

Tricore Gets 'P' Hotel & Spa Project Rolling with Demolition Ceremony - By Glenn Hasek

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When most hotel developers officially launch a project, they invite local dignitaries and have a groundbreaking ceremony-with at least several shovels. This month, Tricore Group, LLC did something just a little different. It had a demolition ceremony and used a gold sledgehammer. Why demolition and why gold?

The demolition is significant because much of the masonry, concrete, steel and glass will be recycled per the requirements of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification program. Gold is meaningful because Tricore will pursue LEED Gold for its 'P' Hotel & Spa, a 100-suite, five-story condominium hotel.

'We are really excited about the plans for this property' said John Heim, president of State College, Pa.-based Tricore Group, LLC, in a press release describing the project. 'It will be like nothing this area has seen and few have seen across the country. We think it will be a great addition to State College and to Pennsylvania.'

The hotel and spa will be part of a mixed-use development that will include a plaza, Tapas restaurant and bar, wine cellar and 9,000-square-foot-spa. It will be the first luxury condominium hotel in Pennsylvania.

'Everybody here is excited about this project,' said Patty Kleban, a spokesperson for Tricore. 'Eighty nights a year, this town is sold out, and most other times, occupancy is high.'

As home to Penn State University, State College attracts families of students throughout the year and especially during sporting events.

Numerous Green Initiatives

As mentioned, material from the demolition of the existing structures on the building site will be recycled as much as possible. Asphalt, for example, will be ground down and eventually reused. Construction waste will also be recycled. Additional green highlights will include geothermal heating, solar panels, rainwater reuse, and a smoke-free environment. Hybrid vehicle drivers will be given preferred parking privileges and the hotel will include a shower for employees who choose to walk or bicycle to work.

'Only one other hotel in the nation is currently certified at the Gold level and no other condominium hotel has this certification,' said Ben Heim, Tricore's CEO. 'We are proud to bring the first LEED Gold certified condominium hotel in the nation to Pennsylvania and to Centre County. By making use of pre-developed property, recycling the vacated warehouse and creating the highest quality indoor environment, we are minimizing the environmental impact while ensuring healthy and luxurious accommodations. This facility will be a destination in and of itself.'

Kleban said Tricore took a close look at the direction the lodging industry is headed and decided to be proactive. She said the cost of building to LEED standards was not an obstacle.

'It was not cost-prohibitive when you look at what you will get back,' Kleban said.

Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, the LEED Green Building Rating System provides standards for environmentally sustainable construction. The rating system addresses areas such as sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and innovation and design process. Rating systems for different projects (e.g. renovation versus new construction, retail versus residential) evaluate prerequisites and credits on a point rating system. The Gaia Napa Valley Hotel and Spa, American Canyon, Calif., is the only hotel in the United States so far to have earned the Gold rating.

Close to Beaver Stadium

Located on 16 acres, just two miles from Penn State University's Beaver Stadium, the 'P' Hotel & Spa will include large one-, two- and three-bedroom suites. The suites will be for sale to private owners who can opt to participate in a rental program.

'One of the nice features of our concept, compared to buying a traditional condominium or other game-day accommodation, is that the suite owners will enjoy the benefits of ownership without the hassles when they aren't staying at their suite,' Ben Heim says. 'They will also have the benefit of a full-service luxury hotel and spa right at their front door. The suites will be exquisitely decorated by our design team and will be maintained and cared for in the owner's absence. 'Our priority, and we believe the priority of our owners, will be our focus on the most environmentally conscious and luxurious travel experience in our region.'

When asked if Tricore would build similar condominium hotel projects in the future if its 'P' Hotel & Spa is successful, Kleban said, 'As with any great business, if it works here, it may work somewhere else.'

Tricore Group, LLC's partners on the project include: John and Doug Wolf of Wolf Furniture Enterprises, Michael, Richard and Leonard Fiore of Leonard S. Fiore, Inc., and Mark DiSanto of Triple Crown Corp.

This article first appeared on the Green Lodging News website. To sign up to receive the weekly Green Lodging News newsletter, go to www.greenlodgingnews.com. Glenn Hasek can be reached at greenlodgingnews@aol.com.

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