

“We basically couldn’t find a dummy model, so we had to build this ourselves,” he said, adding that certain elements of the completed design—which saves between 10 and 20 percent of electricity—were taken from foreign markets.

In addition to the key-card system, the Garden Orchard also features energy efficient light bulbs, carpet made from recycled materials, large windows that pull in an abundance of natural light without absorbing heat, and a menu that features local wines, meats, cheeses, and other sustainably harvested items.

From a development standpoint, the results of the AH&LA survey also match the demand Shane Fowler has seen as principal of design-build firm Aardex LLC.

“We have a number of different [LEED-related] projects in different stages of design and construction,” he said.

One such project is the Best Western Inn and Suites at Dinosaur Ridge in Golden, Colo. Designed to achieve a silver LEED certification, the 86-room hotel will be the first LEED-certified hotel from Best Western when it opens in Fall 2009.

Despite the interest in LEED-certified projects, Fowler said that not every chain is so quick to adopt environmental sustainable designs. “Some have old ways of working and are not so quick to embrace (the LEED process.)”

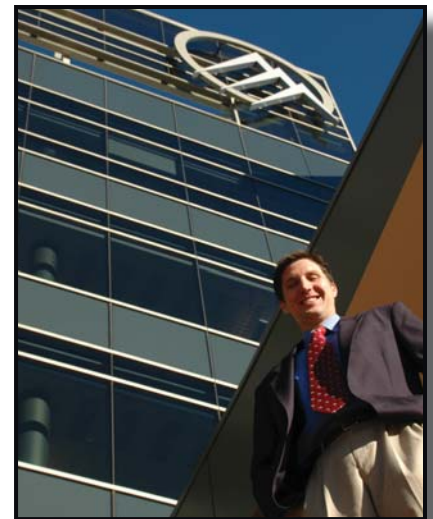
Mühle cited the time-consuming registration process as one source of hesitation. “I think part of the trouble is that there is a lot of research involved, and a lot of general managers don’t have the time to do this.”

Additionally, he said many hoteliers are waiting for the U.S. Green Building Council to develop a LEED program tailored specifically to hotels. Currently, the program comprises a checklist of criteria modeled for buildings in general.

“We’re working very closely with the USGBC on making sure that the specifications and standards that they have for LEED certification are easy for hoteliers to understand,” said Joe McNerney, president and CEO of the AH&LA. “We’re having a look at things that are standards for hotels that aren’t included in office buildings.”

McNerney said two task forces are investigating relevant criteria for both new and existing properties. The project is still in the assessment phase with no date set for completion.

In the meantime, many brands are working side-by-side with the USGBC to establish LEED-certified prototypes that will bypass site-by-site certification, according to McNerney. “It will help move the LEED process forward and get people LEED certified at a faster pace.”



Shane Fowler, principal,
Aardex LLC

