

MINNEAPOLIS

Radisson shows off new look in model room at its Red hotel in Minneapolis

Downtown Minneapolis hotel has a model set up for guests to critique.

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A model guest room has been built in unused space in the Radisson Red in Minneapolis.

There's a new suite at the Radisson Red in downtown Minneapolis that could be enticing to those who like open-concept design. There are no doors and no windows, and the exposed concrete ceiling sits high above the king-size bed.

The space isn't really a guest room at all but a model for the newly redesigned Radisson hotels. The mock room was built inside unfinished space on the first floor of the Radisson Red.

Parent company Radisson Hotel Group, which was renamed earlier this year after its flagship Radisson hotel brand, is in the midst of a major \$200 million repositioning that includes redesigning the rooms and lobbies at its Radissons.

The model room is a tool executives are using so hotel owners, designers and vendors can walk through the space and provide feedback on the look and feel, practicality and other design elements.

"Unless you build the room and people can really touch it and feel it, something is missing," said Phil Malcolm, vice president of technical services at Radisson Hotel Group.

While there are more than 200 Radisson hotels in the world that are operating or in development (most in the Americas), many of the existing hotels lack a consistent design. A lobby at a Radisson in California may look completely different from a Radisson in Texas, Malcolm said.

"We have a strong presence in North America, but it kind of got to the point where we wanted to bring about consistency," he said. "Radisson didn't have a design position."

The new look centers on a simple Scandinavian aesthetic with natural tones and materials, which hotel leaders hope will be more timeless. The warm look carries over into the lobbies with layered textures and soft colors.

The muted look is unlike its youth-minded Radisson Red rooms that have bright and flashy murals and colorful furniture. That was on purpose. Designers have to think "the design is great today [but] will it last tomorrow?" since hotels are typically only redone every 10 years or so, Malcolm said.

Radisson tends to skew to an older and more-sophisticated traveler, but leaders hope the modern redesign will help it appeal to a younger demographic, said Ben Gardeen, a spokesman for Radisson Hotel Group.

"The idea with these new designs is to open it up," he said. Firms DLR, HOK and Graven helped work on the designs.

The 330-square-foot room was built in the Twin Cities, the home of Radisson Hospitality Inc., the Minnetonka-based half of Radisson Hotel Groups which used to be known as Carlson Hotels. In April, it debuted at Radisson Hotel Group's business conference in Orlando before it was brought back to Minnesota. The room is set up in 7,800 square feet of space on the first floor of the Radisson Red. The hotel hopes to eventually lease the space to a retailer.

Having a physical room allows people to point out flaws that would be harder to spot in a drawing, like that the base of a lamp doesn't leave enough room for other items on a nightstand or a type of rug could become a tripping hazard or cleaning nightmare, Malcolm said.

Radisson executives are continuing to receive feedback about the room and are still making adjustments. The first hotels to feature the new designs likely will be those owned and managed by Radisson Hotel Group itself.

Earlier this year, Radisson executives estimated that the company would reduce the number of core Radisson hotels by about 10 percent as it evaluates its hotel portfolio. The hotels remaining will eventually be renovated.

The space in Radisson Red may also get used for other model rooms for Radisson Hotel Group brands such as Park Inn by Radisson Hotels as well as Radisson Red.

"The plan is to make this a showcase," Gardeen said.