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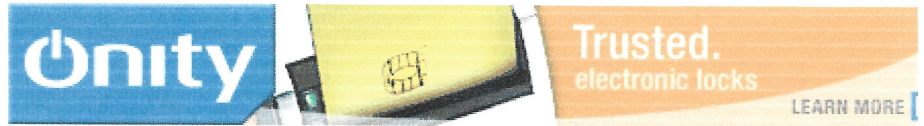
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### Tranquil Chic

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By Bettina Marks



Developer Steve Marx has a vision.

"Imagine an oasis in which you can retreat and become "re-invigorated," where a sense of gentle balance, spirituality and wellness permeates all public areas of the property achieved through atmospheric lighting, soothing scents and tactile comforts, where mind and body can relax without a disconnect from first moment of entry continuing through to the experience in the guest rooms and spa facilities," says Steve Marx, CEO of Lifestyle Hospitality LLC.

Lifestyle Hospitality LLC - Marx's newly formed management and development company- is in the process of making this vision a reality by launching a unique hybrid of two concepts : the 4-diamond "lifestyle hotel product and the spa/wellness/fitness destination experience.

"I want to produce a product which represents a hole in the marketplace," he says. "There is an untapped secondary market in the form of product in smaller cities throughout the North and Southeast with tremendous opportunity which we are targeting. I want to be the first to enter that market."

Steve Marx is an established pioneer in the hotel industry. He developed the boutique/lifestyle concept property, the Monaco, while he was a partner at Kimpton Hotels, a 4-diamond, full service boutique hotel that was the first to do free standing hip restaurant/bars that were smaller and more intimate and separately managed; the first to provide hi-quality linens with 1,000 thread count; and a "vibrantly styled" environment.

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When Marx first arrived in 1993, there were twelve hotels in the gro San Francisco. They were three-diamond boutique hotels that were service, hi-value alternatives to institutional properties. When he left 2000 there were 35, including the boutique branded Monaco's in Portland, which he opened, in Chicago, Denver, Salt Lake City and Vancouver. With his vision, they developed small office buildings, department stores and abandoned old hotels, gutted them and imb them with the Monaco concept.

During his tenure as senior vice president of W Hotels Worldwide fr 2002 to late 2004, Marx assumed responsibility for its overall operat and financial performance. According to Marx, he was hired to solici the brand from a business standpoint, however, he was responsible creating and leading a cutting edge support team that he handpicke covering all disciplines from design, management to restaurateurs t support the twenty worldwide hotels who carried out the lifestyle br vision.

"We amped up the energy level in the lobby with signage, color and styling" he says. The concept was, "aspirational lifestyle, with a provocative sensual overtone." They provided "intimacy kits," and v the first to launch an "away spa" at the Times Square location, a sn urban spa with two to three treatment rooms that provided guests v massages, manicures/pedicures, and facials. They sold items that in the rooms, including bedside lamps, furniture, robes, slippers, ar chairs and developed a retail catalogue and website from the brand these products. In addition, Marx spearheaded the development of residential and resort W properties and at this time there are curre development deals for new properties in the works.

The "tranquil chic concept," of Lifestyle Hospitality, states Marx, "effortlessly blends affordability, stylish accommodations, spa and wellness with hip food and beverage and entertainment options, all within popular secondary markets; the smaller cities in the North ar Southeast."

This "lifestyle experience" would also include one on one life coach available for guests, yoga and meditation classes, noted wellness authors as guest speakers on a daily basis, separate men's relaxat and spa facilities in addition to the women's spa facilities along with combined facility.

"I chose to partner in my first entrepreneurial endeavor with an experienced professional in the spa/leisure industry whose compar currently oversees approximately 90 spa centers which are operati successfully throughout the country. Gary Henkin, is the president ; founder of WTS International, based in Silver Spring, MD, a spa/lei development and management company with 30 years of experien the industry. His track record and management and implementatio capabilities provide for a logical partnership."

The wellness/spa facilities will be inclusive in the costs of a stay at hotel. "Lifestyle Hospitality's properties will cost somewhat above the costs of a full service Marriott," according to Marx, "but less than the Five Star Ritz Carlton or a Four Seasons."

Marx hopes to make the facilities equally attractive to day spa visitors as a source of further revenue within the local communities. He believes that the rejuvenating wellness/spa packages which will include massages, full body treatments, steamrooms, saunas, manicures, pedicures, and facials, among other treatments will appeal to residents of the neighboring suburban communities.

Lifestyle Hospitality LLC, located in Riverside, CT, already has five different joint venture projects in various stages of development in 11 markets, mostly in the secondary markets throughout the Northeast and Southeast.

These smaller cities including Savannah, GA, Chattanooga, TN, Charleston, SC, Providence, Sarasota, FL, Raleigh/Durham, NC and Baltimore are enjoying rapid growth, as educated and sophisticated people are relocating from the primary markets in the Northeast due to rising real estate costs and high taxes.

"In Chattanooga, TN, for example," says Marx, "We have found an affluent society that is rapidly becoming more cosmopolitan with old historic buildings surrounded by business districts ripe for innovative construction and renovation with growing arts and cultural communities."

According to Marx, "There's already been positive reaction on the part of local government and historical preservation societies to our proposal to rebuild, often times, gutting an entire building while preserving its historic exterior façade to facilitate their new total concept."

"Lifestyle Hospitality LLC is pairing with existing companies, and may lease a restaurant and/or bar at the property, however, everything is centrally managed under the umbrella of our bonafide management company," he says.

A couple of examples, according to Marx, "A property owner who wants to enhance, reposition, expand, add a spa, etc contributes the property and we bring in the improvement equity, and ultimately manage the property as a managing partner."

"We would not actively seek pure management contracts of existing properties, without the ability to reposition it to our "brand" standards and have some equity participation in the deal; however, that could happen under certain circumstances, based on the business considerations."

According to Marx, "Lifestyle Hospitality LLC is one of the first of its

to merge the two industries, following only the lead of W who had b Bliss. We are incorporating the wellness concept throughout the property, not as a separate entity."

With wellness, peace, yoga and meditation on their minds, plans ar the works for potential spa branded products of a holistic nature for retail boutiques which would also be available in all the guest room yoga and meditation classes, screening rooms for conventional anc educational films and adult game rooms with pool tables, bars, and electronic games.

Each individual hotel property will be unique, and at this time, Marx "I'm leaning towards not having a "brand" to market, but, preferring keep each property individualized and specialized, as the communi they will serve."

Marx is a high energy, hi-concept baby boomer, himself, who is wo harder than ever as a new business owner. He is striving to define category of lodging in the travel market.

At this time, Lifestyle Hospitality has not yet purchased or leased re estate to either re-develop or build upon.

According to Marx, who was recently on site surveying a potential j venture opportunity in Ft. Worth, TX, "The first property is schedule open in late 2006 or early 2007," he says, refusing to disclose its e: location. He hopes to follow with at least three openings per year, thereafter.



*Bettina Marks is associate editor of Hotel Interactive. She has written extensively for a variety of publications including Newsday and th Long Island Press. She has also worked as a writer/producer for interactive and broadcast media.*

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