With $18 Million Renovation, Westin Copley Will Build on Green Record

12/29/2010 By Glenn Hasek

BOSTON—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.

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

All Star Engineer Drives Impressive Utility Cost Reductions

12/30/2010 By Glenn Hasek

 As the New Year begins, I have Boston on my mind. Why? This past week I spoke with Jeff Hanulec, director of engineering at the Westin Copley Place in Boston and learned about the outstanding work he and his green team are doing to reduce energy and water consumption. Considering the size of the hotel they are working in—38 stories and 803 rooms—their accomplishments over the last four years have been impressive. Total utility costs in November 2006 were $337,883. In November of this year they were just $178,235. It is a pretty safe bet that rates for water and sewer, electricity, gas and steam have increased significantly since 2006.

In my article on the hotel I describe some of the initiatives that have led to the almost 50 percent savings: variable speed drives on motors, a guestroom energy management system, effective use of condensate from high pressure steam, upgrading to more efficient lighting—including super T-8s—new boiler controls, and much more. The hotel is in the early stages of a guestroom and corridor renovation that will wrap up in April. The renovation will include installation of 1.1 gallon per flush high efficiency toilets (water use from toilet flushing will drop from 3.5 gallons per flush to 1.1), compact fluorescent lighting in all guestroom fixtures, and LED lighting in headboards. A year from now you can bet the hotel will see even more significant reductions in utility costs.

Adding to those savings mentioned above, the green team at the Westin Copley Place also reduced the amount of waste going to landfill by 129 tons from January 1, 2010 through mid-December 2010. In the first few weeks of the renovation, which began in early November, more than 26 tons of trash was diverted from the landfill—a diversion rate of almost 88 percent. The old toilets removed from guestrooms will be crushed and used in road surfacing material.

Jeff Hanulec is the leader of the hotel's green team and an all star engineer in my book. I have been fortunate to interview quite a few like him in the past four years and the owners of the Westin Copley Place have got to be extremely pleased to have him on staff. He is engineering savings that are unheard of at most hotels.

For its efforts, the Westin Copley Place has earned Green Key and Green Seal certification, as well as an Energy Star rating. The hotel is one of many in the Boston area that has accumulated a long list of environmental accomplishments. Thanks go to Dan Ruben, executive director, Boston Green Tourism, for sharing the Westin Copley Place hotel's story with me.