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## Miami's First LEED Certified Hotel: Why Only Now?

When news broke last week that Miami finally had its first LEED certified hotel—the 221-room Hampton Inn & Suites Miami-Brickell Downtown—my first reaction was: Awesome. But I also had to wonder: Why only now?

“Because there are wide misperceptions about the cost of building green, hotel owners have been hesitant to embrace green practices,” notes Ashley Katz, spokesperson for the U.S. Green Building Council, which doles out the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certifications. “However, it has been proven that green building does not have to cost more. In some cases, where projects target higher or more complex levels of green building, there may be added upfront costs of 1 to 4 percent, but these costs can be recouped relatively quickly, often within the first few years.”

Green hotels are catching on in a number of ways, she adds, with great credit given to a new generation of hotel owners who put a higher asset value on their investments and are realize the benefits of green building practices. Plus, there are federal, state and local incentives that can help pay for half to all of the additional cost to construct buildings that are LEED-certified.

Miami’s Hampton Inn, which has been open for a year, received its coveted LEED Silver certification thanks to a green system including low-flow water fixtures, efficient washing machines, a rainwater-harvesting cistern (for irrigation purposes), high-efficiency boilers, and a combo of compact fluorescent lights and LED lighting. Though it’s the only LEED-certified hotel in Miami at the moment, there 12 in the pipeline, notes Katz. Across the waterway, Miami Beach is home to two LEED-certified hotels—the Clifton Hotel South Beach and the Waldorf Towers Hotel, both with LEED Gold labels, indicating the highest level of efficiency—and the city has six more on the way, all in various stages of planning.

Cities leading the way with LEED-certified hotels are Las Vegas and San Francisco, which have six each, Katz says.

“The hotel industry has historically trailed other sectors when it comes to emphasizing sustainability, largely due to excessive energy and water usage,” said Bernard Wolfson, president of Miami-based hotel development firm Hospitality Operations, Inc., which owns the Miami Hampton Inn. “We are overcoming these obstacles at the Hampton Inn & Suites Miami Brickell-Downtown by embracing green features that conserve resources, appeal to eco-conscious guests, and reduce our operating costs.”

Other appeals of going green, Katz adds, are marketing advantages, permit expediting, obtaining building approvals and reduced county fees. “On the corporate sustainability front,” she says, “major Fortune 500 corporations are changing their travel preferences to book green hotels, in order to boost their own company-wide green efforts.” Here, here to that.



Hampton Inn and Suites in Miami just became Miami's first LEED-certified hotel.