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Stay a While

A gallery of unique hotel and resort signage

By Steve Aust

As hoteliers prepare for an eventual economic resurgence, signage plays an important role in rebranding. RTKL designed the environmental-graphics program for this Baltimore Hilton.

When economic conditions trend downward, discretionary spending is typically lopped off more quickly than a royal's head during the French Revolution. Whether it's a family deferring an excursion to a warm-weather or family-friendly destination, or a company opting to incorporate video conferencing instead of sending staff to meet an important client or vendor face-to-face, the hotel and resort industry has taken a hit during this protracted recession.

Lodging Econometrics, which tracks new-hotel construction, reported 3,890 hotel projects, which account for the building of 485,664 rooms, slated for groundbreaking within 12 months or in the planning stages as of 2009's third quarter. That tally represents a 38% decline in rooms and a 34% tumble in properties in development versus the same 2008 timeframe.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the global travel and tourism industry was projected to tally an anticipated \$1.87 trillion in direct revenue in 2009, which represents a 3.5% decline. Also, the WTTC projects the industry directly supported 77.2 million jobs over the year, a 1.9% decline.

Smith Travel Research (STR) reported that hotel

occupancy declined 8.8% in 2009 versus 2008. As a result, property owners and managers have been compelled to slash rates to attempt to attract potential travel revenue. Thus, the average daily room rate fell 8.8%, and the revenue per available room plunged 17%.

However, the fog that's descended upon the hospitality industry shows signs of lifting in the near future. STR predicts occupancy will stabilize in 2010 (down 0.2%) and begin a reversal with 2.4% growth in 2011. Revenue projects to gain even more significantly.

Although a rising economic tide will likely raise most of the collective industry, some hotels and hospitality-oriented properties bolstered their sign programs – and, in turn, their brand identity – to withstand fiscal turbulence. Whether it's the unveiling of environmental graphics for an upscale luxury property, a business-oriented hotel getting a long-needed makeover, or architectural hardware that broadens a sign-shop's scope of work, these projects highlight the possibilities sign companies employ to ply their trade for a diverse, dynamic market.

Staying Nimble

In 1917, Alcide Mandeville and his sons founded Mandeville Signs (Lincoln, RI); today, the family's fourth generation handles the company's operations; Tom Mandeville serves as the company's third-generation president (his father, Roland, replaced Alcide), and his siblings, Jim and Jeanne, also work there.

Nearly a century later, the shop has built a vibrant business; its portfolio includes signage, awnings and environmental graphics for such nationwide companies as Panera Bread, Talbot's and Borders Books, among other corporate and institutional clients.

Given the company's prolific body of work, it's earned a strong reputation. This reputation – and a desire to keep a pipeline of vital new business during economic challenges – helped the company win a project that falls outside the purview of traditional signage. Mandeville created an internally illuminated façade and architectural graphics for a Holiday Inn Select in Stamford, CT.

Mandeville enjoyed an ongoing relationship with Christopher J. Henderson, the hotel's Providence, RI-based architect, and was brought in by Henderson and the general

contractor, Boca Raton, FL-based Shakman Hospitality. DiLeonardo Intl. (Warwick, RI) created the concept design for the architectural graphics as part of the hotel's original, architectural plans.

The three-sided façade graphic spans 160 ft. long and 8 ft. tall. Mandeville fabricated the acrylic facing using Cyro Industries' 0.177-in.-thick Acrylite #2447 white, high-impact acrylic. The shop fabricated the façade at a 244-ft. radius using custom forming and bending equipment. The shop also fabricated a custom cabinet using aluminum tube and sheetstock.

To produce the facade's graphics, Mandeville printed the graphics using 3M's translucent, ivory vinyl and high-performance, metallic-gray, overlay film with reverse-weed ovals.

To illuminate the façade, Mande-

ville recommended LEDs. After testing, they selected SloanLED's Great White 2 modules and methodically populated the façade with 3,200 LEDs.

To accentuate the property's interior décor, Mandeville produced a series of mounted, digitally printed, acrylic faces. The shop produced the pieces using 0.177-in. Acrylite material, on which the shop direct-printed the graphics at 600 x 600 dpi on its Mimaki JF-1631. A low-luster overlamine finish protects the pieces.

To install the panels, which measure up to 4 ft. 6 in. wide and 22 ft. tall, Mandeville used ABC Sign's 3.25-in., rectangular, post-and-panel system. The shop also fabricated custom standoffs and supplemental structural components from aluminum plate and tube extrusions.

