



A Praire Retreat

A Saskatoon institution gets a warm and welcome overhaul

By Alia Akkam
Photography by Artistic Impressions Photography

Winters in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan's largest city, are brutally long and frigid, dominated by below-zero temperatures. So, when Vancouver-based Hager Design International overhauled the public spaces of the 257-room Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre, instilling warmth was essential. Walnut, for example, was embraced in a number of components, from cladding to millwork to the bookcases starring in the business center. Complemented by lush carpeting, bronze accents, and dramatic, full-height draperies, the property has a decidedly residential vibe, with guests settling into the lobby with coffee from the "Bean There" Café or taking conference breaks in the community kitchen.

It was equally important, says founder and principal Doris Hager, "that the finishes complement the existing site's architecture and history." Since opening in 1982, the hotel has been an institution, and such touches as midcentury graphics and zippy plaids evoke that sense



Top: In the lobby, walnut components, lush full-length draperies, and sunshine give the large space a bright, yet cozy feel. Above: Geometric shapes, like river rocks, are influenced by the hotel's atrium and indoor botanical garden.



www.hagerinc.com;
www.saskatooninn.com

Geometric additions lend fluidity throughout the space, like the hexagonal carpet pattern with a floral motif (above) and the herringbone pattern at reception (right).

of timelessness. "Gray tiles give the space a fresh, contemporary feel and contrast against the rich wood, and splashes of sunshine yellow are used on the elevator surround and in the carpets throughout," Hager points out. Accentuating existing volumes was key to her design narrative, so she added vertical elements like the lobby fireplace, large mirrors, and wood-paneled door surrounds.

An atrium, complete with indoor botanical garden, has long defined the Saskatoon Inn's architecture. Instead of removing it, Hager opted to give it a sophisticated update, weaving a "modern vernacular of herringbone patterns and hexagon shapes to pair with the river rock found throughout the meandering space," she explains. "This original feature influenced the selection of the carpet, hexagonal with a floral motif, and it was the perfect complement to the river rock jungle. Inspired by the carpet, geometry was drawn into other areas to create fluidity." To maintain cohesion with the atrium, large, illuminated collections of hexagons were installed on the pre-function area walls, infusing a once-dark place with much-needed light while bringing visual interest to the mezzanine level.

This design scheme, combined with glamorous, sparkly lighting and a slate of textures "brings the hotel into the 21st century in a welcoming and inclusive way that reflects the perseverance of the people of Saskatoon," says Hager. Amid those frozen Canadian climes, consider it a tropical prairie retreat. ■■■



Owner: Temple Hotels
Management Company and Purchasing Firm: Atlicic Hotels
Interior Design Firm: Hager Design International
Contractor: Jemlor Construction
Carpet: Desso Carpets, Masland, and Aqua Hospitality Carpets
Casegoods and Furniture: Nostra Millwork and Credible Upholstery
Fabrics: Robert Allen
Floor Tile: Stonetile and C+S Tile
Lighting: SLS Lighting, Y-Lighting, Kuzco Lighting, and Tai Pan Lighting
Wall Tile: Ames Tile Stone Tile, Daltile, and C+S Tile
Wallcovering: Levey Wallcovering, Vibe Hospitality, Metro, and Crown Wallpaper & Fabrics