

CityFlats Hotel Exudes Green in Historic Holland, Michigan - By Glenn Hasek

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Here in the heart of Holland, Mich., a town known for its roots in Dutch culture, a new eco-boutique style hotel has opened that is anything but traditional. The five-story, 56-room CityFlats Hotel is proof that powerful things can happen when sleek, modern design meets environmental coolness.

From the exterior, where LED lights provide colorful illumination, to the interior where large windows welcome in natural light, the CityFlats Hotel is unlike any other in the United States.

Opened at the very end of last year, the property is owned by Holland, Mich.-based Charter House Holdings, LLC. The owners expect the property to receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification from the U.S. Green Building Council within a month. When it does, it will be among the first hotels in the United States to earn the LEED rating.

From its beginnings, the owners of the CityFlats Hotel have done what they can to minimize the building's environmental impact. According to Dave Wilsey, general manager of the hotel, 95 percent of the waste from the hotel's construction was recycled. Materials for the building's interior were selected in order to minimize impact on indoor air quality.

Owners Opted for Cork Flooring

'We have laminated cork flooring in all guestrooms,' Wilsey says. 'It is so much cleaner than carpet. It is a renewable resource and you just need to replace a tile when there is a problem. The bed bases are made from bamboo and so are the linens and towels. The bamboo linens are better than any cotton product because they 'breathe' and are hypoallergenic and anti-microbial. Our goal is to provide luxury accommodations and business travelers prefer premium bedding.'

Countertops in bathrooms are made from recycled glass mixed with concrete. Veneer used throughout the hotel is formaldehyde-free. Low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint was also chosen. To minimize water consumption, dual-flush toilets are included in each guestroom, as well as low-flow faucets and showerheads.

LED lighting is featured not only on the building's exterior, but also in the paneling that sits above each guestroom bed and along the bar in the CitySen lounge. A master control switch for all guestroom lighting is located at the entrance/exit area of each guestroom to give each guest the ability to turn off all room lights at one time. Windows that stretch from floor to ceiling minimize the need for electrical lighting.

Guestroom Energy Management

To further reduce energy consumption, sensors in each guestroom monitor each room and power down heating and cooling system to a pre-set level when a guest is not present. To minimize waste, recyclables are sorted from the waste stream and the local waste contractor also sorts for recycling off-site.

To minimize the environmental impact of the hotel's food and beverage operations, the property's chef has partnered with area farmers to provide ingredients for dishes served at the CityVu Bistro. The fifth-floor restaurant's menu is geared toward a healthier lifestyle, Wilsey says, adding that the kitchen does not even have a fryer.

In addition to the hotel's green attributes, what really makes it unique is its guestrooms. Each one features a different design-making each one 'anti-vanilla', according to the hotel's website.

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