

today's hotelier

November 2019 | todayshotelier.com

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF AAHTOA

A sound approach to noise control

The rising importance of achieving effective acoustics in hotels

Designing the guest experience

What the data says about hotel design

THE C-SUITE
Kim Sabow and Glenn Hamer
talk foreign tourism

Growing a garden, growing your profits

Latest trends in rooftop gardens, fountains, and farm-to-table

(L) Kim Sabow, president and CEO, Arizona Lodging and Tourism Association and (R) Glenn Hamer, president and CEO, Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry



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AAHOA works with you to win with you

JAGRUTI PANWALA
AAHOA Chairwoman (2019-2020)

AAHOA IS AN ASSOCIATION where hoteliers work together to lift each other up. When we succeed in our businesses, we succeed as an association and as an industry. In my first six months as AAHOA Chairwoman, I saw how our Board of Directors, our Ambassadors, our members, and our professional staff all came together to make substantial progress in key areas that will continue to build up our association. When we work together, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish.

The launch of MyAAHOA.com this summer is a game changer for our association and our nearly 19,000 members. As AAHOA continues to listen to member feedback about how we can serve America's hoteliers, we are tailoring our online tools to help hotel owners get the most out of their membership. Through this new online portal, hoteliers can manage all aspects of their membership, access hundreds of exclusive webinars and educational content through the AAHOA HOTEL OWNERS ACADEMY™, register for events, and share property information securely and confidentially. This last feature can play a critical role in helping our association work with lawmakers, brands, and vendors. As more AAHOA Members enter their property information, it helps us paint a more complete picture of our membership and our footprint not only in the hospitality industry but also in the American economy.

I am proud of the hard work and level of engagement I've seen from our Regional Directors and Ambassadors. They are encouraging more hoteliers to attend AAHOA events, and it is inspiring to see the innovative drive behind some of these events such as the recent tri-state Town Hall in Memphis, TN.

AAHOA's young professionals and women hoteliers are building a lot of momentum for their events and bringing hotel owners and prospective owners into AAHOA's orbit. I am also pleased by the turnout at the 2019 Legislative Action Summit. More than 200 AAHOA Members traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for our industry and met with more than 200 senators, representatives, and professional staff.

Member engagement also continues to be a driving force in promoting AAHOA as a leading voice in the fight against human trafficking. Thanks to our team's hard work, more hoteliers and their employees are completing AAHOA's Human Trafficking Awareness Training. Emails, text messages, and robo calls imploring people to take the training are effective, but hotelier-to-hotelier appeals from those who not only complete the training themselves but also train all their employees is remarkably impactful in pushing others to do the same.

AAHOA and the American Hotel and Lodging Association are holding joint anti-trafficking events across the country to raise awareness of the issue and train hoteliers. Governors, first ladies, attorneys general, U.S. senators and representatives, and other elected officials are partnering with our associations in this fight, and we are demonstrating that our industry is part of the solution when it comes to ending trafficking in our communities. AAHOA partner Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) is conducting trainings at these events, and we are seeing very positive media coverage of our efforts to elevate this issue and hoteliers' commitment to combating human trafficking.

We are achieving great things as an association, and I look forward to the next six months and all that we will accomplish together. ■

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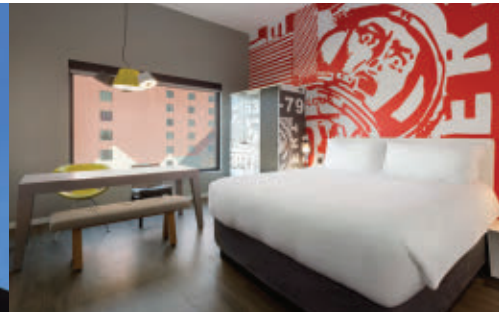
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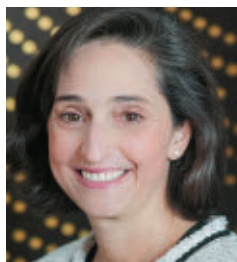
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Define your design

RACHEL HUMPHREY
AAHOA Interim President & CEO

DESIGN IS AN INTEGRAL part of the guest experience at a hotel. From the ornate Tiffany stained-glass windows, palm-filled lobbies, and bronze statues found at historic hotels to the sleek minimalist lobbies of more recent builds, design shapes guest perceptions of a hotel and can set the tone for their stay.

Yet, for many years, stringent brand standards did not afford select- and limited-service hotels opportunities to incorporate original design into their properties. Rather than being able to reflect local color or the owner's originality or creative preference in their properties, hoteliers adhered to uniform designs that rendered each hotel largely indistinguishable from others under the same flag or even within the same segment.

Fortunately, times, guest preferences, and, ultimately, standards are changing. We are in the midst of a veritable brand explosion, and many of the new hotels fall into the select- and limited-service segment. As hotel companies face a larger variety of concepts at competing hotels, design is key to differentiating and defining a hotel.

Because more select-service brands are looking to create a boutique experience, they are focusing on design choices that elevate uniqueness and localization. When guests are immersed in the unique cultural offerings of cities like New York or Miami, they don't want the experience to end when they walk through their hotel's lobby doors. If a guest is planning to spend their days touring Los Angeles, and a property's vibe is more quiet suburban evening than Hollywood Nights, they may choose a competing hotel whose design complements the city's atmosphere.

Additionally, with more select-service hotels beginning to occupy urban spaces, site-specific design quickly jumps from a luxury to a necessity as hotels seek to attract savvy guests looking for an accommodating price. Hoteliers are also seeking out nontraditional spaces for development to capitalize on government incentives, such as historic preservation tax credits that encourage the revitalization of historic buildings in older communities. This can present exceptional design opportunities for hoteliers looking to capture the history of their property's building and location.

AAHOA is committed to bringing designers and hoteliers together to give properties modern aesthetics that contribute to unforgettable guest experiences. In recent years, AAHOA's Officers spoke about hotel design at conferences such as BDNY, BDWest, and HX: The Hotel Experience. *Today's Hotelier* dedicates an annual issue to industry design trends, and the AAHOA HOTEL OWNERS ACADEMY™ developed a revenue management and optimization webinar on how to convert to a boutique hotel on a budget.

This November 10-11, AAHOA and Emerald Expositions are joining forces to reimagine HX: The Hotel Experience Powered by AAHOA. The conference is co-located with the BDNY conference at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City, NY.

Nowhere else is the axiom that competition breeds innovation more apparent than in hotel design as hotels look to distinguish themselves to attract new guests and keep past guests coming back. This is an exciting time for our industry, and, as the select- and limited-service hotels continue to break free from the rigid design standards of the past, we can look forward to a more vibrant (and unique) future. ■

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT AAHOA THIS MONTH

1

November Regionals

Join AAHOA at one of its last four Regional Conferences & Trade Shows this month.

- North Central (Cincinnati, OH), November 4
- Florida (Orlando, FL), November 6
- Arkansas (Benton, AK), November 12
- Central Midwest (Norman, OK), November 19

2

HX: The Hotel Experience Powered by AAHOA

It's finally here! Join us in NYC this month, November 10-11, for HX. With brand-new AAHOA-curated educational sessions, incredible networking opportunities, and an expo featuring hundreds of exhibitors, you won't want to miss it. Use promo code AAHOAT19 to attend!

3

Learn More About Hospitality Design at BDNY

Learn how to implement the latest design practices and trends by joining us at Boutique Design New York (BDNY), held concurrently with HX: The Hotel Experience Powered by AAHOA, November 10-11. BDNY connects the most influential design minds in the hospitality industry.

4

Make a Pledge to Complete Human Trafficking Awareness Training in 2019

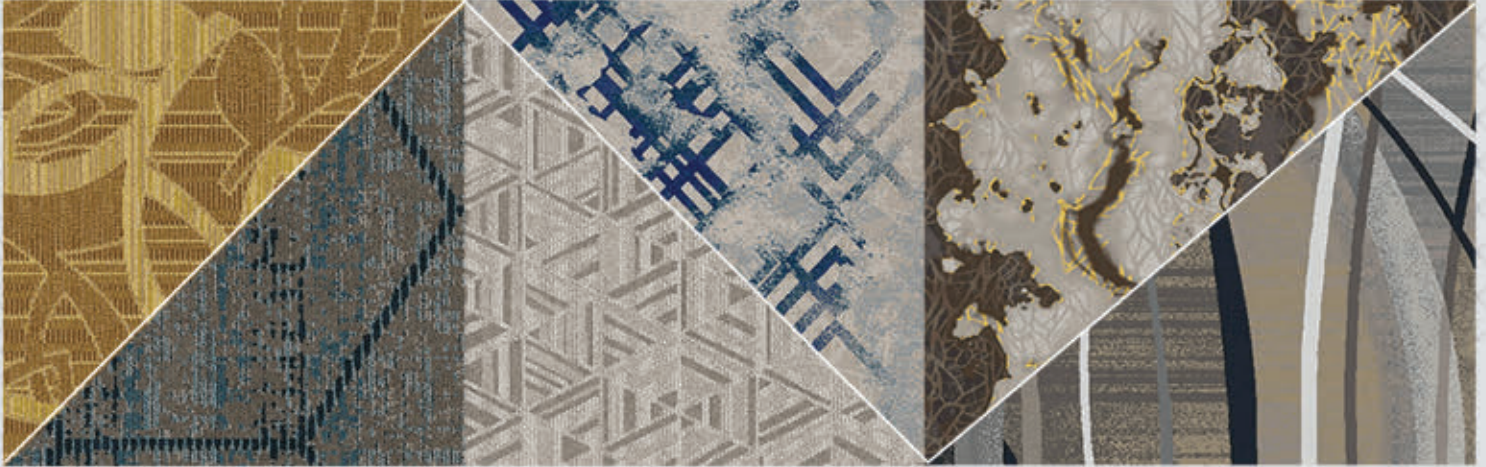
There's only a few months left to take action and complete this critical training. Just 30 minutes of online training can help you and your staff identify the signs of human trafficking – helping to save lives and protect your business. Join us in the fight and pledge to complete this invaluable training before the year is over.

5

Join Us at the Expedia Partner Conference: explore '19

Travel's brightest minds are gathering this month, November 13-14, in Las Vegas. Featuring 52+ speakers, three legendary parties, and insider travel trends, explore '19 is bringing together leaders in travel to share, network, and discuss how to deliver a better and safer customer experience.

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AAHOA and others fight for hoteliers on The Hill

by PETER CLERKIN



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“IF YOU TAKE ONE THING AWAY FROM this event, make sure that you make advocacy a part of your ongoing business plan,” said AAHOA President & CEO Rachel Humphrey as she welcomed more than 400 hoteliers and hospitality professionals to the 2019 Legislative Action Summit in Washington, D.C.

The two-day summit, now in its fifth year, is a joint venture of AAHOA and the American Hotel and Lodging Association. On the first day, attendees received issue briefings from industry experts and political insiders and heard panel discussions featuring lawmakers. On the following day, they visited with their elected officials and staffers on Capitol Hill.

In their remarks to summit attendees, AAHOA Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala and AHLA Vice Chair Jon Bortz both stressed the importance of industry unity when it comes to advocacy.

“It is so important that our industry speak with one voice when we advocate on issues that affect the entire hospitality industry. When hoteliers, brands, and industry partners are united, we have the greatest impact,” Panwala said.

Rep. Bradley Byrne (R-AL) addressed the summit’s general session on the first day and remarked on the impact that small businesses, such as hotels, have on local economies as well as legislation like the Save Local Business Act, which would codify the historical joint employer standard and bring clarity to industries that rely on the franchise business model. Reps. Ami Bera (D-CA) and Ralph Norman (R-SC), both AAHOA Members, participated in a panel

discussion that touched on a wide array of topics, including the efficacy of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the hospitality industry’s one million-employee labor shortage, and finding bipartisanship in a divided Congress.

The AAHOA and AHLA Government Affairs teams briefed attendees on three key issues before Congress that affect the hospitality industry: Brand USA reauthorization, strengthening consumer protections in online booking, and empowering localities to shut down illegal hotels.

Brand USA, a public-private partnership that promotes the entire United States as a destination to international travelers, requires reauthorization before its funding stream redirects to a general fund in 2020. The program is funded at no cost to taxpayers by fees collected from international travelers to the U.S. and matched dollar per dollar by hundreds of businesses in the travel and tourism industry. The program’s successful 25:1 ROI helps generate billions of dollars in international tourism for the U.S. For many AAHOA Members with properties in less-populated areas that are close to historic sites, national parks, or landmarks, this program is vital to promoting these locations as travel destinations. Hoteliers met with key co-sponsors of the bill as well as staffers in the office of Rep. Frank Pallone, the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee that will ultimately refer the legislation to the House for a full vote. The bipartisan legislation is expected to pass, but hoteliers made clear the urgency of reauthorizing it by 2020.

Hoteliers also pressed for congressional action on the Stop Online Booking Scams Act, a bill that would make it easier for the Federal Trade Commission to prevent third-party online hotel reservation websites not affiliated with a hotel from advertising listings if they are deceptive or otherwise misleading to consumers.

The week prior to LAS, Rep. Ed Case (D-HI) introduced the Protecting Local Authority and Neighborhoods (PLAN) Act, which would amend Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act to stop short-term rental (STR) platforms from profiting when they knowingly facilitate transactions for listings deemed illegal by local governments. Currently, STRs are claiming they are immune from local laws because they are protected by Section 230, a provision originally designed to protect bloggers and platform hosts from liability for objectionable third-party-generated content. The legislation would clarify that Section 230 does not shield Big Tech STRs from complying with state and local laws. Rep. Case briefed LAS attendees on the bill and thanked them for their support.

“This year’s Legislative Action Summit was very successful. Our members met with over 200 members of Congress and professional staff and, as small business owners, made the case for policies that have a direct impact on their and their employees’ livelihoods,” Rachel Humphrey said. “It was great to see so many AAHOA Members embracing advocacy as part of their business plan and showing up to Washington to make their voices heard.” ■

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KIM SABOW,
president and CEO,
Arizona Lodging and Tourism Association



GLENN HAMER,
president and CEO,
Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry



NEIGHBORS ACROSS BORDERS

by KIM SABOW and GLENN HAMER

WE HAIL FROM a state where fall marks a time when we emerge from a sort of summer hibernation and start to enjoy all that the Desert Southwest has to offer. Soon, we'll be hosting mega events like the Fiesta Bowl, the Waste Management Phoenix Open – the world's best-attended golf tournament – and Cactus League Spring Training, all while much of the country is in the grips of a winter chill.

With all of these events, outstanding weather, and world-class resorts and restaurants to enjoy comes an influx of visitors from all over the globe, including from Mexico and Canada, Arizona's top-two sources of foreign tourists.

As a border state, Arizona's relationship with Mexico is especially strong, something our family ties, interdependent economy, and interconnected culture demonstrate. But Canada's ties with Arizona are deep, too. In fact, Canada is Arizona's No. 1 source of foreign investment. During the winter months, Canadian license plates dot our roads as visitors escape the deep freeze.

To tourism professionals, this isn't surprising. Canada and Mexico are likely your state's top sources of foreign visitors, too.

Our bonds with Mexico and Canada have grown even stronger over the

past 25 years, thanks to the North America Free Trade Agreement, which has transformed our three-country region into the world's most competitive trading bloc.

Thanks to that accord, U.S. manufacturers can reach more customers, and consumers have more choices on store shelves at better prices. For example, it's because of free trade that our grocery store produce sections are still full of a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables even during cold-weather months.

But despite NAFTA's positive contributions to the economies of all three countries, it's outdated. The agreement went into effect long before the days of e-commerce, or advancements in just-in-time manufacturing, or the growth of the express shipping industry.

It's time for a trade agreement built for today's economy, which is why we and our colleagues across the business and tourism community are so strongly supportive of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA.

The modernized USMCA will make for a healthier U.S. economy and a healthier travel environment. According to U.S. Travel estimates, adoption of USMCA would raise \$1.7 billion in travel-generated economic output and create 15,000 jobs.

The executive branches in the three countries have all signed on to the new

agreement, but only Mexico's Congress has completed its work on the deal. We're calling on the U.S. Congress to work swiftly to adopt USMCA in this country; we can't afford not to.

According to the same U.S. Travel estimates, a dismantling of the current free-trade framework would lead to three million fewer visitors from Canada and Mexico by 2022, \$5 billion less in travel-generated output for the U.S. economy, and 30,000 fewer American jobs.

Higher tariffs on consumer goods in Canada and Mexico would mean higher prices and a contraction in business and leisure travel budgets. Every U.S. state would feel the pinch, but especially border states like ours that are so dependent on cross-border travel. Nearly 3.6 million people from Mexico alone choose Arizona as a travel destination each year, spending more than \$7 million a day eating in our restaurants, staying at our hotels, and shopping in our stores.

Now is the time for Congress to act on USMCA. There is too much at stake for the travel industry and for the entire economy to wait any longer. ■

Kim Sabow is president and CEO of the Arizona Lodging and Tourism Association. Glenn Hamer is the president and CEO of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

COMMON GROUND

The PLAN Act: Holding all parties accountable

by PETER CLERKIN



REDDAXLUMA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Common Ground profiles members of opposing parties who are working together to advance issues important to hoteliers.

THE ISSUE

Illegal Hotels

From housing shortages and skyrocketing rents to public safety concerns, short-term rentals (STRs) are creating significant headaches for neighborhoods across America. Cities and states are responding by passing laws to curb illegal hotels and hold to account the STR platforms that advertise them. But STRs are mounting aggressive legal challenges to avoid liability for profiting from illegal rentals on their platforms. They claim that Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (CDA) pre-empts local laws and thus protects them from any legal responsibility. This section is meant to shield internet hosts, such as bloggers, from liability for objectionable third-party content posted to their platform.

COMMON GROUND

H.R. 4232, the Protecting Local Authority and Neighborhoods (PLAN) Act is a measure that would amend Section 230 of the CDA to clarify that the statute does not shield internet platforms from liability for facilitating the booking of illegal rentals. The legislation confirms that internet platforms that knowingly market illegal rentals can indeed be held liable under state and local laws. This would empower cities and states to regulate STRs in their communities and bring an end to the string of abusive litigation by STRs, such as AirBnb, HomeAway, VRBO, and others seeking to profit from illegal listings. ■



Rep. Ed Case (D-HI)

First Elected: 2002

"This is a narrow, targeted change to the statute to ensure short-term rental companies and internet platforms comply with state and local planning, zoning, rental, labor, and tax laws and end their

abusive stretching of CDA 230's original intent."



Rep. Ralph Norman (R-SC)

First Elected: 2017

"The PLAN Act takes much-needed action to protect lodging businesses. For online platforms to use an antiquated aspect of the law to make large profits and avoid paying taxes is simply not

right. This legislation will take important steps to prevent these abuses from continuing. I am happy to support this bill and thank my colleague from Hawaii for taking the lead on this important issue."



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Designing the guest experience



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“Make the room amazing, then go beyond.”

— GENSLER'S HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE INDEX

What the data says about the importance of hotel design

by STEPHANIE STEPHENS



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A guest walks into a hotel? The first glance around has a lasting effect – that critical first impression. Even before that, however, expectations are set well before a guest walks in the door due to recommendations from a guest’s family and friends, says consulting firm Gensler’s Hospitality Experience Index.¹

“The best hotels know that designing for today’s everything/everywhere customer doesn’t mean being everything to everyone. But it does require a new approach to understanding what guests want that goes far beyond business vs. leisure or millennial vs. boomer,” the index says.

DESIGN IS ABOUT REIMAGINING

Don’t just view design as an aesthetic or practical experience. Look at design from an emotional perspective, in a psychological way, says Rebecca McBride, director of design and branding for Auric Road.² The property management company owns Hotel Joaquin in Laguna Beach and two others with more coming. Hotel Joaquin won *Hospitality Design* magazine’s Lifestyle Hotel award during its 15th annual ceremony this year.

“Making a room ‘pretty’ doesn’t really connect to people on a deeper level,” McBride says. “We approach our hotels as more of an inn, with staff who are innkeepers, and we meet people on their journeys and set a tone for them.”

The company doesn’t build from the ground up. “What makes a property as authentic as possible is reviving something that’s always been there, reimagining it because it’s already grounded in the community,” McBride says. “That sense of community helps make Airbnb so popular.”

Design should “gently nudge guests out of their comfort zone,” she says. For Auric Road, that means doing the unexpected, “trying to dial things back to celebrate a more analogue lifestyle: no in-room TVs, record players with individually curated record collections, and no push-button coffee machines.”

“Hotels can be places to centralize your business affairs, a jumping-off point to have those engagements. They can also say something about the neighborhood, with artifacts, imagery, painting or photography, even while referencing nature, materiality, purity, and a sense of authenticity.”

— SEAN KNIBB, KNIBB DESIGN



DESIGN TELLS A STORY

Though home sharing is looming over the hotel industry, the platform still has some competition from hoteliers.

“Business people traveling for pleasure want something completely different. Our guests will remember their hotel room in 20 years,” says Steve Segner, entrepreneur owner of the luxury, multi-awarded El Portal Sedona Hotel in Northern Arizona.

“Each room here tells a story,” he says. The hotel might have been built in 1910 in Arizona Territory and is furnished with period pieces. “It feels like you’ve stepped back in time or that you’re in a museum discovering a time you never knew.”

Hotel owners should be brave but thoughtful, Segner says, “to break out of the mold and add flavor from the area, if nothing else, just in the lobby. Guests really want that.”

USE SUBTLE CLUES

Acclaimed, in-demand designer Sean Knibb of Knibb Design in Venice, CA, makes welcoming spaces at hotels like The Line in Austin – a finalist for that Hospitality Design Magazine lifestyle award – and in The Line in Los Angeles.

Try to offer up just what a guest’s sensibilities desire. “It’s an environment where they live and sleep for 1.5 days,” Knibb says.

He categorizes hotels three specific ways. “Hotels should convey a sense of place, and resonate for people trying to find peace and solace, to gather themselves and their thoughts,” Knibb says. “A city hotel should try to capture energy with a party- or revelry-focused atmosphere. Or maybe it should say, ‘I just want to be rich,’ and have a luxury rich feel.”

For him, hotels are not just hotels. “Hotels can be places to centralize your business affairs, a jumping-off point to have those engagements,” he says. “They can also say something about the neighborhood, with artifacts, imagery, paintings



or photography, even while referencing nature, materiality, purity, and a sense of authenticity.”

Knibb uses “subtle clues” to suggest a hotel room not too far removed from the average person. Maybe bring in those historical elements of what may remind people of their own home, “maybe something referencing antiquities, or something from everyday life like a soap dish or memento found in the kitchen, that play with old sensibilities,” Knibb says.

THE NOMENCLATURE OF NATURE

Biophilic design fills the human need to connect with nature in our mostly non-natural or “built environment.” As the sustainability consulting firm Terrapin Bright Green of New York City explains in “14 Patterns of Biophilic Design,” it “can reduce stress, enhance creativity and clarity of thought, improve our well-being, and expedite healing; as the world population continues to urbanize, these qualities are ever more important.”³

The idea is “to create spaces that are inspirational, restorative, and healthy, as well as integrative with the functionality of the place and the [urban] ecosystem to which it is applied.” Bottom line: “Biophilic design must nurture a love of place.”

In another research project, Terrapin partnered with international designer of carpet tile Interface.⁴ Titled “Biophilic Design in Hospitality,” the 2017 report shares that a water view adds an 18-percent increase in average daily rate, and that hotel guests had a 36-percent-higher dwell rate in hotel lobbies with biophilic elements. They increase room value and they drive more time in key incremental revenue-driving areas such as hotel bars and restaurants in addition to lobbies.



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For inspiration, see 1Hotel Central Park, with 200+ rooms and suites, and two doors composed of 16,000 twigs, and the 27-story Oasia Hotel Downtown, Singapore, with a living green tower.⁵

The October issue of the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* showed biophilic designs elicited stronger positive emotional and behavioral responses than the standard design. In addition, customers perceived hotels that had biophilic designs as being superior in quality.⁶

CO-WORK AND COLLABORATE

As the publication *Commercial Interior Design* reported in February 2019, laidback luxury usually means creating a “home away from home” feeling that may involve a “strong and individual narrative,” carefully curated and culturally engaged.⁷

Guests are experienced and informed, and they know what they want – a distinctive experience accomplished through design and tailored services, says the report. Personalize the hotel experience for guests and make it meaningful: more flexibility, technology-oriented concepts, and even experimental interiors.

Not everyone wants to be totally “laid back” with their technology. The architecture and design firm Álvarez-Díaz & Villalón of San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Miami says lots of amenities won’t go too far with poor Wi-Fi. Look for more

personalization in smart tech design to control not only lighting, temperature, and audiovisual systems from a guest’s smartphone. Soon, tech may invite guests to choose bedding, toiletry items, and in-room refrigerator items pre-arrival.⁸

The Eaton hotels in Washington, D.C., and Hong Kong have Eaton House, with “private, shared, and communal workspaces for brainstorming and collaborating” for guests and non-guests, the latter paying tiered membership fees “to come meet kindred spirits.”⁹

Finally, to hit the design mark, Gensler suggests, “Make the room amazing, then go beyond.” ■


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FEATURE

Deck the halls

by FIONA SOLTES

AT ONE FIVE-STAR PROPERTY IN SAN FRANCISCO, THE request is that a team arrive the night of Thanksgiving to install an elaborate holiday display. It's much to the delight of patrons still up and has been known to bring applause.

"People love the process of seeing it happen, of it all coming to life," said Laura Burns Lambert, a sensory designer for Ambius, which offers interior landscape design for hospitality, retail, offices, health care, and other spaces nationwide.

Truth is, no matter the size of the property, expectations still run high for some extra "wow" at the holidays. Over the years, however, a few unspoken rules have emerged, not the least of which is sidestepping the religious aspects of Christmas to create a more inclusive experience. There might still be an element of Santa or decorated trees, but nativity scenes, angels, and, in some cases, even the colors red and green can be out.

The good news is that creativity in designing a holiday display or winter wonderland can help hotels differentiate themselves during the season. Lambert and Janice Nath, Ambius interior design consultant, compiled a look book of holiday ideas for 2019. Inside are fresh and unexpected color palettes. There's also inspired use of branches, birch, florals, and greenery to highlight the season, as well as scents like peppermint, cinnamon, gingerbread, mulled spices, and pine to create a sensory experience.

'EVERYTHING YOU LOVE' IN ONE LOCATION

Across the country, the prospect and process of decorating for the holidays can bring challenges. Properties of all kinds work hard to balance guest expectations, current trends, costs, and time, all the while delivering something unique.

Some properties, however, take on the challenge of outdoing themselves year after year – and in grand style.

At The Coeur d'Alene Resort in Idaho, for example, what started as a few lights out front in 1986 has grown into an ever-expanding display of lights, features, music, and more. Not only is there a performance by Santa, there's also a souped-up sleigh complete with flaming afterburners, and a floating Christmas tree with lights set to Christmas music.

Tree and Santa aside, however, it's still not considered a Christmas event.

"We have always referred to this fun family tradition as our annual Holiday Light Show," said Gally King, marketing and public relations manager for the resort. "We want to be inclusive of diverse beliefs and traditions across the country." Besides, King said, the display is up from Thanksgiving to New Year's Eve, so it encompasses those holidays in addition to Christmas.

"The show has continued to earn accolades year after year, and the reason is simple: It's the best way to experience everything you love about the holidays in one location," King said. "The show is always held to a high standard, in which we are proud to deliver a fun and quality presentation year after year."

In addition to the holiday lights and displays, which are custom built in Portland, OR, the property offers Journey to the North Pole cruises on the lake and special packages. But the "extra" isn't just relegated to the holiday season. Decorations at other times of year include fresh blooms in the spring, signature tango-red geraniums in the summer, and softer oranges in the fall.

At the Hilton Americas-Houston, meanwhile, holiday displays have gone up since the hotel first opened.

"However, three years ago, we made a commitment that we were going to have some of the best holiday decorations in Houston," General Manager Jacques D'Rovencourt said. "We think we have accomplished that goal."

In true Texas style of going big, the hotel has a larger-than-life sculpted chocolate rodeo display in the lobby for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

At the holidays, then, the sweetness continues. In 2018, Hilton Americas-Houston pastry chef Mahesh Weerasinghe and pastry sous chef Glenna Artripe worked with the hotel's culinary and property operations teams to create a life-sized Santa's Gingerbread Sweet Shop. It was made entirely of gingerbread and chocolate, but that's not all – it was surrounded by full-color, hand-painted children made of chocolate, chocolate deer, a chocolate Christmas tree, and more. All in all, the hotel's 'Tis the Season display encompassed 2.5 tons – and 7.6 million calories – of sugary confections.



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HOW TO CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS WHILE INCLUDING GUESTS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE

That translates to 800 pounds of gingerbread, 990 eggs, 650 pounds of butter, 850 pounds of sugar, 300 pounds of royal icing, 1,000 pounds of dark chocolate, 725 pounds of white chocolate, and 1,850 person hours.

“You either do a great job with it or you don’t,” D’Rovencourt said. “They remember when it’s done well, and they come back looking forward to it.”

Even with all the seasonal cheer, D’Rovencourt said, “It’s not a Christmas event, per se. We want everyone to feel included and thoughtfully and purposely called it ‘holiday.’”

CHOOSE IT AND OWN IT

For some, holiday displays are far from extravagant, though no less meaningful. They might be as simple as bright poinsettias or as gentle as twinkling lights. Regardless of the size of the property, trees are still a popular choice for the holidays, though not necessarily in traditional Christmas-y ways. In some cases, the designers said, even using the word “Christmas” can be considered a faux pas. That’s not to say that there aren’t still properties that include religious themes; it may just need to be a more conscious decision, either way.

Lambert remembers one client who wanted a tree with lights but no decorations; it was an attempt to be sensitive, but it ended up missing the mark: “They got negative replies, with people asking, ‘Why did you put an undecorated tree up in the lobby?’”

Overall, when it comes to festive decorations, she continued, it’s best to go all in on the design choice and then own it.

DIY OR HIRE A PRO?

One last note when it comes to design: For those considering whether to hand off the process to a professional, know that working with a designer means planning far ahead; Lambert and Nath say most properties will book as early as January or February for the following holiday season, allowing time for a true collaborative process.

In terms of other “holiday” displays, both designers have had clients highlighting Hanukkah – more as cultural tradition than religious one, perhaps – plus Kwanzaa, Halloween, Chinese New Year, as well as the fall and spring seasons.

The end of the year, however, still tends to take the cake... or, maybe, the gingerbread. ■



What to consider when designing for the holidays

- Focus on cultural traditions rather than religious ones
- Think outside of the red-and-green box
- Utilize seasonal scents
- Plan ahead

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FEATURE

GROWING A GARDEN

GROWING YOUR PROFITS

NATTIYA WIVASUKHUSHUTTERS/ISTOCK.COM

LATEST TRENDS IN ROOFTOP GARDENS, FOUNTAINS, AND FARM-TO-TABLE

by TAYLOR DAVIS

THE GUEST EXPECTATIONS ARE IN: ROOFTOP GARDENS are a must and they have to do more than look pretty.

Your guests expect a stay at your hotel to dazzle them, from the bed they sleep in to the food they eat. It's a social media world and your hotel will thrive based on what your guests deem Instagram-worthy, which is why innovative hoteliers are catching wind of the endless possibilities a rooftop space.

Space is a commodity, especially in dense areas like New York City. The restaurant and bar trend seemed to fill the need most hotels wanted, but the public's desires have shifted. Now, it's not just the city views that make guests book with you. It's where the food they eat comes from, the special opportunity you provide, and the way your hotel is making an impact on the environment.

That's where creating a hotel rooftop garden comes in.

PROFITS IN BLOOM

Growing a garden not only provides an opportunity to give your guests a unique experience, but it also gives you a chance to use your space to every advantage it can, including creating a sustainable source of produce and herbs, eco-friendly surroundings, and opportunities for the community to benefit—all while cutting costs and increasing profits.

You have the space, but are you using it to your hotel's best advantage? A few of these rooftop garden trends will let you know.

"GROW YOUR OWN" GARDEN

Farm-to-table is a constantly evolving trendsetter. If you have rooftop space available, this investment is a must for any hotel looking to give its guests a dining experience unlike any other.

Overall prices and shipment costs can be high for various foods and herbs your chefs use in their dishes, but this trend allows you to take the middleman out of the equation, save big, and make your hospitality style more eco-friendly. Farm-to-table dining ensures food is local and fresh, allowing guests to know where their food is coming from, while cutting costs for the hotel, too.

Many hotels are shifting dramatically in this area, like Nita Lake Lodge in Whistler, Canada, which emphasizes its rooftop garden efforts ensure the best quality of food for guests by "using locally sourced ingredients in our dining outlets whenever possible."

A better dining experience is not the only perk, though.

Culinary teams have easy access to these ingredients, while other parts of your garden can offer a unique dining experience or even an escape for your guests. The serene environment of a rooftop garden gives your hotel plenty of creative opportunity to offer your guests a new experience.

BEE APIARY

"Save the bees!" is now a common theme in most industries today, but knowing that bees pollinate most of the food we eat isn't necessarily enough to make you want to start a beehive on your hotel roof.



You might be thinking, “Wouldn’t bees be a turn-off for guests?” Not according to some trendsetters in the industry who are seeing multiple returns from creating bee apiaries in their rooftop garden.

Fairmont Waterfront in Vancouver, Canada, has turned its bee apiary into a thriving part of its business. Their 2,100-square-foot rooftop garden is home to the “Bee and Bee,” a pollinator hotel – a collection of beehives – which gives them easy access to local honey that’s a delicious addition to their culinary creations.

“Our chefs find creative new ways to infuse honey into our dishes, including chocolate, pastries, salad dressings, and signature cocktails,” said Kristyna Vogel, manager of marketing and public relations for the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel.

The bees produce approximately 200 pounds of honey on-site, and 2,000 pounds including off-site hives annually, while also providing a unique experience for guests to view the bees in action. The bee apiary opened up new avenues for partnerships to not only create signature honey-infused cocktails and beers, but also host beekeeping workshops, sell jars of honey, host bee-inspired art installations and events, offer special guest packages, and build an experience for the community unlike any other.

ECO-FRIENDLY MATERIALS

Not all materials are made the same, and with the “support local” trend that’s blossoming, your rooftop garden is the perfect opportunity to make a statement that you’re invested in your community’s health in more ways than one.

Eco-friendly materials can be easily sourced from local areas, giving your clients a local experience. The Fairmont Waterfront in Vancouver has made strides in the bee apiary department, but they also went eco-friendly with their materials, creating their “Bee and Bee” from purely local venues. The

wood for the structure, fire bricks, logs, burlap, branches, and plants were all donated, collected, or sourced from locations around the city, while the bumblebee nests were woven using scavenged ivy, wool, and leaves.

Other ways to kick it up a notch in the going green arena may be small shifts into things like composting and avoiding pesticides in your rooftop garden. Investing in plants that are bee-friendly and those that purify the air or absorb pollution can also go a long way in establishing your hotel’s green reputation, attracting more guests who are interested in leaving less of a footprint during their stay.

WATER RECYCLING FOUNTAINS

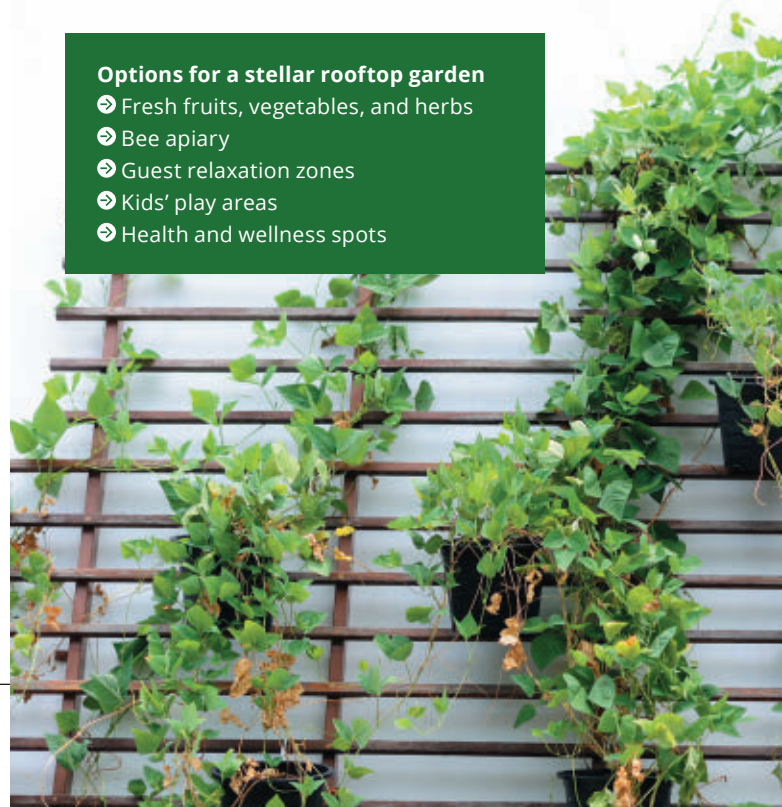
Water waste is a habit most of us don’t know we have, and it’s costing us more than we realize. Water crises have been identified as the third-most-impactful global risk by the 2016 World Economic Forum Global Risk Report.

What if you could reuse the water you already have access to for more? It would not only cut down on water usage but also make the water you do use go the extra mile. Reusing water can be easy once a filtration system is in place, and it allows you to use both natural rainfall and previously used hotel water for other purposes, such as watering your rooftop garden.

Greywater recycling is a system that treats and reuses the water from machines like dishwashers and showers to irrigate the hotel’s plant life. Thanks to the wonders of the sky, rainwater can also be collected, filtered, and fed back into the property, cutting water costs. These treatment options have systems that ensure the water is clean and usable for non-drinking purposes, such as laundry, garden, and toilets.

Options for a stellar rooftop garden

- Fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs
- Bee apiary
- Guest relaxation zones
- Kids’ play areas
- Health and wellness spots



Low-risk cost-saving initiatives like this increase efficiency, giving you more bang for your buck, while creating a big impact on your profits and the world. Plus, with the desire for eco-friendly additions, this also gives your guests more reasons to stay with you.

VERTICAL GARDENING

While growing a rooftop garden of any kind may seem like a good idea, space can be a huge problem to overcome. Hotels are now using vertical gardening, taking advantage of sunny wall space to grow fruits, vegetables, herbs, or flowers.

While most are crafted with easy shelving on the wall or hanging plants, some trendsetters utilize “living walls” to hang plants, cool the building, and purify percolating water (such as greywater) to water the plants and recycle for other uses.

A living wall in your garden can be developed with a hydroponic growing system that does everything mentioned above and gives the wall an aesthetically pleasing landscape. Vertical gardening may be exactly what you need to spruce up a small space, while still benefiting from the herbs and vegetables you grow there.

ROBOGARDENING

Technology is everywhere, so it's no wonder that innovators have discovered new ways to bring gardening into the 21st century by using those high-tech tools to make gardening much easier.

Devices are being constructed right now to not only help with the small stuff, like watering and weeding, but also to

take all the heavy lifting out of gardening. Planting, maintaining, warding off pesky critters – they're all taken care of thanks to robogardening devices that require Wi-Fi or an app on your phone. Apps can even tell you what to plant in a given area and reorder seeds for you throughout the year.

Some setups take only an hour. So, if you're ready to make that “grow your own” garden a reality, there are plenty of tech gadgets to take the stress out of it.

Robogardening is on the rise and you can easily add it to your rooftop expansion project to limit overall investment while getting maximum results.

ZONES

Despite a rooftop usually being a smaller space, the concept of specific zones for different needs is quite ingenious. Your guests have the space near the corner to engage in a serene, relaxation space for quiet activities like meditation, while another area is a designated kids' play area and a lush garden seating area for adults.

Think about how this zoning trend opens up new benefits to designing the perfect space. Your relaxation zone inside the rooftop garden can be the perfect refuge for employees to de-stress, step away from the hustle, and enjoy nature. *The Journal of Positive Psychology* proved that just five minutes in nature can increase positive emotions, which maximizes customer experiences and employee satisfaction.

This zoned areas can also open up new possibilities for events, such as hosting a yoga class, like The Ritz-Carlton Georgetown in Washington, D.C. Their outdoor garden known as “The Yard,” is actually a ground-floor installation and a perfect example of how to transform a concrete jungle into a shaded oasis for the community, while offering new opportunities for clients who are looking to rent out a space.

“We saw great potential in transforming the space known today as The Yard,” General Manager Marcus A. Loevenforst said. “The tiered gardens and large patios shaded by lush foliage provide a blank canvas for clients with unlimited possibilities – a rare option for those looking for venues in Washington, D.C.”

EXPANDING INTO PROFIT

Rooftop gardens may not have been a thing in the past, but there's no mistaking the appeal to older and younger generations alike. The craving for better-tasting food, memorable events, eco-friendly environments, and easier access to lush greenery in the face of an overwhelmingly stressful world, while straddling the dwindling space epidemic, is certainly a challenge.

Fortunately, hotels that rise to the occasion are the ones that prosper, and your rooftop garden can be the beginning of a whole new world of profitable possibilities.

You have the space, but are you using it to your hotel's best advantage? ■



Are we facing an economic downturn?

Are today's market signals being driven by the same factors as the last recession? What's different this time?

by RUSHI SHAH

TUNE INTO THE NEWS these days and you're sure to find talking heads from around the world calling for an economic downturn. It's natural to jump to this conclusion given the amount of time that has elapsed since the last recession and the length of this economic recovery. There are also increasing structural signals, such as an inverted Yield Curve, lack of inflation, overheated valuations for various asset classes including hotels, too much liquidity chasing deals, and lax lending, that typically indicate significant friction in the market. In the past, signals like these would have ignited fear of economic Armageddon. But today's market is different and the forecast less ominous. Let's explore why.

AN INVERTED YIELD CURVE - WHAT IT TELLS US

The Yield Curve is a graph that depicts the relationship between interest rates over a time horizon. It answers

the question of what interest rate is the market willing to yield for borrowing money locked for a certain period of time. Historically, the Yield Curve has been a symbol of the price of money. Typically in normal markets, the rate to borrow for a short term is lower than the rate to borrow money for a longer term. This concept is very intuitive and results in a positively sloped Yield Curve where borrowing money for one month is at a lower rate than borrowing money for 10 years. During the past several months, however, the Yield Curve has flipped to a negative slope. In this environment, the rate an investor can yield for investing in short-term debt is higher than that of investing in long-term bonds. This phenomenon is known as an inverted Yield Curve.

The talking heads, market pundits, and economists always view the inverted Yield Curve as a sign of an impending recession. This has been a formal signal since the initial charting of the Yield Curve. If we look back, 100 percent of the

time, an inverted Yield Curve has been a leading indicator of a major economic slowdown. To understand why this may not be the case today, we have to look at the birth of our country's Federal Reserve Bank (the Fed).

WHAT IS THE FED?

Commissioned by Congress and President Woodrow Wilson in the aftermath of the Panic of 1907, the Fed was designed to be a fail-safe mechanism of our government. It was created as a monetary institution to govern and regulate the money supply and demand of the United States' economy and the U.S. dollar. One of the major tenets of the Fed was that its job is to control the cost and velocity of the money as it relates to the U.S. dollar by managing economic growth and inflation. It accomplishes this by deciding at what interest rates the U.S. dollar can be borrowed or lent. Because it regulates the most important currency in the world, structurally, the Fed is designed to be a nonpartisan and objective force.

“If there is one signal to watch, it is the supply landscape. If the hotel industry continues to keep building just for the sake of building without a clear strategy, it will prove to be its own worst enemy.”

None of the former presidents have ever directly or indirectly tried to influence what the Fed does to the interest rates policy. Instead, the president's role has typically ended at appointing the board's chairman. This objectivity and independence has historically resulted in highly predictable interest-rate markets. The markets review the Fed's transcripts, identify signals, and extrapolate those signals into long-term interest rates. But things aren't as simple today. Let's look at why.

ANALYZING THE YIELD CURVE

The short-term portion of the Yield Curve is usually anchored by the Fed's tangible and public actions. The medium-term and longer-term portions of the Yield Curve, however, are shaped by the signals and guidance provided by the Fed's chairman and board after each of their meetings. Long-term interest rates are nothing but a forecast by futures traders and market participants of where they believe short-term interest rates will be over a longer horizon.

The way the future traders are operating this time around, however, is very different from how they have acted in the past. One can argue that social media is the catalyst for this change. By publicly tweeting his expectations of the Fed, the president now has the ability to directly influence the Fed's policy decision. The last time economic conditions looked like this, technology such as Twitter wasn't widely used and didn't have the strength to move markets. This time around, when the president publicly asks the Fed to lower rates, traders factor it into their forecast. This drives long-term interest rates lower, even without an actual economic slowdown.

While the Fed has often lowered rates to fight economic slowdown or to reduce inflation, it seldom reduces rates to help

a trade war. The good news is lower rates in general help prolong our economic recovery. A fringe benefit of lower rates is they effectively neutralize the effects of tariffs by lowering the value of the dollar and making exports more attractive. This can then boost domestic manufacturing and consumption, creating a win-win for our country.

LACK OF INFLATION

One reason the Fed has been reluctant to lower interest rates is because of the lack of inflation in the economy. However, a tight labor market can result in wage inflation which eventually results in inflation. While we aren't facing that issue today, the Fed appears to have put the cart before the horse. The market participants agree and that is the reason why they continue to bid the long-term interest rates lower. This action results in an inverted Yield Curve but isn't necessarily a strong sign of a recession.

OVERHEATED VALUATIONS

There are pockets within the U.S. where the market is most definitely overheated and asset values are much higher than the cash-flow numbers actually justify. This signal is a result of lower long-term rates for the reasons explored above, and because the U.S. is the country of choice for investment and stellar risk-adjusted returns by foreign and domestic capital.

EXCESS LIQUIDITY

After the last recession, the institutional capital markets, as well as households, increased their cash reserves. Media and market participants have eagerly waited for the next recession, prompting everyone to use the time to hoard cash. This accumulation of liquidity or cash sitting on the sidelines in the form of private equity and debt funds, and other shadow banking participants, could potentially

cause a self-correcting slowdown. In other words, any slowdown can correct itself by capital being deployed to exploit failed assets.

LAX LENDING MARKETS

Due to the amount of liquidity in the shadow banking system, one might think that the lending markets are lax. While capital is flowing freely, the metrics by which lenders gauge risk have evolved since the last recession. Today, lenders capture a much-more-accurate picture of the assets. This increased discipline is one more reason why we are enjoying a prolonged economic cycle this time around.

WHAT TO WATCH

If there is one signal to watch, it is the supply landscape. If the hotel industry continues to keep building just for the sake of building without a clear strategy, it will prove to be its own worst enemy. The demand has to grow in order for the supply to be able to absorb it. This simple mantra is what will keep this economic recovery sustainable. ■



Rushi Shah is principal and CEO of the commercial mortgage and real estate investment banking firm and AAHOA Club Blue Member Mag Mile Capital.

As a leader in hospitality financing, Shah specializes in structuring and placing high-leverage, non-recourse bridge and permanent debt with cash out for full- and limited-service hotels nationwide. Since joining the firm's predecessor, Aries Capital, in 2015, Shah has structured and closed hundreds of millions in financing for all property types. Shah has held previous positions at Northern Trust and has an MBA from the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business.



Beware of hidden taxes this holiday season

by ALFREDO ORTIZ

THANKSGIVING BRINGS GOOD food, great company, and the busiest travel days of the year. Whether you plan to travel by car or plane for the holiday, or spend big on presents, the government has imposed excise taxes, or extra fees, that will leave you less than joyful this holiday season.

For those traveling by air, various taxes are applied to the base price of a ticket, which help maintain and operate airways and airports, strengthen national security, fund environmental protections, and more.

It's a bit complicated, so let's break these taxes down further.

TRAVELING BY AIR AND CAR

For domestic flights, there is a general airline tax applied to the base fare, a flight segment tax, a September 11 fee, and a passenger facility charge, all of which depend on a specific itinerary. For international flights, these fees increase and additional taxes are added on. For example, on a domestic trip base fare of \$100, taxes would increase the total cost by about 35 percent.

Planning to travel over state lines by car this holiday season? If so, beware of the varying gasoline taxes in different areas. While the federal government applies an even tax rate across the country, additional taxes are often tacked on by states and cities.

For example, in California, the state tax on gas is 14 cents per gallon, the state excise tax is 47 cents per gallon, and the federal excise tax is 18 cents per gallon. In total, that's almost a dollar more per gallon because of taxes.

HOSPITALITY TAXES

The hospitality industry is not exempt from these taxes. There is often a steep tax applied to hotel guest bills. As with the gas tax, this amount varies depending on location.

For example, the highest occupancy tax that hits hotel goers is seen in the District of Columbia, coming in at 14.95 percent. However, luckily for visitors to the Capital City, an additional sales tax does not apply. In Hawaii, it's a different story. While the lodging tax is only 10.25 percent, an additional 4 percent sales tax is added to the bill, totaling 14.25 percent. For those thinking of jetting off to the warmth of the Aloha State for a winter vacation, be sure to factor in these additional costs.

PURCHASING CONSIDERATIONS

Keep in mind sales taxes that also differ by state as you begin to purchase gifts for your loved ones. For example, the sales tax for California is 7.25 percent. Colorado's sales tax is the lowest at 2.9 percent. Some states don't have any sales tax at all.

Last year, the National Retail Federation found that consumers were expecting to spend roughly \$1,000 on items such as gifts and decorations. So, this tax can really add up.

All of these taxes – both hidden and known – can add a staggering amount to what appears to be a reasonable trip or gift. But knowing about them will give us one more thing to be thankful for this holiday season. ■

Alfredo Ortiz is the president of the Job Creators Network.

NEW YORK CITY

by ASIF LAKHANI

OF ALL THE DESTINATIONS in the U.S. and across the world, there is arguably none more popular than New York City. The Big Apple welcomed 65.1 million visitors in 2018, according to NYC & Company, the city's tourism and marketing agency. It was also New York's ninth straight year of tourism growth, the agency said in its 2018-19 report. Total direct visitor spending for 2017 was \$44.2 billion, which generated \$12.1 billion in taxes and supported 391,400 jobs.

NYC in 2018

51.5M
domestic
visitors

13.6M
international
visitors

9th
straight year of
tourism growth

88%
average
occupancy rate



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An overwhelming majority of New York City visitors in 2018 – 51.5 million to be precise – were from domestic markets, while 13.6 million came internationally. The most international visitors came from the United Kingdom, China, Canada, Brazil, and France, respectively; the top three countries had more than one million visitors each, according to NYC & Company's data. Their report anticipates 2019 having a record 14 million international visitors.

For perspective, the World Atlas says the U.S. welcomed 80 million international visitors total in 2018.

Unsurprisingly, New York City hotels are thriving – so much that demand exceeded inventory growth in 2018, according to NYC & Company. The average occupancy rate was 88 percent for the year and above 90 percent for six of those months, and the ADR was \$291, the report said. New York City is on pace to have 137,000 hotel rooms by

2021, marking a roughly 19,000-room increase from 2018.

Enchanting attractions, marquee events, meticulous urban planning, and a one-of-a-kind energy are at the foundation of New York City's identity and brand – all working in unison as the fuel for the city's unmatched tourism industry. Hudson Yards is the nation's largest private development. One World Trade Center is the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere. Central Park will be instantly recognizable forever.

Regular events include New York Fashion Week, held in February and September annually, a number of holiday parades, and the U.S. Open tennis tournament. The city also hosted WorldPride 2019 at the beginning of the summer, which was the first time the parade was held in the United States.

While Oklahoma City (City Spotlight October 2019) has the luxury of developing with technology and Phoenix (September 2019) has unmatched geographic resources, New York City will always have its popularity, one-of-a-kind energy, and timeless appeal. The nation's capital may be in Washington D.C., but to check the country's pulse and direction, one need only look at what's happening in New York City. ■



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IT is the new interior designer

Technology has an important role in the modern hospitality guest experience

by JADY WEST

IN THE AGE OF THE ON-DEMAND guest, hotels are facing an evolving expectation of what a “home away from home” really means. Hotel patrons of the past expected hot water and a comfortable mattress, but today’s travelers are looking for streaming services, high-speed Wi-Fi, and app-based check-in – all from the comfort of their room.

Approaching the tech-focused generation of customers isn’t an easy task, especially as legacy hotel brands must work to advance their offerings without losing the charm of existing properties or alienating the less tech-savvy. Even harder still is the fact that having all of these amenities changes the entire experience from check-in down to how a lobby or room looks and feels.

Aside from adding new devices to the in-room experience, technology, and the infrastructure to support it, is shifting how hotels approach design. Let’s explore ways your hotel can take the guest experience to the next level, and the best ways to evolve your design plans with it.

FRONT DESK FACELIFT

Innovation can be first experienced right as guests arrive at your hotel. For many modern properties, gone are the days of the large banks of concierge and check-in desks. Digital check-in is on the rise, as 68 percent of guests want to speed up the check-in process by using their smartphones, according to Zebra Hospitality’s 2016 Vision Study. But for many properties, they will now need to

change the function of these spaces to adapt to a streamlined check-in culture.

However, the hotel lobby likely isn’t going to completely go away any time soon. But it will look a bit different and serve a separate purpose. In the place of concierge desks, some hotels have modern, self-serve kiosks that they can use for check-in or folio review. A prime example of this trend is the new CitizenM hotel in Boston. Now the lobby resembles a “hip coffee shop,” giving customers a relaxed spot to wait for their rideshare or meet up with a traveling companion that is more closely related to a cozy living room vignette than a traditional hotel lobby.

But even as technology continues to permeate nearly every aspect of the guest experience, there are some things

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the world just isn't ready for. A recent Cox Business study found that 60 percent of guests found robot bellhops to be more "creepy" than "cool."

But aesthetics aren't the only focus for hotels. From a technology standpoint, hotels need to ensure they have high-density Wi-Fi strategically placed in high-traffic areas to support tech-driven conveniences like digital check-ins, checkouts, and account review, as well as a large volume of personal devices that will traffic these areas. Technology is changing design, and that will change the technology required to support it, as well.

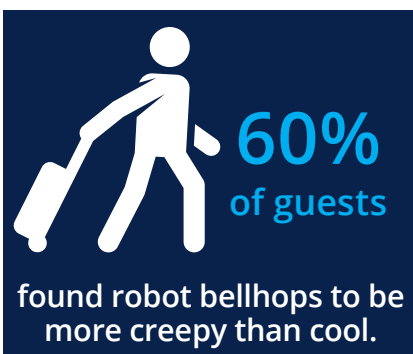
DON'T FORGET DIGITAL SIGNAGE

With these new experiences like a kiosk-only check-in, guests are more likely to need guidance to navigate the property. Clear signage and way-finding markers are a necessity to help usher guests through a possibly unfamiliar process.

Static signage is on its way out in favor of flexible digital signage that can be updated more frequently and streamline wayfinding. Going digital also gives hotels the opportunity to utilize wayfinding as a focal point of design or advertising, all while streamlining traffic flow.

IN-ROOM IS EN VOGUE

When guests arrive at their rooms, they expect more than just creature comforts. They want the type of experience they're used to at home. In fact, according to a



~50% of
Americans use
digital voice/AI
assistants.

One in 6
Americans
uses "smart"
speakers at
home.

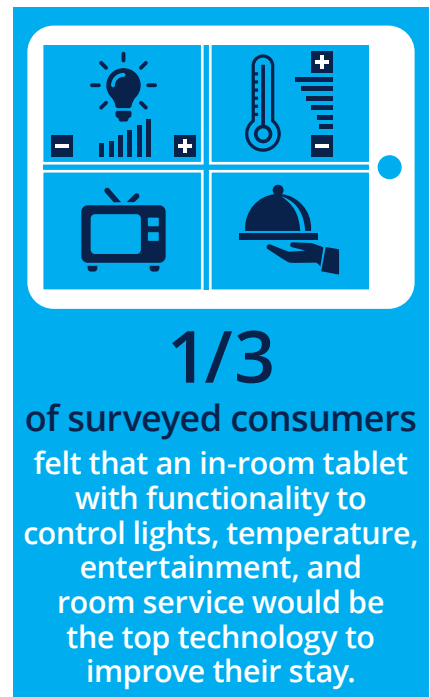
study by Pew Research, almost half of Americans use digital voice/AI assistants and one in six uses "smart" speakers at home, according to a study by NPR and Edison Research. This rise in at-home gadgets is also fueling the need for them to become more commonplace in hospitality.

But adding in-room streaming capabilities and Amazon Alexa isn't always just as simple as "plug and play." The room design will often need to shift to be centered around technology or customizable in-room experiences. Even the average TV-watching experience is changing, as many hotels use smart TVs to enhance the over-the-top (OTT) content experience through streaming services/devices or casting options. Technology that can even be leveraged for customizable ambiance, like art, is now a possibility through augmented reality. Just look at Marriott and Lifewtr's recent in-room partnership.

Hotels should also prioritize in-room tablets that control in-room technologies and design elements. The same Cox Business survey found that one-third of surveyed consumers felt that an in-room tablet with functionality to control lights, temperature, entertainment, and room service would be the top technology to improve their stay.

BEFORE YOU CHECK OUT...

In short, for hotels looking to bring their services into the modern age, it's important to consider the lasting effects technology will have on design and infrastructure needs. When implementing a new experience, like self-serve check-in, consider how current spaces will need to be altered to maximize the



spaces (and the Wi-Fi and other amenities that will be needed to support them). Make sure your signage is upgraded to be flexible and visually interesting, allowing for easy streamlining of traffic with a contemporary twist. Finally, don't be afraid to bring smart technology into guest rooms, but be sure you've thought through the role each gadget will play in the guest experience. And for now, stay clear of the robots. ■



Jady West is director of strategic sales for Cox Business and Hospitality Network. In this capacity, Jady works closely with CB/HN Leadership and

leads a team of sales professionals in the rapidly expanding Strategic Accounts market. Jady is responsible for driving continued sales development and growth, strategic planning, cross-functional alignment, budgeting, and planning for the Government, Gaming and Lodging verticals, Hospitality Network, and the third-party Agent Channel.



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A sound approach to noise control

The rising importance of achieving effective acoustics in hotels

by NIKLAS MOELLER

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IN A RECENTLY RELEASED report titled “Hospitality Design and Well-Being: Quality Sleep at Hotels,” the American Society of Interior Designers describes how design can help hotels promote deep, restful sleep. Although noise does not top the list of sleep-disrupting factors documented in this report, various noise sources are cited individually that, when added together, account for 46 percent of total disturbances.

Sleep deprivation – due to delayed onset, interruptions to sleep state, and awakenings – can have a number of psychological and physiological impacts on guests. These run the gamut from not feeling well-rested enough to tackle the day’s activities to more serious, cumulative effects that, according to John Hopkins researcher Patrick Finan, Ph.D., include increased

risk for heart disease, cancer, dementia, and obesity.

SOUNDING OFF UNHAPPY GUESTS

Noise issues can also have a considerable impact on the property. Dissatisfied guests are less likely to return and more inclined to post a negative review. As a result, a hotel’s reputation and bookings can suffer. For example, a TripAdvisor survey found that 55 percent of guests look at online reviews specifically addressing sleep quality before making a reservation. There are also direct costs associated with appeasing unhappy visitors, such as by offering discounts.

When trying to tackle this problem, property owners and managers tend to focus exclusively on reducing overall volume levels within guest rooms, primarily by increasing the specifications

for walls, doors, and windows, and purchasing quieter equipment. However, when it comes to sleep, studies show that dynamic range – or the *variation in volume* – is often the primary culprit.

THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP

Sleep studies conducted in health care, military, and residential facilities show that variations in our acoustic environment are difficult to ignore – even while we are asleep – because our senses are designed to detect changes in our surroundings. And as the difference between a room’s background sound level and any intermittent noises increases, so does the likelihood that our sleep will be disrupted. This research also indicates that we sleep better in rooms in which we are exposed to continuous sound of a certain volume than those in which we experience



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intermittent noises, even if they are of the same average level. For example, infrequent bursts of periodic traffic are far more disruptive to sleep than the constant sound made by a steady stream of traffic.

By way of example, I was recently asked to make sound-level measurements in a residential bedroom because the occupant had complained to town officials about traffic noise from an adjacent road. Though the occupant was confident that volumes exceeded local regulations, tests revealed that when traffic passed by, peak volumes only reached 40 to 41 A-weighted decibels (dBA). The occupant perceived them as higher due to the significant 14- to 15-dBA change in volume from the bedroom's low background sound level of 26 dBA.

Hotel owners and managers might be surprised to learn that the noise peaks that disrupt guests' sleep and comfort are often not much greater than 40 dBA. To put it in context, normal conversation is in the range of 50 to 60 dBA. While one would not usually describe 40-dBA noises as "loud," they are very disruptive within the pin-drop environment of guest rooms, which typically

exhibit background sound levels of only 28 to 32 dBA.

BACKGROUND NOISE

Guests can be made more comfortable by using a sound-masking device to increase the room's background sound level. Though adding sound might seem contrary to the goal of achieving effective acoustics, the premise is simple: any noise lower than the new background sound level is masked, while the impact of those above it is lessened because the degree of change between the baseline and any volume peaks is smaller.

Because most noises entering guest rooms are near or below 40 dBA, they are easily muted by a relatively low level of masking (40 to 45 dBA). Though this level will not always completely cover an offending noise, it will reduce both the frequency and magnitude of volume changes, creating a less variable – and, therefore, more comfortable – sleeping environment for guests.

Sound masking can also be used to treat acoustic issues in other areas of the property. For example, there is a growing trend whereby brands are promoting their hotels as co-working spaces (to which some have applied the tongue-twisting

term "corporatality") – an approach that can work better for those engaged in business "on the go" than the traditional monthly membership structure used by co-working companies.

However, success depends on more than providing a convenient place to work. Properties should endeavor to create an environment that supports occupants' needs. While some have simply added more electrical outlets and USB ports to make existing common areas more appealing to mobile workers, others offer spaces specifically designed to augment their ability to host business activities. Sound masking can be installed in dedicated co-working spaces in order to improve speech privacy and concentration – the role this technology has played in commercial offices and call centers for several decades. ■



Niklas Moeller is the vice president of K.R. Moeller Associates, manufacturer of the LogiSon Acoustic Network and MODIO Guestroom Acoustic

Control (www.modio.audio). He has more than 25 years of experience in the sound-masking field.



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The return to European design

by LAWRENCE CHALFIN

“While luxury is still top of mind, it shouldn’t be the sole design intention.”

AS WE ENTER AN INCREAS-
ingly fast-paced and mech-
anized design industry,
trends have started to
run their course faster
than the seasons do.
Brands hop on and off the bandwagon
in search of the next product, element,
color, or style expected to become main-
stream. And yet, our team foresees a
trend that is here to stay well into 2020 –
the return to European-inspired design.

To dive in a bit deeper, we are seeing
hoteliers and designers celebrate the

craftsmanship of traditional European
furniture makers with an aesthetic that
takes into account American sensibili-
ties: warm woods, curved frames, deco-
rative stitching, and so forth. These
elements help enrich a space, acting
as a storyteller with unique details
that offer a balance between form
and function.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Hotels are no longer “one size fits all;”
instead, the approach is localized,

making each property unique based on
its surrounding environment. All hotels
are in search of that “Instagrammable
moment,” or what furniture, paint color,
or other detail will help it to differentiate
itself from the plethora of other available
accommodations.

Part of the resurgence is the reversal
of how the industry was approaching
hotel design. In the past, we were seeing
developers tearing buildings down in
their entirety and starting anew. Now,
designers, hoteliers, manufacturers,
and contractors are exploring ways to



EKKACHAI/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

uphold, maintain, and restore buildings that capture a city's history or culture. A parking-lot-turned-medical-center or an empty warehouse transformed into a nightclub have become more appealing than a one-size-fits-all new build. Recent boutique hotel openings exhibit something old and something new, a classic tale with a fresh perspective. Marble walls from decades ago, reupholstered antique furniture, tables broken apart and pieced back together in a fresh form – all of these are being incorporated into renovation projects.

Ask manufacturers the following questions:

- How does your company navigate quality assurance and quality control?
- How should we maintain the furniture?
- What steps can we take to prolong or prevent wear and tear?

WELCOME HOME

Another component to consider is the influence of residential design. Younger guests are seeking out spaces that feel more like home so that they can “live like a local” and fully immerse themselves into their surroundings. Home sharing has an inevitable “residential feel,” and in order to compete, hoteliers have to reconsider the way they are approaching the look and feel of their properties. While luxury is still top of mind, it shouldn't be the sole design intention. Creating a space that feels like home means that guests should be able to walk in a room and kick their feet up, relax, and feel comfortable enough to spread out their belongings, call a friend, or listen to music – as if the room was truly theirs. Hoteliers have to ensure guests don't feel as though they could be in any hotel, in any city, in any country. Hence the need to be rooted in location and have the design reflect that vision.

FORM VS. FUNCTION

Bringing it back to the specifics, we see the return to European-inspired craftsmanship as it relates to furniture design. Hoteliers want quality furniture, which is why asking important questions such as how to maintain and how to avoid the inevitable “wear and tear” a piece will have in a high-traffic area is key. As a specific example, hoteliers can inquire about how the manufacturer navigates “quality assurance” and “quality control” for their products. Quality assurance is a proactive process to improve development and prevent defects during the manufacturing process. Quality control is a reactive process that seeks to identify and correct defects in finished products through testing. We believe that these two components must work in tandem to eliminate problems and provide a consistent result. Questions

like these should be answered upfront so that management knows that the product is able to be maintained and can withstand all of the foot traffic in a hotel or resort property.

CUSTOM CONSIDERATIONS

When evaluating these custom pieces, there are a few components hoteliers should consider in depth. For example, tufting adds a decorative, distinguished element to furniture and cushions. Stitches or blind tufts may be sewn through the upholstery to create dimension and pattern. On the functional side, tufting prevents the stuffing inside the piece from bunching or shifting. Another example is the seat suspension. Sinuous springs, cross tied to each other, or classic eight-way hand-tied coil springs connect to the frames for strength and resilience. This method provides a suspension with consistent quality throughout the seat surface, which is something hospitality spaces must be keen on.

Despite the industry's brief “cookie-cutter” direction, with products from varying brands looking more alike and a general loss of brand identity in hotel design, designers and specifiers have rediscovered the love for the handmade, the tiny details, and spaces that reflect the design intent individually and as a whole. Though as a longstanding product manufacturer and active participant in the community, we don't think it was ever fully lost. European-inspired design has certainly reemerged in a big way. ■

Lawrence Chalfin is president of Samuelson Furniture (www.samuelsonfurniture.com), a Jersey-based manufacturer of high-end casegoods and seating for four- and five-star hospitality projects around the globe. For additional tips, readers can refer to the company's white papers: <https://samuelsonfurniture.com/whitepapers>.

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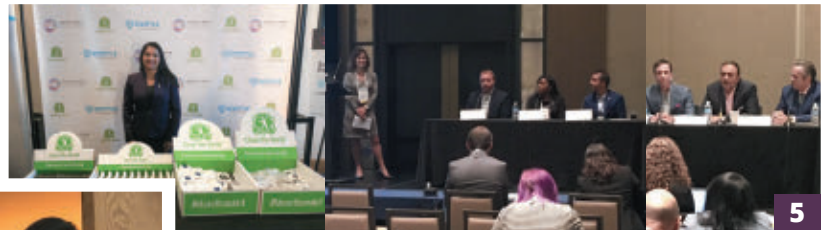
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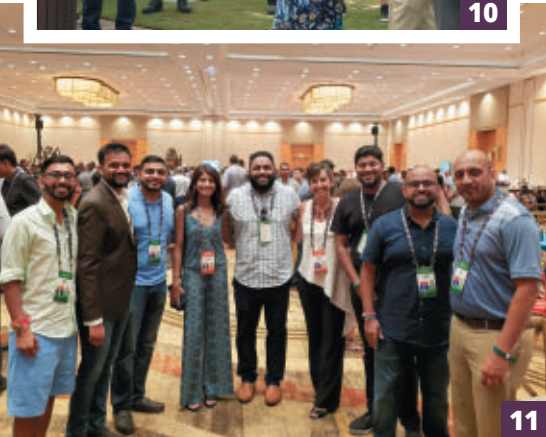


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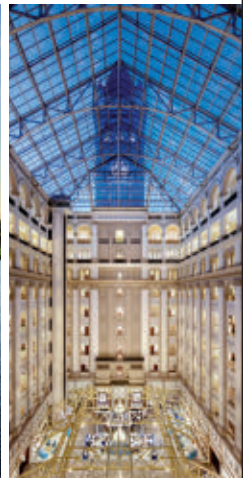
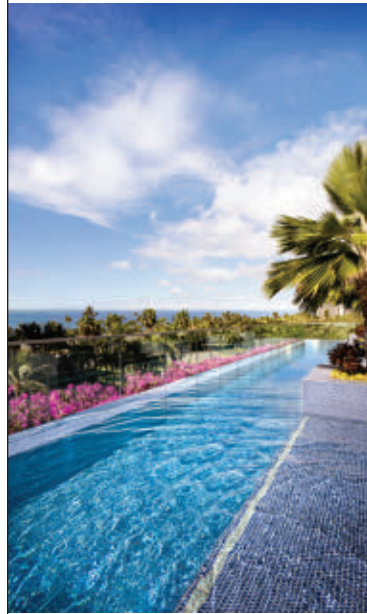


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- Gov. Kim Reynolds joined Upper Midwest Regional Director Kalpesh Joshi and Interim President & CEO Rachel Humphrey as AAHOA co-hosted the first No Room for Trafficking session with the American Hotel & Lodging Association in Des Moines, IA.
- Interim President & CEO Rachel Humphrey, Director at Large Jayesh Patel, and Secretary Nishant (Neal) Patel joined Upper Midwest Regional Director Kalpesh Joshi in Des Moines, IA, as he and his Ambassadors hosted their Regional Conference & Trade Show.
- Mid Atlantic Regional Director Sanjay Patel and his Ambassadors hosted their Regional Conference & Trade Show in Cherry Hill, NJ.
- The second AAHOA Young Professional Focus Group was held during the Mid Atlantic Regional Conference & Trade Show. The discussions centered around how technology is changing operations, the challenges YPs will face in the future, and a host of other topics.
- Vice Chairman Biran Patel, Treasurer Vinay Patel, and Young Professional Director Eastern Division Purvi Panwala were all featured panelists at the Hotel Data Conference in Nashville, TN.
- Lifetime Member Trusha Patel continued to support AAHOA's efforts to eradicate sex and labor trafficking by administering the Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) Inhospitable to Human Trafficking Training sponsored by AAHOA to the Austin Airport Managers Association and to the staff at the Archer Hotel in Austin, TX, this summer.
- Female Directors Lina Patel and Nimisha Patel hosted the first Women Hoteliers Networking Reception of the year in Portland, just before the Regional Conference and golf event.
- Secretary Nishant (Neal) Patel and South Central Texas Regional Director Mike Patel joined Northwest Regional Director Hiten Patel in Camas, WA, as he hosted the sold-out Northwest Region Charity Golf Tournament at the Camas Meadows Golf Club. The event raised more than \$100,000 in revenue. The next day, Hiten and his Ambassadors hosted their Regional Conference & Trade Show in Portland, OR.



9. Upper Midwest Regional Director Kalpesh Joshi and his Ambassadors hosted their final Regional Conference & Trade Show of 2019, in Elmhurst, IL.
10. Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala addressed the crowd at the AAHOA Charlotte Charity Golf Tournament, where AAHOA raised nearly \$100,000 in revenue to support 11 charities.
11. Chairwoman Jagruti Panwala, Secretary Nishant (Neal) Patel, and Interim President & CEO Rachel Humphrey joined G6 Hospitality executives for the AAHOA/G6 Hospitality Brand Alliance Meeting at the G6 Hospitality Conference.



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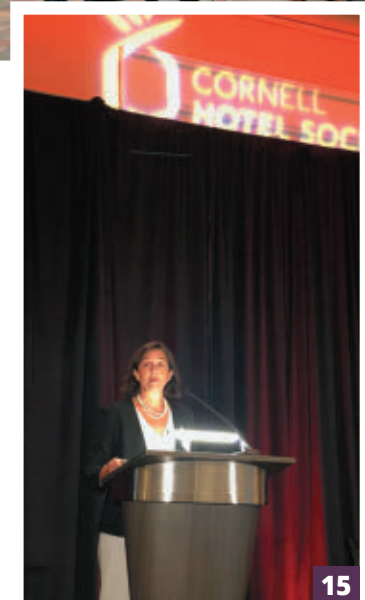
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12. Immediate Past Chairman Hitesh (HP) Patel and South Central Texas Regional Director Mike Patel participated in an economic roundtable with Texas Republican Party Chairman James Dickey and roundtable host and owner Bob Thomas.
13. Washington, D.C. Area Regional Director Sandip Patel and his Ambassadors hosted their final Regional Conference & Trade Show of 2019, in Norfolk, VA.
14. Alabama Regional Director Sanjay Patel and the Regional Ambassadors were joined by Florida Regional Director Bharat Patel at a Town Hall meeting in Montgomery.
15. Interim President & CEO Rachel Humphrey provided an AAHOA update and national industry update at the Atlanta Lodging Outlook.



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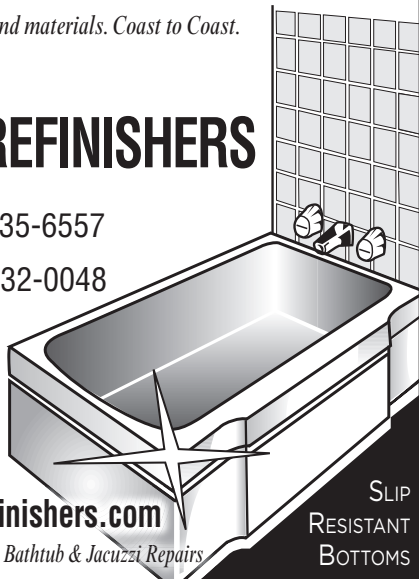
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1. Title of publication: *Today's Hotelier*
2. Publication no.: 2417-4062
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8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business offices of the publisher:
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9. Full names and complete mailing address of publisher, editor and managing editor:
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12. Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
13. Publication title: *Today's Hotelier*
14. Issue date for circulation data below: *November*
15. Extent and nature of circulation:

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h. Total	11,322	10,782
i. Percent Paid	100	100
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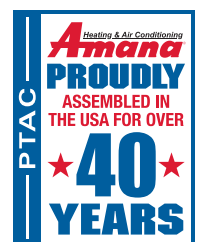
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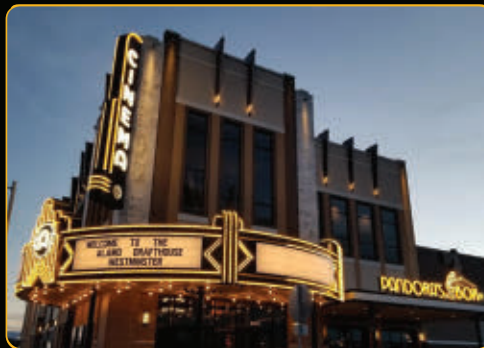
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