

Precious Medal Awarded LEED Platinum certification, Bardessono Hotel & Spa is a gem in Napa

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For some hotels, earning LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is a distinction that shows their owners are in tune with environmental issues; for others, its worn like a badge of honor displayed for all to see. The Bardessono Hotel & Spa in Yountville, CA, falls into that latter category thanks to its earning of LEED Platinum status, one of only four properties in the U.S. to reach the highest level of certification.

The 62-room property was acquired by Ashford Hospitality Prime, Inc. last June and is now managed by Ashford's management arm, Remington Lodging. But, when it opened in 2009, it was the darling of California developer Phil Sherburne, considered to be a pioneer in modern green development. As the story goes, Sherburne was hand-picked by the Bardessono family to build the hotel on the six-acre homestead it had owned for 80 years at the time it was constructed. He worked with Ron Mitchell, then SVP of architectural firm WATG, to construct an eco-friendly boutique hotel in Napa Valley's wine country.

"Our initial discussions with Phil Sherburne were more about creating a project that was sustainable and practical, yet luxurious," said Noe Pegarido, a senior associate and senior project designer at WATG, who worked on Mitchell's team as a project designer. "We wanted a project that would provide guests with a unique experience and sense of luxury, but would still fit within the context of Yountville's charming small-town feel."

LEED certification, especially at the level that was reached, wasn't "a goal or a driver," according to Pegarido, "but was more of a result of Phil's and the team's beliefs and values."

Susan Frieson, AIA, LEED AP, who was WATG's project architect for the Bardessono and is now in that same role at Weber Thompson, agreed with her former colleague and added, "As we kept getting into it and after talking with us, realizing that we could at least qualify for LEED Silver, Phil made the decision [to strive for certification] on the spot at a Town Council meeting in Yountville while we were wrapping up design and development. I would say that LEED certification wasn't important at the beginning of the planning/design stages; it was more about having a well-designed hotel using sustainable approaches, and then it went on from there."

The sustainability effort began with the 940 solar panels that provide a significant amount of the hotel's electrical demand. "One of the first discussions of sustainable design centered around the opportunity to take advantage of rebates, credits and incentives to use solar," said Pegarido. "With that in mind, the buildings needed flat roofs to provide the adequate space for the many photovoltaic panels to be used. This roof design direction set us on going with a more modern and contemporary look for the project that drew inspiration from the region's wine and agricultural history, as well as its natural beauty."

According to the hotel, the 200kW solar energy system provides approximately

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The reuse of materials can be found in all aspects of the hotel. Salvaged wood was used for the siding of the exterior walls, as well as other areas inside the property. "Initial thoughts on using wood on the project were concerning because of the maintenance required," said Pegarido. "However, using wood to express the concepts inspired by wine barrels and the site's surrounding landscape were too important to value-engineer out. As a result, the project team was able to secure salvaged Monterey Cypress to be used for the hotel building's siding. Salvaged wood was also used for guestroom floors, doors, ceilings and even some furniture."

Recycled steel was used on the building's facade, in the form of rusted steel panels, noted Pegarido, "which were used to represent the colors found in wine, the surrounding landscape and vineyards, as well as agriculture equipment that is part of the region's history."

WATG used stone from the Bardessono family's home for the arrival area. "In their home, they had a beautiful and very old cellar that was made of local stone," said Pegarido. "This stone was salvaged when the home was demolished, then cut into panels."

The architect noted that scale was a major consideration when designing the hotel, as the firm felt the property's location would add to its charm. "The flat roofs also help to reduce the hotel buildings' scale, making them fit nicely within the neighborhood as well as minimize the blocking of views towards the surrounding hills," he said, citing another distinct feature that made the hotel stand out among the other properties in the area. "Another design approach to reduce the project's scale was to break the building up into clusters with buildings no more than two levels tall. These clusters were designed around courtyards that had their own unique design concepts, with landscape features and sculptures creating completely different guest experiences. All guestrooms have entries directly from the outside, eliminating the need for corridors."

Rammed earth walls were also used as design features for key areas of the properties, Pegarido noted. "Initially, rammed earth was to be used extensively throughout the project not only because of its beauty but for its sustainable characteristics and properties," he said. "However, due to its labor intensive construction, the use of rammed earth was limited to signage and feature wall elements. These walls helped to express the natural beauty and colors of the areas surrounding hillsides."

Ground-level guestrooms at the Bardessono each have privately fenced courtyards that feature outdoor showers and tubs, allowing guests to enjoy the region's temperate climate and weather. All guestrooms feature large windows, which provide both natural lighting and warmth during the colder seasons. Deep overhangs help to provide sun shading for the windows, and motorized exterior venetian blinds were installed on the exterior to help reduce heat gain, noted Pegarido. Frieson commented that the blinds, while performing an important function, were a challenge to install due to the fact that they involved "new technology at the time integrating into our system." The rooms also feature energy-management systems that detect occupancy, whereby lights are turned off when they are unoccupied.

Other features that led to the hotel receiving LEED Platinum certification include bathrooms utilizing low-water-flow fixtures; a drip irrigation system outdoors to minimize water usage; the recycling of gray and black water, which are treated and recycled by the Town of Yountville; the use of organic products in showers, laundry rooms and during housekeeping; and the use of electric and bio-diesel vehicles on the property to minimize air pollution.

The hotel also utilizes organic and locally produced food products whenever possible at