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## Making accommodations: Westport hotel's renovations include a suite of eco-friendly policies

Kansas City Business Journal - by [Suzanna Stagemeyer](#) Staff Writer

A corner of Westport will green up with more than just holiday decorations come December.

The Quarterage Hotel, soon to be renamed Q Hotel and Spa, is being outfitted with devices and operations policies meant to make the hotel more environmentally friendly as part of a renovation effort.

Although some features, such as washing machines that cut down 34 percent on water use, were added as part of the renovation, many changes are in operations, said Doug Gamble, a partner with **Quarterage Hotel LLC**. He considers the project an example for companies that want to implement green measures but aren't in a position to transform their buildings.

The \$1.1 million renovation, which coincidentally decks the hotel halls in a green-themed decor, includes about \$95,000 in costs related to environmentally friendly measures, or about 8.2 percent of the renovation's cost.

Gamble, part of an ownership group that bought the hotel in April, stumbled across the idea in a trade magazine and considered it a good way to differentiate the 123-room hotel.

Many measures are simple ways of increasing efficiency and decreasing waste -- thereby decreasing costs, Gamble said.

In general, that's how hotel operators act -- they do what's in their economic interest, said Ray Burger, president of **Pineapple Hospitality Inc.**, based in St. Charles, Mo., which sells environmentally friendly supplies and provides consulting and marketing along the same lines. Now, environmental concerns are fitting that mold, he said.

Burger, who has helped Gamble with his efforts to green the Q, said the changes Gamble has made probably will save upward of \$2 to \$3 an occupied room night. At that rate, Gamble estimated that he would recoup the startup costs of the sustainable measures in less than two years.

The hotel also will be advertised on Burger's **EcoSuites.com**, which provides information about hotels that meet certain environmentally friendly qualifications.

"I've been doing this for about 12 years, and in the last two years, interest has grown three- or fourfold," Burger said. "Hotel companies recognize that consumers are basically eco-savvy at this point."

Gamble said he began by writing a plan, then picking an employee with similar concerns to help back the effort.

The measures impressed Claus Wawrzinek, local **Sierra Club** group chairman, whom Gamble asked to look over his plan.

"It seems like he is really doing, I would say, 95 percent of the things that could be done without having to tear down the entire hotel," Wawrzinek said.

And as he researched green measures, Gamble, who described himself as an "average Joe" who practices minimal environmentally friendly activities, developed a personal passion for them as well, even beginning to ride a bicycle to work.

That only cements his conviction that being among the first to implement sustainable measures will benefit the hotel.

"If a person like me, who's in the majority, can be turned on by sustainability, I think everybody can," he said.

Brochures in the hotel have prompted interested and enthusiastic questions from guests, he said. Gamble, a board member with the **Kansas City Convention & Visitors Association**, plans to implement similar measures in other hotels, and said he hopes some of the simple steps he's taking will spread to guests and to other hotels to make the city a destination for environmentally conscious travelers and conventions.

The Convention & Visitors Association is compiling a Web page about such green efforts in the city.

"I can't say that we've had people call and say that, 'I'm going to book a meeting because of a green building,'" association CEO Rick Hughes said. "But we do know that the industry and tourists are becoming much more environmentally conscious. ... Everybody thought it was a fluke a few years ago, but it does seem to be in the consciousness of travelers."

Steve Bernstein, president of **Bernstein-Rein** marketing agency, said the green trend can be a valuable marketing tool. Consumers are becoming more interested in the environmental and social responsibility of brands.

"To be first-in and early adopters ... definitely can make an impact," he said, adding that loud advertising also is an important factor. "Going green differentiates you."

### **Step by step**

Environmentally friendly measures at the Q Hotel and Spa, many of which are detailed on educational placards at the hotel, include:

- In-room recycling.
- Energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs in every lighting option.
- A programmable thermostat.
- A choice for guests between individual eco-friendly soaps and shampoos and bulk shower dispensers that will contain the same substances but avoid the packaging waste.
- Devices to reduce the water used in showers, sinks and toilets.
- A linen plan that doesn't change out towels and linens unless guests request it.
- Eco-friendly housekeeping, pest control and laundry products.
- Recycled tissue and toilet paper.
- Recycled or reusable dishes.
- Food and condiments will be provided in bulk where possible to reduce packaging waste, and leftovers will be composted and donated to local organic farmers.
- Bus schedules, bike routes and six bikes that guests can use for free will be available, as well as shuttle service by a hybrid Toyota Prius.

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