

HotelRED Brings Boutique to Madison, WI

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Mike Erikson is getting his feet wet in the lodging industry with HotelRED, a 48-room boutique hotel in Madison, WI. Built across the street from across from Camp Randall Stadium on the University of Wisconsin campus, the hotel has a modern, almost minimalist design. The name, and its accent color, reflect university spirit.

Owner Erikson's involvement started after the HotelRED project stalled with the economy in 2008. It's the real estate developer's first hotel project, one he chose because of his family ties to the university town.

"In a nutshell we hated to see such a good idea go to waste," he says. "The idea behind it was there. The architecture was there. We came in and finished the project from the interior design to the operation to the brand and the identity. Before HotelRED there wasn't a boutique hotel in Madison with the luxury modern design like we've tried to create."

General Manager Jason Ilstrup says the city was more than ready for a boutique property. "Madison is one of the most sophisticated and highly educated cities in the Midwest," he says. "It's a city that's dynamic and cutting edge with all kinds of biotech and high-tech industries growing up."

"We're trying to do something different in the market. It's filled with big-box chain hotels. There aren't many facilities that are unique to Madison," he says.

As a new property, the hotel takes advantage of the newest energy efficiencies available in heating and cooling systems. "Being a new build, we have an advantage," says Ilstrup of the hotel that opened last summer. "Having a lot of windows also cuts down on energy costs."

The restaurant follows the go-local trend. "We get everything as close to Madison as we can," says Chef John Bauer. "We source from 100 farmers. They're making things available in Madison that we used to be able only to find elsewhere. As the seasons go by we change our menus accordingly. Winter can put a damper on produce."

Craig Nedderson, president of management company IDM Group, points out, "Jason uses artisan cheeses from Wisconsin. They've reached extraordinary levels. We work with local bakeries and a local pasta maker. We're joining forces with a local coffee roaster."

The company will also join a global soap repurposing project, whereby unused soap is combined, sterilized and sent to refugee camps.

Guests include tourists, university visitors and the corporate community. Room rates are \$125 to \$150 for a king executive room. The largest room is a two-bedroom 1,200-square-foot suite.

The property is managed by IDM Group, which handles 10 independent hotels in Wisconsin and Iowa, including the four-diamond HotelRED.

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