

## Aardex builds Colorado's first LEED-Certified Hampton Inn

by Jill Jamieson-Nichols

A leader in sustainable building is breaking new ground in the hospitality business. Aardex LLC, known for its LEED Platinum Signature Centre office building in Golden, is developing Colorado's first LEED-certified Hampton Inn & Suites in Rifle.

The hotel's swimming pool will be heated by warm air extracted in the process of cooling the building. Other energy-saving features will include a series of sensors that determine when a room is occupied and adjust the climate accordingly.

Aardex won't know what level of LEED certification the building will attain, but, "There's a very good chance that we'll be LEED Silver," said Shane Fowler, Aardex principal.

The development is noteworthy in that sustainable building and design are relatively new to the hospitality industry. Hotels have different physical and operating requirements from office buildings and weren't heavily contemplated when LEED came about, said Fowler, a founder of U.S. Green Building Council in Colorado.

Fowler likened acceptance of sustainable building and design in the hospitality industry to that of the office development industry in 2000-2001. "We're not quite there yet in hospitality, but it's coming," he said.

Rather than honing in on LEED certification – for the hotel or any other project – "We're going to build the best, most sustainable buildings we can in the market," Fowler said, explaining sustainable integrates design, constructability and operations. Features that make sense for one project may not make sense for another; for example, floor-to-ceiling glass that would earn LEED points for an office building wouldn't be desirable for hotel rooms or patient rooms in a hospital.



*The Rifle hotel will feature Hampton Inn & Suites new "Perfect Mix" lobby with lots of seating to enhance social interaction.*

Aardex launched its hospitality division about a year ago, teaming up with Rim Hospitality, a large hotel development and management company. It saw Rifle, where it owns a successful boutique hotel leased to an operator, as a good fit because of the city's efforts to become a leader in sustainability, Fowler said.

The Hampton Inn & Suites is being built on Airport Road at the Rifle exit off Interstate 70. At the front door to the new interchange, the \$10 million to \$12 million hotel is surrounded by commercial development, including an expansion at Grand River Medical Center.

"If you stand on our site, there is construction all around us," Fowler said.

Slated for opening next summer, the Hampton Inn will offer the only hotel suites in Rifle. Catering to business people in the natural resources industry, as well as the occasional

leisure traveler, the four-story structure will have 92 suites and rooms, a small conference room, swimming pool, spa and fitness facility. It will include Hampton Inn & Suites' new "Perfect Mix" lobby with additional seating to enhance social interaction.

Instead of an outdoor detention pond to capture storm water, the 1 3/4-acre site will use a bioswale that will filter storm water, recharge the aquifer and support landscaping. Aardex also is working on a possible solar array for the hotel, whose laundry facility will use ultra-fast-spinning washing machines to cut the time it takes to dry linens, and consequently, save on labor costs, Fowler said.

Rifle's average daily hotel rate is about \$100. The Hampton Inn & Suites will be on par with that rate, yet, "this really will be the nicest product in the market," Fowler said.