

The Eldorado Hotel and Spa, Santa Fe, NM

Delivering the Spa Experience

In today's ever-competitive hotel and resort market, the addition of a spa can be a significant magnet to attract and retain a loyal guest and consumer base. An attractive, well-designed spa which offers a truly relaxing, tranquil and guest-friendly experience can have a positive impact on a property's occupancy levels, average daily rate and competitive advantage. At the same time, spas can be an extremely viable profit center unto themselves, which is separate and distinct from their impact as an amenity.

During the past several years, the spa business has become increasingly competitive, and although spa development in the hospitality industry is a hot button for developers, it is crucial to be prudent before launching into the design process. Thus, careful consideration should be given to current trends in the industry, how

they affect design and the impact they will ultimately have on potential guest and general consumer use. In the absence of careful planning and attention to existing and emerging trends, savvy guests and local spa patrons will not view your spa as delineative or on the cutting edge. In the end, what is delivered should be "an experience" and, as such, design trends and aesthetics will play a critical role in consumer perception and in how the spa will perform from an operational and financial perspective.

Spa design should begin with a series of discussions and meetings between the owner/developer, architecture and interior firm(s), a spa consultant and other members of the project team. The spa business is extremely management-intensive, and operational discussions should be incorporated into the project design meetings as well; a clear vision as to how the spa will operate and what

Trends dictate spa design and operational components

By Gary Henkin

treatments and services it will offer are necessary to develop an optimal facility design. Trends that affect spa design and operational components include the following:

► **Spas as a business unit:** Increasingly, spas are perceived as individual business units capable of delivering not only benefits to hotel occupancy levels and rates, but also as stand-alone profit centers. This trend impacts not only design issues but financial considerations, including buildout, equipment and operational costs. From a management perspective, the spa director and staff must be equipped to operate these facilities as businesses that continuously promote the spa and strive for a positive bottom line.

► **User connections affect design:** Spas offer more of a social ex-

perience than in the past. Men represent a growing market segment and there are far more opportunities for people to connect with each other. Thus, design might incorporate "spa suites" containing a lounge, treatment areas, in-room yoga channels and equipment, healthy items in mini-bars, spa cuisine, sleep preparation/therapy in-room, steam showers/sauna and fitness equipment. Creative design elements and effective space planning are a must to create spaces that are inviting to men, women and families.

► **Spa treatment menus diversify:** Today, there are more self-service treatments that require such areas as lounges surrounded by a variety of water amenities. Tech-inspired treatments (e.g. hand treatments for "BlackBerry fatigue," spe-

cial neck and upper back massage, cleansing and revitalization of facial areas around the mouth and chin), are more prevalent. Eastern influences are mainstream. Treatments like Ashiatsu massage, Thai massage and bathing rituals such as hammam are more common and here to stay.

► **Multi-generational appeal and "spa-ing" as a group:** A trend toward services and programs that meet the expectations of groups and families will have an ever-growing influence on design elements. Spas are reaching out to children, teenagers and their parents to relieve stress and gain quality time together. Spas are teaching children and teens healthy eating, grooming skills and the importance of living a balanced life. Groups going to spas (families, girlfriends, business associates,

Spa Spectacular

There's no question that today's most elite hotels simply must offer a spa experience to discerning and demanding guests, so it was high time last year for the prestigious Beverly Wilshire hotel, Los Angeles, to create an exquisite spa of its own.

Enter Barry Design Associates, a prominent interior architectural design firm specializing in five-star luxury hotels, spas and restaurants. Senior Designer Stella Abdoulin created a design that centers around a curved water wall that embraces a geode of amethyst crystal, "emitting vibrant energy throughout the spa."

Natural materials are used throughout the facility to create a tranquil Zen-like quality, and minimalist interiors support its calm, peaceful environment.

The \$4-million project carved out 12,000 square feet for the spa from half a wing of guestrooms. "It was difficult working with existing conditions," says Abdoulin. "The ceilings were very low so we improvised by working with light colors on the ceilings, accent lighting and cove lighting to give an illusion of height."



Soft and flattering lighting and a soothing color palette are elements of the Beverly Wilshire hotel's new spa.

Serenity and quiet are imperative in a spa, with traffic flow key to maintaining those qualities. "As a guest, you don't want to hear or see big carts piled with linens rumbling through the corridors, so there was a lot of rerouting doors to accommodate hidden storage areas," says Abdoulin. "It's all about tranquility."

—Patricia Sheehan

A treatment room at the new spa at the Beverly Wilshire hotel, Los Angeles

Lighting Showcase



Silk thread lamps

The Clavius family of lights from Axo Light includes suspension, floor, wall, ceiling and table lamps and features a handworked silk thread lamp shade. Silk creates interesting light effects. Clavius' light is soft and diffused, especially in the tobacco-colored version. It also shines downward, making it ideal positioned above a dining table or as a reading lamp. Clavius is also available in ivory white and black. **Circle 90**

Compact Fluorescent Lamps

The DULUX EL family of self-ballasted medium screw base CFLs are available from Osram Sylvania. DURA-ONE A19 electroless CFL features a long rated life of up to 15,000 hours or 13 years, meaning fewer lamp replacements and lower maintenance costs. With instant brightness and a low starting temperature, the A19 offers unlimited switching cycles and greater light over a wider temperature range. **Circle 92**



Recessed Luminaires

Amerlux Lighting Solutions introduces Cylindrix Trimless Multiples. Amerlux offers the miniature, low wattage metal halide fixtures in its EcoTectural product line. The fixtures are crafted with a flangeless housing with seamless welded corners for a minimal edge detail. A die-cast lamp housing is vented for optimal thermal management. The fixtures are available in one-, two-, three- and four-light configurations. **Circle 91**



Pendant Lighting

W.A.C. Lighting introduces four styles of Quick Connect Pendants. Each pendant style is distinguished by varying shapes and patterns—the results of fusing two layers of art glass. Draco (G715), Fury (G714) and Pyro (G928) feature a pitch-black background with frosted striations etched by hand on amber or red glass sections. Chimera (G716) features six miniature square-shaped insets of optical crystal. **Circle 93**

bridal parties, etc.) is a trend which will continue to influence space allocation and design elements in order to accommodate several people at a time for treatments and/or lounging.

► **MediSpa:** The spa and fitness/wellness fields converge in this relatively new trend. The integration of medical and wellness components with spa services defines this space. Design elements are influenced by the need to care for the client prior

to, during and after their experience or procedure. From dermatologists to plastic surgeons, this partnership between wellness and spa is being driven by consumer demand. The inclusion of the medical spa affects such areas as access and egress, safety, privacy, etc.

► **Sustainable spas:** Renewable and sustainable resources are more evident in the spa world. Bamboo robes and linens, locally available

consumable supplies, water and air purification systems, etc. are now specified. This trend influences TEI (total environmental impact) for construction and design components including building materials and operating supplies. This will become a more prevalent trend in the coming years, substantially affecting spa design.

► **Men-only areas:** There is a growing trend to add men-only

spaces and products, which may include boxing robes, barber services, sports viewing, pool tables, etc.

► **Spa online:** Spa consumers want to book travel, order books and reorder products online. With health-focused chat rooms, information-rich

websites and e-newsletters, spas will transcend their physical spaces to form "virtual communities" focused on healthy spa living and lifestyle.

► **Increased time at the spa:** More guests are seeking more amenities at the spa. This trend impacts space al-

location in allowing for more steam rooms, sauna and showers (general wet areas), pools, relaxation areas, ample locker rooms, etc. Hotel and resort spas will gradually become more luxurious and spacious. This will heavily influence planning and design considerations.

► **Inventive cuisine:** Customization and variety are driving spa cuisine with spas offering a range of diet options to meet guest needs. Spa cafes are being added to create more of a destination feel and ambience.

► **Healthy (anti-aging) treatments, products and rituals:** More spa goers seek healthy aging treatments and products that deliver results. Guests also want personal care programs that can be used at home. This trend influences retail selection, delivery systems and treatment menu development, all of which influence facility design. In addition, there is a trend toward healing rituals which can include water/color therapy, ayurveda massage, shiatsu, beauty and treatment based elements, meditation and labyrinth areas, yoga and Tai Chi spaces and pre- and post-natal treatments.

In summary, as the spa industry has expanded, so too has the diversity and complexity of facility design considerations which are influenced by industry trends. There are numerous issues that should be discussed and debated prior to the initiation of design; one important one is to determine which of these trends will play a part in your planning process. Paying attention to trends and market influences will yield dividends not only in the guest experience but in the spa's financial success. **LH**

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