

Green features coloring Brickell's Hampton Inn

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The 221-room Hampton Inn & Suites in the Brickell area is expected to welcome guests in November as it strives to become the city's first newly-built hotel to earn Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification.

The 15-story hotel at 50 SW 12th St. encompasses environmentally-conscious features such as lights and thermostats that automatically turn off when guests leave rooms and charging stations for electric cars.

Rooms are also equipped with low-flow water fixtures, dual flush toilets and motion-activated faucets expected to cut water usage by more than 40%, which translates into saving about 500,000 gallons of water a year.

The hotel's green design aims to significantly reduce operating costs, appeal to eco-conscious travelers and preserve natural resources.

"We wanted to be leaders in sustainability. Not a lot of people are doing it," said Howard Wolfson, vice president of operations at Hospitality America. "We wanted to be the leaders and show the benefits of it, and how it's good for the guests and it's good for the bottom line."

This is a family affair: the hotel is being developed by Brickell Hotel Group, with Bernard Wolfson, Mr. Wolfson's father, as general partner. He is president of Miami-based hotel development firm Hospitality Operations.



"We wanted to be leaders in sustainability," Howard Wolfson says.

The hotel project, which began construction in mid-2010, is pursuing LEED silver certification from the US Green Building Council, which it expects to get early next year.

To obtain this distinction, the developer has also invested in behind-the-scenes sustainable elements.

For example, a 35,000-gallon cistern is to harvest rainwater to be used in public restrooms, for irrigation and for washing down exterior decking and walkways.

The Brickell location is slated to become the third Hampton Inn-branded property in the world to achieve the LEED certification. The brand has 1,700-plus hotels globally.

Hampton Inn expects to have a soft opening in September, Howard Wolfson said, as finishing touches include placing the furniture and completing city inspections.

The hotel, which is to employ about 75 people, is accepting reservations for November.

The property has 10,000 square feet of street-level retail space and a 210-space garage.

Average rates range from \$189 to \$289 per night, he said, depending on the season.

With bustling Brickell housing mainly upscale hotels, such as Brickell Key's Mandarin Oriental, Four Seasons Hotel and JW Marriott Hotel, Hampton Inn is to cater to business and leisure travelers looking at more competitively-priced hotel accommodations.

"About 60% of our business will be coming from the financial and corporate market here in Brickell and the rest will be balanced out with friends and families – that's 40%," Howard Wolfson said. "With all the condos filling up, a lot of these people don't have the extra space to have their families stay at the condos. With our price points, we expect to get a lot of that business."