

# FACILITY

# EXECUTIVE®

*Creating Intelligent Buildings*

AUGUST 2023 - FACILITYEXECUTIVE.COM



## THE **AI** REVOLUTION

The rise in artificial intelligence systems has created new opportunities, and presented new risks, for facility management.

Page 14

### PLUS:

OT Security Risk Management 8

Long Range Infrastructure Planning 24

Mobile CMMS 38

# A Luxurious Transformation

The Terrace Bay Hotel has undergone several renovations to create a high-end guest experience.

Compiled by Facility Executive

Jen and Jarred Drown knew when they purchased the Terrace Bay Hotel, there would be a lot of work involved to create the luxury experience they envisioned.

The couple, who met in hospitality school, always possessed an entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to own their own space, so they started looking into properties across the country. They discovered a 24-room motel near the Great Lakes in Michigan, and after six years, decided to sell it to purchase the nearby Terrace Bay Hotel.

Located on the beautiful coast of Lake Michigan, and the only Lake Michigan-front property in the area, the Drowns quickly realized its potential. The almost 100-year-old building hadn't been meaningfully updated since the 80s, and it was very outdated.

"That's one of the reasons we were able to afford it and able to get into it," says Jarred Drown. "We knew we were buying a project and we've been working on it ever since."

## An Elevated Dining Experience

Once the Drowns acquired the hotel, their first priority was to tackle the restaurant space.

"We wanted to create a more modern atmosphere and ambiance," says Jarred. "What we bought was more of a typical hotel restaurant, which was not used very much. It was used more as banquet space, and it was open and had a low staffing model. It was right on the lake, and it was part of our pitch to the bank when we bought it and secured financing that we can make this a destination restaurant for the area, and make that the focus—almost secondary to the fact that it's in a hotel.

"When we're [fully booked], lots of hotel guests come [to the restaurant], but over the course of the year 80 percent of our business is people from the local area that come in," he adds.



The first year and a half in, Jarred and Jen focused on renovating the restaurant. Currently, they're working to enhance the bar space and are building a cocktail lounge as an add-on to the existing space.

## A Facility Refresh

Aside from working on the restaurant, Jarred and Jen have updated rooms, corridors, banquet spaces, and more to invoke a higher-end luxury feel.

"The room renovations happened a little bit at a time—we knocked out like 15-20 each year. It took us four years to do the existing 61 rooms," says Jarred.

One way Terrace Bay Hotel has worked to create a more luxurious space is by installing ceiling tiles from Ceilume, to give the space an elevated and unique-looking feel. Drown found Ceilume's thermoformed, three-dimensional ceiling products through extensive searching online. They selected white Madison style, a coffer pattern with deep relief, and added borders of white Cambridge tiles, a complementary square pattern with less relief.

"Our design across the whole hotel is modern, but isn't what I would call minimalist," says Jarred. "We like a lot of textures. I think a lot of modern design has minimalism front and center, which can be bland and boring if it's not done well.

"The ceiling is something that gets forgotten and overlooked, and we really wanted something to make the ceiling a stand-out feature," he continues. "Even in areas where there aren't drop ceilings, we've added them because we feel like it adds so much to the look and feel of the room. You may not be staring at the ceiling, but it gives you that



An inside view of the living room in the Terrace Bay Hotel's Lake View King Suite.

perception of when you walk in, you feel like everything is just a little bit more high-end, because that's an added touch you may not even notice or look at." Adding special touches, such as the Ceilume ceiling tiles, to the design has already done wonders for the space.

Today, all 61 original rooms have been renovated, and the Drowns are working on building 56 more. Out of these new rooms, 48 will face the lake. This exciting building addition will not only offer more access to lakefront rooms, but it will allow the hotel to accommodate larger parties for conferences or weddings. The Drowns are hoping to open the new rooms on Memorial Day weekend next summer.

After several redesign and renovation processes, the Drowns have taken what they've learned from their initial projects and applied those lessons to their future ones.

"When you've only got a quarter of your rooms done, you can set expectations higher than they should be when people show up and they don't get one of the renovated rooms," says Jarred. "So, it was important to have a plan in [how we approached our marketing strategy.]"

During the renovation process, it can be a challenge to manage guest expectations. For the Drowns, they've done their best to keep operations running as smoothly as possible.

"From the beginning, we've taken care of people. For the most part, people are pretty understanding," says Jarred. "You're putting money into the place and you're trying to



The Terrace Bay Hotel is in the process of adding 56 more rooms to its existing structure.

improve it for the future. A lot of guests are honestly excited about it."

### A Higher-End Experience For All

The Drowns will continue investing in the hotel to create a five-star experience for their guests. There are a lot of quaint, but dated properties, in the surrounding area, and only a few high-end luxury places. Being one of those few luxury spaces is what the Drowns envision for the future.

"It will take time and money to get there, but our goal ten years down the road is to be a higher-end luxury facility," says Jarred. "We're slowly working toward providing that five-star experience."

Jarred believes that they have a way to go, but that they are making progress to take their high-end facility to the next level. For other facility executives in the hospitality space embarking on similar goals, Jarred believes its important to not be afraid to

invest, even in a full-service facility. "It's fun to invest in front of house items, like the atmosphere, restaurant, etc., but we spent a ton of money on the back of the house, just giving us the ability to [have] larger capacity."

He also suggests focusing on marketing. "Create a brand and have a plan. We've done paid promotion on Instagram, Facebook and Tik Tok. You have to deliver when [guests arrive], but having a brand and investing in marketing can really help."

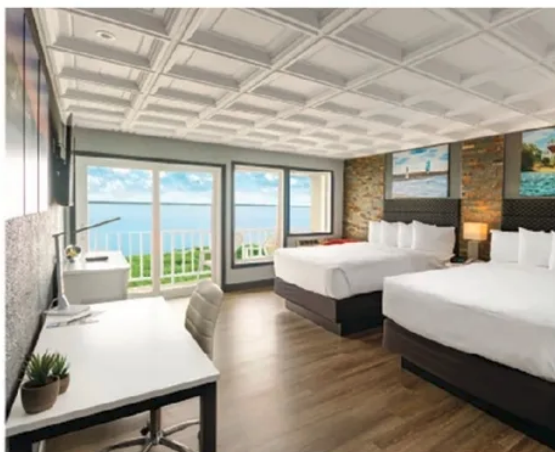
In addition to the big projects, on the day-to-day, the Drowns are focused on keeping their team and hotel guests happy.

"As far as the operations are concerned, we've really focused on things that are going to reduce turnover, keep people happy, keep people here long-term," says Jarred. "We do pay well, but we also find that pay is not the only thing; people need to enjoy where they work. They're at work 8-, 9-, 10-hours a day, and so we create an atmosphere that's rewarding and ready to involve everyone in our goals."

"You have to have standards, and make sure that everyone is doing everything correctly, but you're not going to have happy guests or customers if you don't have happy team members," he adds. "We really focus on that, and consider that to be one of the secrets to our success. And, we make sure everyone is working toward the same goal for the future—to make the Terrace Bay Hotel a higher-end spot". ■

*Do you have a comment? Share your thoughts in the Comments section of the online version of this article at FacilityExecutive.com. Or send an e-mail to the Editor at jen@groupc.com.*

PHOTOS: TERRACE BAY HOTEL



This before and after image shows the significant updates the Drowns have made to create a higher-end experience for visitors.