

THE WATERFRONT HOTEL'S EMERGENCE IN-HOUSE LAUNDRY KEY TO COST CONTROL & QUALITY



OCTOBER 2013 • By Haley Jorgensen

An eclectic investor group and the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UWO) Foundation recently combined interests to rejuvenate a non-functioning hotel property situated along the banks of the Fox River, in Oshkosh, Wis. Located near the heart of the city's historic district, the new Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel & Convention Center (The Waterfront) offers 176 rooms, 5,000-square-feet of function space, 18,000-square-feet of convention space, and the Ground Round at River's Edge restaurant. It also harnesses an on-premise laundry capable of processing 2,400 pounds of laundry in a single eight-hour shift.



A Multipurpose Property

Within the next three years, UWO plans to use The Waterfront as a hands-on classroom for students involved in its soon-to-debut hospitality program. Campus is just blocks away. Additionally, The Waterfront serves the needs of area visitors, groups and business guests seeking upscale meeting and convention space, posh rooms, craved amenities, an on-premise restaurant and bar, and the scenic river walk just outside.

Emerging from the Vision of Many

The Waterfront — requiring \$13 million in renovations — materialized thanks to UWO vision, private investors Rich Batley and John

Pfefferle, dozens of shareholders, traditional financing, and city support in the form of \$3 million in Tax Increment Financing (TIF), according to General Manager Dan Schetter. The property, which had operated under many hotel brands since the 1980s, was non-functioning prior to its rebirth in May 2013. It is among 25 North American hotels touting the BEST WESTERN PREMIER brand.

In-House Laundry Key to Quality

Rather than outsource its laundry, risking problems with timely delivery and quality control, The Waterfront handles everything in-house. It tackles food and beverage skirting, tablecloths and napkins; sheets, pillowcases and duvets; towels, bathmats and robes; pillows, comforters and blankets; and rags, mops and rugs.

“My experience with outsourcing laundry is that it becomes a struggle,” says Schetter. “You don’t always get your linens returned when you need them.”

The laundry features three 90-pound capacity Continental soft-mount E-Series Washer-Extractors and a 120-pound capacity dryer. Highly automated, all towels, bathmats and blankets are automatically folded using a GI FT-LITE drywork folder; while sheets, pillowcases and tablecloths are processed using a GI 5-in-One Compact Ironing System. The Compact — a feeder, ironer, folder, stacker and accumulator — processes up to 82-feet-of-linen per minute.

Housekeeping Manager Misty Braun, who began her career in a hotel laundry



2500 State Road 44 • Oshkosh, WI 54904
920-231-8222 • Fax 920-231-4666
800-256-1073 • girbauindustrial.com



at age 15, maintains the laundry facility delivers unsurpassed productivity amped by automation and efficiency. “I came from another property with 95 rooms,” says Braun. “When it was sold out, it took three, eight-hour shifts and three operators per shift just to get the towels and linens done. Laundry would spill over from Sunday to Monday. Here, when we are sold out, we have five operators on for eight hours. Yet, we have triple the rooms and process food and beverage items in addition to regular laundry,” she says. “We are saving a lot on labor as a result of the automation.”

Equipment Working in Concert

Key to cleanliness and production are The Waterfront’s E-Series Washer-Extractors. The washers are highly programmable to properly clean a variety of items, feature a soft-mount design for simple installation, and reach extract speeds of up to 381 G-force. Laundry staff simply select a program number to match the item type — food and beverage linens, towels, sheets, etc. — and press start. The washer automatically combines the correct chemicals, water temperatures and levels, mechanical action and baths to ensure high-quality results.

Unlike hard-mount washers, which must be bolted to a reinforced concrete foundation, soft-mount washers slide into place without bolts. This simplifies installation and resulting costs. Additionally, E-Series soft-mount washers reach considerably higher extract speeds when compared with hard-mount washers, and as a result, remove significantly more water from every load. This cuts resulting dry time by up to 50 percent, according to GI National Sales Manager Seth Willer,

who worked closely with The Waterfront to design and outfit the laundry. “This catapults productivity,” he says.

The high-extract means terry items dry more quickly; sheets and tablecloths bypass drying altogether. A 90-pound load of towels takes just 50 minutes to wash, according to Braun. Meanwhile, the Compact feeds, irons, folds and stacks more than 120 sheets per hour — straight from the washer.

Washer to Dryer to Folder — Processing Drywork

Once dried, terry items and blankets are fed into the FT-LITE folder. The FT-LITE folds small- and large-sized items and requires one operator. It is configured with an automatic stacker, as well, so like items are quickly folded and stacked with minimal effort.

“If we are sold out on Saturday night, we can fold 3,000 towels per day in one shift,” says Braun. “We perform the final fold on our pool towels by rolling them. Bath towels come out with a long fold and we perform the third fold.”

Washer to Compact — Processing Flatwork

Superior productivity flows out of the laundry’s Compact Ironer, as well. All flatwork items — sheets, tablecloths, table skirting and pillowcases — are fed directly from the washer into the Compact, according to Braun. The nice thing about the Compact is it takes on items of different dimensions, she says. It is configurable for one, two or four working lanes, with one lane for sheets, two for table linens and four for small items. It delivers up to three cross folds in one lane. Additionally, small items run through multiple lanes can by-pass

folding. The Compact control features 20 pre-set and 20 customizable programs.

“We normally use one operator on the Compact. That person attaches items using clips, and the Compact spreads, feed, irons, folds and stacks them,” she says. The laundry can easily process 960 sheets in an eight-hour day.

Once complete, laundry is stocked on each floor of the hotel for housekeepers. It’s a smooth process — one that will no doubt improve further as management gains experience with the new laundry operation, according to Schetter.

The Waterfront’s laundry is equipped to handle the hotel’s growing sales volume, while ensuring a high-quality product for hotel guests. “It allows us more control over linen inventory and quality — and over time — will save us significantly in outside vendor costs,” maintains Schetter. “It also allows us to schedule labor based on our business demands.”

And, like all the other areas of the hotel, the laundry will serve as a hands-on learning area — showing UWO hospitality students how laundry productivity and quality impact overall hotel operations and profits.

To discover more about The Waterfront, visit oshkoshwaterfronthotel.com, or call 855-230-1900.

To find out more about Continental and GI laundry equipment, visit cgilaundry.com and girbauindustrial.com, respectively, or call 800-256-1073.

“[OUR LAUNDRY EQUIPMENT] ALLOWS US MORE CONTROL OVER LINEN INVENTORY AND QUALITY — AND OVER TIME — WILL SAVE US SIGNIFICANTLY IN OUTSIDE VENDOR COSTS”

— General Manager, Dan Schetter