduces the amount of chemicals needed for laundering. The system allows a reduction in water consumption of 30 percent and drying time is improved which allows more laundry to be done per shift. Towel and linen life is extended and Osiecki says there has been an 80 percent reduction in the volume of towels and linens that have to be thrown away. Housekeepers also like the system because of the reduced chemical exposure.

Worth the Investment?

Building to LEED standards certainly costs more but Osiecki says in the long term it is worth it. LEED-designed hotels Concord is involved with have been costing \$350,000 more but Osiecki says he expects a five-year payback on the premium. The company's Courtyard by Marriott property in Settler's Ridge in west suburban Pittsburgh, opened about two years ago, is using 24 percent less energy than a typical Courtyard.

"We spend most of the extra dollars on the building envelopes, the energy-saving systems, as well as water conservation," Osiecki says.

Concord is planning to create a video that will highlight the hotel's green features. That video will run on a TV channel at the hotel

Osiecki says committing to LEED certification is difficult to do but the benefit is very powerful.

"It has enormous benefit for our investors and the environment," he says. "It increases the value of the hotel. I am very proud of our company for really taking the initiative to adopt this and make it our company standard."

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