

Hotel News Now

Vital information for hotel decision makers

Search

[Newsletters](#) [Log in](#) [Join](#)

[Data](#) [Digital](#) [Ownership](#) [Operations](#) [Regions](#) [Profiles](#) [Opinions](#) [Marketplace](#)

HeBSdigital

Shift Share from the OTAs
this Summer with 20% off!

I'M READY TO
SHIFT SHARE!



Creative solutions to design challenges

27 Mar 2013

With the number of conversions and renovations increasing, there are new challenges arising to adapt designs to fit existing spaces.

Highlights

- A straightforward layout in a complicated space will also aid guests in finding common elements like arrival, elevators and dining.
- When working with existing features, incorporate an aspect of the dated element into your design.
- To keep renovation costs down, be careful to not move existing items that will have a huge cost impact.

By **Jonathan Nehmer**
HNN columnist
jcnehmer@nehmer.com



This is the final part in a three-part series from the International Society of Hospitality Consultants focusing on design and renovation. Read part 1 [here](#) and part 2 [here](#).

As the hotel industry is starting to climb back to its pre-recession levels, renovations are more prevalent than new construction. As a part of this recovery, owners and developers are looking to convert and renovate existing properties. Depending on the magnitude of the work, these renovations and conversions can create design challenges to adapt designs to fit within the existing spaces of older properties. Designers are faced with space, budget and schedule constraints. Creativity plays a definite role in developing a new product that is inviting to guests, complimentary to the brand and conscious of the bottom line. Here are some design challenges that occur and solutions to overcome them.



Jonathan Nehmer

Site and spatial constraints

In urban locations, owners and developers are not only looking to renovate and reflag existing hotels but also to convert office or commercial buildings into hotels. These buildings can have unusual shapes that are inconsistent with hotel function, making it difficult to fit a typical brand program. But

GET MORE...



TRENDING

MORE



The evolution of hotel room distribution



Hoteliers seek loyalty among millennials

Loyalty programs are worth the cost

How to breathe life back into loyalty

Heading to the top of the hotel cycle

What really drives a hotel's income?

HOTELDATA CONFERENCE
Hosted by STR and Hotel News Now
Presented by **Loews Vanderbilt Hotel**

data
geeks
unite!

SEPTEMBER 4-5, 2013 NASHVILLE, TN



The Future of Hospitality is Here
LEARN MORE >>



It's More Than Just a Pretty Interface
From Intility - www.intilitycorp.com

there are always solutions to overcome site and spatial obstacles:

- Get the “wow” factor. Try to put as much of the lobby and key spaces in the front of the building at the street level. This will create activity and intrigue to passers-by, bringing more people into the hotel.
- Less is more. Create a simple layout to maximize square footage and circulation areas. A straightforward layout in a complicated space will also aid guests in finding common elements like arrival, elevators and dining.
- Brighten it up. Create as much light as possible. Make sure enough natural (and artificial) light is spread throughout the common area spaces.
- Think inside the envelope. If you have a narrow structure with neighboring buildings, be sure to include well-placed air wells to allow natural light to filter down the building to develop a comfortable environment for the guestrooms.
- Aim high. If possible, try to put amenities on the roof or upper levels to allow for greater advantage of views as well as for more space for the lobby. Utilize lower levels below grade when possible for back-of-house functions.

Wrong box for the right product

What do you do with the “box” you want to convert or reflag doesn’t match the new brand’s vision? To keep the renovation cost at an acceptable level, there are a couple areas to examine when presented with a property-improvement-plan conversion.

- Design with cost in mind. Be careful to not move existing items that will have a huge cost impact. In most instances, it is best to limit moving the bathrooms, bar and buffet because they impact the infrastructure and create the most cost.
- Examine the space for potential increase in revenue and activity. Depending on the space, it might make more sense to relocate the bar to be in the sight line of guests as they enter the hotel. These aggressive moves have to be weighed against their cost benefit.
- Open it up. Today’s trends and many of today’s brands embrace an open-concept lobby that is a challenge to incorporate in older hotels. Removing non-load bearing walls will allow guests to visually connect while keeping the existing infrastructure in place.

Embrace the hotel’s character

Sometimes an older building will have distinctive design elements that were in style when it was originally built but might not be fashionable today. These details may be ingrained in the hotel and will pose a challenge when trying to incorporate them into the current design. The first answer is to cover up the dated feature but that might not be possible and may not even be the best approach. A couple of suggestions to embrace these items are:

- Work with existing features. Try to incorporate an aspect of the dated element into your design. A recent project featured large amounts of scalloped concrete throughout the public spaces of the hotel. It was cost prohibitive to remove it or cover it so a round bar and circular front desk were created to embrace it and tie into the scalloped edging. The new elements created a space that matched and provided a cohesive, updated area for guests without the expense of covering it up.
- Embellish it. Another idea is to add elegant touches to furniture, fixtures and equipment, finishes and art around a distinctive element as a way to offset the feature or make the new composition a more eclectic mix of old and new.

Too much program

Many times when starting the feasibility of converting a hotel, the brand issues a PIP that has more “wants” than the hotel has space. When the PIP has too much program for the current square footage, an examination of the current footprint may lend to some creative solutions to the “size” challenge.

- Double up on space. A meeting room can serve as overflow dining

VIDEO

MORE



Inland American values key hotel markets



Denihan Hospitality looks West



W Hotels at 15



Rob Winchester, Waterford Hotel Group

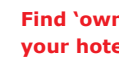


Pillar looks to support ownership position

LATEST NEWS



CHG eyes Asia for its innovative brands



Find 'owners' who embrace change at your hotel



OTA growth market appears at or near peak



New growth avenue for LodgeWorks



The importance of deposition preparation



A history lesson in hotels

for breakfast or as a private dining room. Another consideration is to combine a morning coffee bar with an evening reception bar to maximize the same space. Maybe part of the lobby can be used for overflow food-and-beverage space.

- Evaluate the market. Are all program elements really necessary? Do you need a spa? Does the market support the amount of meeting space or lobby seating recommended?

Compact guestrooms

An owner might purchase a lower-tier branded hotel and decide to convert it into a higher-tier or full-service brand. A general rule of thumb usually dictates that the higher the tier, the bigger the guestroom. In addition, they usually have more FF&E than a lower-tier hotel. Designers are challenged with fitting the same amenities into less square footage.

How do you find more inches in a room size that can't budge?

- Make it look bigger. Use smaller pieces when possible. In the past, a dresser needed to be 24-inches deep to accommodate a tube-style TV. With today's flat-screen TV, a hotel can get by with 18 inches or even less to pick up an extra six inches or more at the foot of the bed.
- Create new ideas. Find dual-purpose or convertible FF&E like an ottoman that doubles as storage, a fold-down table or a desk with wheels that can move when needed or put away when it's not in use. Consider a bench that also serves as a luggage rack.
- Change the conditions. Examine the room layout to see if rotating a king bed to the bathroom wall might provide additional clearance.

Every project is unique and poses its own challenges. Sometimes thinking outside the box or deep within the intricacies of the box produces the best results for the client, brand and most importantly, the guest.

Jonathan C. Nehmer, AIA, ISHC, president of Jonathan Nehmer + Associates, Inc., is a hospitality industry veteran with more than 30 years of experience in all facets of architecture and interior design, design management, project management, and construction administration. Since 1989, JN+A has led the hospitality industry in architecture, project management and interior design for hotel and resort projects around the globe. It now provides complete Interior Design services through its subsidiary, HVS Design. Visit the company's website, www.nehmer.com, for more information.

The opinions expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect the opinions of HotelNewsNow.com or its parent company, STR and its affiliated companies. Columnists published on this site are given the freedom to express views that may be controversial, but our goal is to provoke thought and constructive discussion within our reader community. Please feel free to comment or contact an editor with any questions or concerns.

ISHC Global Insights is a partnership of HotelNewsNow.com and the International Society of Hospitality Consultants (www.ISHC.com) to bring in-depth global topics to the hotel industry. Be informed about specialized topics from hospitality experts that will be delivered throughout the year.

COMMENTS 0 [Show All](#)

[Login](#) or enter a name

Post Your

Comment

Check to follow this thread via email alerts (must be logged in)
(4000 characters max)

Comments that include links or URLs will be removed to avoid instances of spam. Also, comments that include profanity, lewdness, personal attacks, solicitations or advertising, or other similarly inappropriate or offensive comments or material will be removed from the site. You are fully responsible for the content you post. The opinions expressed in comments do not necessarily reflect the opinions of HotelNewsNow.com or its parent company, Smith Travel Research and its affiliated companies. Please report any violations to our [editorial staff](#)

Submit Comment



September 17th - 20th

REGISTER NOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR REVENUE

2013 REVENUE MANAGEMENT
WEBINAR SERIES

www.hamiltonuniversity.org



[Log In](#)
[Join](#)
[Advertise](#)
[Subscribe](#)
[Hotel News Now mobile](#)
[About Us](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Contact STR/STR Global](#)

[Cookies Policy](#)
[RSS](#)
[Twitter](#)
[Facebook](#)
[LinkedIn](#)
[Events](#)
[Hotel Data Conference](#)
[Hotel Data Presentations](#)

[Ownership](#)
[Data](#)
[Operations](#)
[Opinions](#)
[Video](#)
[Technical Support](#)
[Corrections Policy](#)
[Transparency Policy](#)

Contact Us

Hotel News Now
18500 Lake Rd.
Suite 310
Rocky River, Ohio 44116

