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Westin Copley's \$18M Renovation Boosts Hotel's Green Efforts

BOSTON, MA — In the early stages of an \$18 million renovation project, one that will see a complete guestroom and corridor redesign, the 38-story, 803-room Westin Copley Place in Boston is preparing to add to its long list of environmental achievements.

In 2010, the property earned Green Key and Green Seal certification, an Energy Star rating, and significantly reduced its energy consumption, water consumption and waste sent to landfill. The hotel's green team, which deserves much of the credit for the accomplishments, is led by Jeff Hanulec, director of engineering, an industry veteran constantly on the lookout for ways to improve operational efficiencies.

Hanulec, who has been at the Westin Copley Place since 2007, recently provided Green Lodging News with charts documenting electricity, gas, steam (the hotel purchases high pressure steam from the city of Boston) and water consumption between January 2006 and November 2010. While consumption has varied each month because of occupancy changes, one can easily see dramatic improvements over time.

In November 2006, for example, the hotel spent \$198,566 on electricity; in November 2010 it spent just \$104,373. In November 2006, gas costs were \$33,177; in November 2010 those costs were \$14,658. In November 2006, the hotel spent \$36,694 on steam; in November 2010 it spent \$19,740. In November 2006 water and sewer charges were \$69,447; in November 2010 those charges amounted to \$39,463. Total utility costs in November 2006 were \$337,883; in November 2010 they dropped to \$178,235 -- approaching a 50 percent reduction during a time when utility costs were rising.

There are many investments and process changes that have resulted in the cost savings. Guestroom heating and cooling is controlled thanks to a guestroom energy management system, condensate from the high pressure steam purchased from the city of Boston is used to heat the hotel's loading dock area, new boiler controls have improved combustion efficiency by 6 percent, variable speed drives are used on electric motors, and mecho shades in guestrooms reduce solar heat gain in the summer.

Lighting Upgrades Help

In terms of lighting, the hotel, as part of its renovation, is adding LED lighting to headboards in

guestrooms and corridor lighting has been upgraded to super T-8s. At the end of 2009, kitchens were upgraded to two-bulb fixtures from four-bulb fixtures without losing any light output. Compact fluorescents have replaced incandescents where possible and motion sensors and timers are used in linen closets.

"We are looking at LED lighting for our lobby -- going from 65-watt bulbs to 13-watt," Hanulec says.

In the kitchens variable-speed hood controllers help to save energy, water cooled ice machines and refrigerators have been upgraded to air cooled, and an efficient ware washing system reduces re-wash of a rack by 10 percent, reducing electricity consumption by nearly 15,000 kWh annually.

As part of the renovation, all 3.5 gallon per flush (gpf) toilets are being replaced with high efficiency 1.1 gpf models. Hanulec says he tested four different toilets in four different rooms -- including two dual flush toilets -- and opted for the standard 1.1 gpf.

"People did not understand the button [for the dual flush]," Hanulec says.

To further reduce water consumption on the property, guestroom bathrooms that previously had two showerheads are getting one 2.5 gallon per minute fixture. Pre-rinse spray valves are used in the kitchen, aerators are used in the kitchen and guestrooms, and six waterless urinals are on property.

Renovation Waste Recycled

All of the waste currently being generated through the renovation is being recycled. The porcelain from the old toilets will end up in asphalt, Hanulec says. As of mid-December, the hotel had prevented 129 tons of materials from going to the landfill through recycling. That is an increase of 29 percent from 2009. The Westin Copley Place now uses single-stream recycling. Cardboard, plastic, metals, light bulbs, batteries, computer equipment, pallets, ballasts and other items are all recycled. A food waste decomposition system is eliminating up to 10 tons of food waste each month and fryer oil is sent off site where it is recycled into bio-fuel.

The Westin Copley Place's laundry is done off site but two programs help the hotel reduce its laundry-related impact: a towel and linen program, and a Make a Green Choice program which allows guests to opt out of housekeeping entirely in exchange for loyalty points or a food voucher. Hanulec says about 5 percent to 9 percent of guests participate in Make a Green Choice.

To help improve air quality and guest and staff safety at the 100 percent nonsmoking hotel, all cleaning chemicals are being changed over to Green Seal approved products.

As mentioned, the hotel's green team, led by Hanulec, has been instrumental in leading and carrying out green initiatives. The green team meets every four to six weeks with most departments represented. Between meetings, the team corresponds frequently by e-mail.

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Renovation of the Westin Copley Place -- its fourth since its establishment in 1983, is scheduled to be completed by mid-April.

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