



How to Execute a Brand Hotel, while Meeting your Unique Needs

An inside look with Becker Morgan Group Principal Architect and hospitality practice area leader Jack Mumford III, AIA, Architect Dave Botscheller, AIA, and Interior Designer Louise Miller, NCIDQ.

Understanding the process

As you embark As you embark on the development of a branded hotel, you should understand key milestones related to the design and development of your venture. Prior to meeting with an architect, you should have a market study completed to decide the brand and product that will best fit your goals. Once you have the list narrowed down, an architect can help you conduct an architectural feasibility study to decide which product is best suited for your site.

During the feasibility study, your team will look at site plans, parking, and room layouts the site can accommodate and fit within the brand standards. If the project is considered workable, these

initial studies can be submitted to the brand for a preliminary review and approval of the concept. This is the first of many approvals you will receive from the brand. Once the formal design process begins, your architect and interior design team will work closely with the brand. Typically, there are design submissions and approvals at 30%/50%/75%/100% completion points.

When working with a challenging site, it is crucial to have a team that can not only implement brand standards but also meets the project's unique needs. Collaboration and organization are paramount to a successful project.

The prototype just won't work!

Prototypes are designed for an ideal site, but the reality is, that those are exceedingly rare. But do not worry, collaborating with an architect who can meet brand standards and local codes will allow your team to find the right solutions for your unique needs. Most areas of customization fall under four key categories: site, local code regulations, local aesthetics, and guest amenities.

Site

When your design team studies the site, wetlands and stormwater management are always major concerns. Based on the existing constraints, your design team may recommend an untraditional layout or reorienting the site plan to take advantage of views or shield the building from undesirable noise or eyesores. Distinctive solutions often take the approval of local and state agencies and require a team who knows how to navigate the process and understands the local politics.

Parking is also a key consideration during site design. Often the number of rooms a hotel can accommodate is dictated by parking restraints. The national average is one space per hotel room; however, local regulations may impact this number. Collaborating with a team who can find creative solutions to parking is imperative for smaller sites. Solutions may include maximizing the area available for parking by implementing pervious pavement and underground stormwater systems, introducing an above or below-grade parking structure, or utilizing stacked/tandem parking spaces and compact parking spaces, although this may require special code exceptions or approvals.



Local Customizations

Unique and Local Elements are becoming increasingly popular amongst branded hotels. It is important to have an interior designer who is familiar with brand design standards to implement customizations effectively. An understanding of what is readily approved and how to combine elements to create a unique look and feel saves developers time and money. Not to mention, these designers know what is likely to be approved outside of the standards.

Aesthetic is as important as cost and durability. Materials with timeless properties that will not need to be replaced often will provide cost-effective solutions. Soft goods, although replaced more often, add flair or pops of color to the design, piquing guests' interest. Sticking a balance between long-lasting durable materials and replaceable soft goods will keep the hotel modern with low maintenance costs.

Utilizing finishes that are suitable for the local environment is a way design is tailored to the project. For example, tile and hard surfaces in hallways perform better in coastal environments where sand is prevalent amongst guests. Bike and beach equipment storage should also be considered in coastal settings.

Resort area hotels are becoming popular wedding venues with special amenity areas programmed into the design to enhance the stay of wedding guests at the hotel. Ballrooms and meeting spaces have become multi-function spaces that are used for many diverse types of activities. Many hotels also include on-site restaurants, bars, and retail shops to create an all-inclusive guest experience.

Guests should feel like the hotel is an extension of their destinations. Your interior designer should spend time learning the local geography to choose color, artwork, and textures that complement the area.



This owner wanted to offer their guests a unique bar space. The interior design team created a custom design that incorporated elements that are reminiscent of the coastal region. Sea grass is a part of the panels behind the bar, the flooring resembles weather wood, the light fixture and metal ceiling panels look like water bubbles, and at night the bar glows with a blue hue resembling crystal blue water.



This project was met with tight local height restrictions, paired with ceiling minimums from the brand, and the developer needed a third floor to maximize their investment. The design team worked in tandem with the brand for a six-inch variance per floor to bring the design into local height restrictions.

Code Regulations

Local code regulations can have a significant impact on the design of a hotel. Common constraints include height restrictions, local architectural guidelines, and environmental regulations such as Brownfields programs. Projects can also be limited by maximum lot coverage or floor area ratios, shadow projections, and airport or helicopter flight paths set by the FAA. Some local codes supply incentives for creating mixed-use projects and employee housing. During design, your architect will need to mesh brand standards with local regulations while simultaneously meeting project goals.