

Wen-I Chang's LEED-Pursuing Gaia at Anderson Opens in California - By Glenn Hasek

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Gaia at Anderson, a new 122-room green hotel, has opened here. It is the second Gaia hotel in California to be developed and opened by Wen-I Chang. The first was the Gaia Napa Valley Hotel and Spa in American Canyon. That 133-room property opened in October 2006.

Chang is also developing a third hotel in Merced, Calif., a 141-room property. Chang expects the Gaia at Anderson hotel to achieve a LEED Silver or Gold rating from the U.S. Green Building Council. The Gaia Napa Valley Hotel and Spa was the first U.S. hotel to earn LEED Gold.

In building Gaia at Anderson, Chang applied lessons he learned from his Gaia Napa Valley Hotel and Spa experience. The swan lake at Gaia at Anderson is 10 acres-twice as large as the one at the Gaia Napa Valley property. Chang says the Anderson property is in the Pacific flight path of different bird species. Unlike Gaia Napa Valley Hotel & Spa, Gaia at Anderson will have dual-flush toilets, 32-inch flat-screen TVs, and an extra layer of sheetrock between guestrooms to help minimize sound transfer. From an overall design perspective, Chang says Gaia at Anderson blends into its natural surroundings much better than the Gaia Napa Valley hotel.

'[For Gaia at Anderson], we preserved about 60 percent of the large trees on the development site,' Chang says.

To preserve a rare elderberry tree, one nearly extinct, 23 parking spaces were sacrificed and sewer lines were diverted.

Whereas the Gaia Napa Valley Hotel and Spa cost about 12 to 15 percent more than a standard hotel its size, Chang says Gaia at Anderson will end up costing about 6 percent more. He expects his Merced property to come in at about 3 percent more.

Recycled Content in Flooring, Countertops

Gaia at Anderson includes numerous green features. An ozone laundry system reduces energy consumption, tile made from 100 percent natural ingredients is used in the lobby floor and bathroom floors, and countertops that include crushed bottle content are used in bathrooms. Solar power provides more than 12 percent of the hotel's electrical needs, while a real-time display in the lobby shows how much energy and water is being used by the hotel, and how much CO₂-a common gas implicated in global warming-is being saved due to sophisticated energy conservation at the hotel.

During construction, leftover scraps of wood, cardboard and metal were recycled. The contractor provided a recycling station for paints. The contractor also provided a recycling station for cardboard. Exceeding the standards of the U.S. Green Building Council, nearly 90 percent of the wood used in the construction of the hotel was certified as sustainably-harvested by the Forest Stewardship Council and comes from local timber sources within 500 miles of the hotel's location.

Interiors are painted with low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints to ensure superior indoor air quality. Carpet and padding made from recycled materials has been purchased. Behind the walls, all the wood used in construction was certified as new growth wood.

SolaTubes Enhance Natural Daylight

The eco-friendly hotel features a full-service restaurant and more than 5,000 square feet of meeting space, all built under the rigorous construction guidelines of USGBC. Solar lighting-natural light from the sun-illuminates the public areas of the hotel through SolaTubes that focus the light of the sun into these areas, replacing electric lights and energy consumption during the day. Other green features include:

Low-VOC sealants and adhesives were used throughout the hotel for carpet and construction. This will help improve the air quality within the hotel and have a positive effect on human health by improving the quality of air.

Water. The project achieved a water use reduction of about 40 percent. Low-flush toilets use just 1 gpf (gallon per flush). Standard toilets produce 1.6 gallons per flush. All of the guestrooms are equipped with low-flow showerheads. The Koi pond uses recycled water from the site, which is then filtered and cleaned prior to entering the pond.

Environmental quality. Appropriately sized and efficient HVAC units that use 15 percent less energy are used throughout. These units are quieter and more efficient than standard HVAC systems and use a more environmentally friendly refrigerant than is standard. Aluminum exterior grates were used in all entrances of the property. This helps to minimize dust and particulates entering the building, therefore improving air quality.

Energy. All windows used are efficient, low energy transmittable and reduce glare. A cool reflective roof reflects heat, therefore saving money in cooling costs.

Recycling. Recycling bins are located in guestrooms and around property. Newspapers are not delivered to each occupied room. They are located in the lobby and are available there for guests. Bulk soap and shower dispensers are used in all guestrooms. This helps to eliminate hundreds of pounds of plastic containers and packaging daily from miniature shower bottles and soap. Only recycled paper products are used at the hotel.

Cleaning. Environmentally friendly cleaning products are used to clean the property.

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