



CASE STUDY

Inn at Laurel Point

INN AT LAUREL POINT'S FIVE GREEN KEY RATING EMBEDS SUSTAINABILITY
IN HOTEL POLICIES AND PRACTICES; LETS THE STEWARDSHIP LEGACY OF
LATE OWNERS LIVE ON



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Background

Inn at Laurel Point

www.laurelpoint.com

Ocean-side, architecturally stunning hotel and conference centre with Japanese gardens in Victoria, British Columbia; owned by a trust and operated as a for-profit social enterprise.

The Inn at Laurel Point is a 196-room, architecturally-striking hotel located on a beautiful vantage point on Victoria, British Columbia's inner harbour. Purchased as a Delta Hotel by owners Paul and Artie Arsens in 1980, the Inn continues to be independently owned and operated as a for-profit social enterprise since 2008. The sole owner of the Inn is a local trust set up by Artie, who was predeceased by Paul in 1997, before she passed away. Driven by the Arsens' social mission to maintain a great hotel that benefits the local community, the Inn invests profits, first into the hotel, then staff, then the hotel's Vancouver Island community, supporting local charities and purchasing carbon offsets on the Island that have enabled the Inn to be carbon neutral since 2009.





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The Challenges

- **Extending and embedding the stewardship legacy of the original owners beyond senior management to staff at all levels, including new hires**
- **Identifying hotel-specific solutions for sustainability improvements for both aging hotel infrastructure and new renovations**

Though the Trust represented the Arsens' legacy value of stewardship for hotel assets and the environment, it wasn't the same as having passionate and engaged owners on-site every day embodying the behaviours and values they held dear. The Inn's management team wanted to elevate and formalize the Arsens' mission to embed it in the hotel's culture and expand efforts to advance the late owners' desire for careful and responsible management of the Inn and its surroundings.

Management recognized that to continue making progress towards the Arsens' vision, they needed a framework to identify specific opportunities to build on their social agenda and to reduce key metrics, including waste, energy and water use, to reduce their carbon footprint; goals that were especially challenging, given the age of the Inn's original infrastructure built in the 1970s.



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The Solution

The Hotel Association of Canada's **Green Key Global Eco-Rating** certification program

It was around the time that Artie created the Trust that the Inn completed their first Green Key Global (GKG) Eco-Rating assessment and earned a 4 Green Key rating. Laurel Point's Marketing Manager, Louise Higgins, recalls the Inn's decision to join GKG "well before it became fashionable to be environmentally conscious." "It seemed like the next logical step," Higgins said. "When we first started, it was really the only trustworthy program in the market. We were impressed with the thoroughness of the evaluation, lending credibility to our hard work. Additionally, it is a well-recognized program that our guests understand and that's of course important to us, too."

By 2013, little had changed in the landscape of green certification system options when the Inn paired up with the corporate sustainability management firm, Synergy, to hold them accountable as their "measuring stick" for sustainability initiatives. Synergy looked at a number of different certification options, but according to Kayli Anderson, Managing Partner at Synergy, many are not a good fit for hotels. "Green Key Global is a certification system specifically for hotels," Anderson said, "and the structure, tools, templates and metrics are a match for the Inn's values."

The Inn completed their most recent reassessment in 2017. As GKG program criteria had been updated since the last assessment, it took Anderson about 20 hours over a two to three month period to complete the full site visit, gather the supporting documentation and develop the policies necessary for re-evaluation.





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The Results

“Green Key Global is a certification system specifically for hotels, and the structure, tools, templates and metrics are a match for the Inn’s values.”

Kayli Anderson
Managing Partner
Synergy

Identified New Opportunities and Solutions for Stewardship

Using GKG’s hotel-specific checklists and suggestions, Anderson developed an action plan for the Inn that increased the hotel’s rating from 4 to 5 Green Keys, the highest a hotel can achieve in the Eco-Rating Program. “Everyone could figure out the basics – like LED lighting and low flush toilets – these are standard for certification systems,” said Anderson, “But Green Key Global helped identify hotel-specific initiatives we needed to work on, including for meetings.”

Brooke Harris, Director of Sales at Laurel Point, pointed to the thoroughness of the GKG assessment and wealth of resources available on their website, which helped the Inn have a better understanding of possible options to improve their systems. “They have great metrics to work with, for example, on air quality and land use, and suggestions for sustainable practices,” she said.

Now implementing the action plan, the Inn’s Green Team is tackling priority areas in a step-wise way through “focus months” to reduce waste, water, paper and energy consumption, and they plan to engage guests and the broader community in an Earth month celebration. Action plan priorities are also core aspects being considered in decisions about ongoing hotel renovations.

Embedded Sustainability in the Corporate Culture

The Inn used GKG’s templates and models for hotel sustainability policies and training procedures to update Laurel Point’s documentation, which received senior management approval in the form of a signed declaration. “We had talked about sustainability initiatives before, and brought many forward,” said Anderson, “but sustainability was not baked into the Inn’s documents.”

Moving beyond a paper exercise to implementation in practise, the policies, procedures and expectations were communicated to staff at meetings, including training sessions to onboard new employees. “It created a small shift in the mindset at the Inn,” said Anderson. “Communicating our commitments in this way gave staff members like bellmen and colleagues in food and beverage services, the tools and confidence to act on sustainability initiatives in their jobs.”



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The Results

“The more people you have on staff that believe in this stuff, the more you can push the envelope on sustainability.”

Brooke Harris
Director of Sales
Inn at Laurel Point

Garnered Internal Support and External Enthusiasts

Appreciation of GKG brand recognition among – and cachet with – clients made it easy for senior management to lend their backing to sustainability initiatives at Laurel Point; especially those that would elevate their rating. “The Keys are recognized,” said Harris, “and that’s really big. Meeting planners are familiar with Green Key Global, and corporate organizers see it at other properties.”

So when it came time for reassessment, senior management clearly recognized the incremental value a 5 Green Key Rating would bring to the Inn. “It was easier to get approval for initiatives like the Green Team because of the recognition the Inn would get for it through a higher Green Key rating,” said Anderson. “Anything that required more effort – if it was related to achieving the 5 Key rating – was pushed through.”

Guests appreciated and recognized the Inn’s efforts, too. “People love what we’re doing,” said Harris. “When they hear about all the initiatives we’re doing, it really sets us apart from the competition and has moved business our way. The 5 Green Keys puts us at the upper echelon of the standard.”

Attracted and Retained Top Talent

Recognition of Laurel Point’s commitment to stewardship and sustainability represented by their 5 Green Key rating extends to staff and potential future employees, allowing the Inn to attract and retain top talent in an industry where there can be high turnover. For Harris, it comes back to embedding sustainability in the hotel’s policies and procedures. “Once we did,” she said, “it was a little shining light: new hires started seeing our commitment to sustainability and it became more tangible.”

Harris recalled how two recent hires indicated that the Inn’s core values, commitment to reducing their carbon footprint and Green Key Rating were important factors that prompted them to apply for work at Laurel Point. Hiring people that are passionate about the Inn’s corporate values speaks to creating a workplace of choice, and works to the advantage the hotel, too. “The more people you have on staff that believe in this stuff,” said Harris, “the more you can push the envelope on sustainability.”

