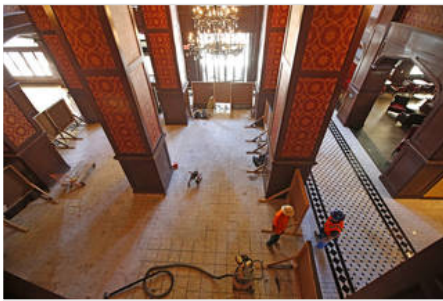


Historic Skirvin Hotel undergoes \$4.3M makeover



by Steve Lackmeyer • Published: July 30, 2016 •



Workers renovate the lobby of the Skirvin Hilton hotel. [Photo By Steve Gooch, The Oklahoman]

The Skirvin Hilton Hotel, widely considered the most important historic preservation victory in the city's history, is undergoing a \$4.3 million “refresh” as it marks a decade since the downtown landmark was reopened by Marcus Hotels & Resorts.

Hotel guests are encountering a construction site as they visit. But once completed, the hotel's 225 rooms will be reopened with new furnishings, the hallways will have all new carpeting and furnishings, and the

lobby itself will be changed dramatically.

The Skirvin makeover is taking place as downtown continues to see an expansion in its hotel count, jumping from just one hotel 20 years ago to a dozen in 2016 with several more under construction.

“With every hotel there comes a time we have to keep our product fresh,” hotel manager Gerald Rappaport said. “Competition is fierce and new hotels are always opening. New hotels are always doing something to differentiate themselves from others. We have to be ahead of the curve and keep the hotel at the forefront of the city.”

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The Skirvin, 1 Park Ave., is considered the city's most historic hotel. It opened in 1911 by oil wildcatter W.B. Skirvin, but it closed in 1988, a victim of the 1980s oil bust and decline of downtown. The city, joined by developer John Weeman and Marcus Hotels & Resorts, spent \$55 million on an extensive rebuilding and historic restoration of the hotel.

Some of the recent renovations already are visible to guests. The hotel's Red Piano Lounge was redone with new flooring, seating and tables, which Rappaport hopes will better reflect the bar's “laid back luxury.” Even the red piano is new.

Large dark curtains that were added to the lobby as part of the 2007 restoration have been removed, lightning up the area and also putting more focus on the lobby's historic architecture. The hotel also replaced the solid red wallpaper on the lobby columns added in 2007 — changes meeting the approval of John Weeman, principal of Skirvin Partners in Development and lead

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developer of the restoration that ended 18 years of uncertainty for the landmark.

“The new Skirvin lobby wall coverings reflect the original gothic design intent of developer Bill Skirvin when the hotel originally opened in 1911,” Weeman said.

The renovation also required the removal of the lobby's original, but crumbling 1911 white tile flooring.

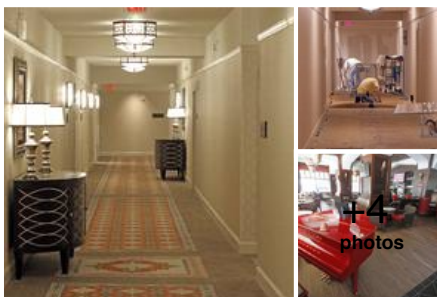
“The floor in the lobby was in terrible shape,” Rappaport said. “It was original to the hotel from when it was built in 1911. But there was nothing we could do to restore the original floor.”

The new granite and marble flooring, he said, also is designed to reflect the hotel's original design intent.

“It showcases the beautiful story of the hotel yet makes it more relevant and cosmetically appealing,” Rappaport said. “There is a tricky balance to maintaining the historic integrity of the hotel and making it relevant at the same time. We paid careful attention to all of the important aspects of the lobby, the millwork and design intent.”

The remainder of the work is a floor-by-floor task, as one level of rooms is closed at a time to strip the hallways and rooms down to the bare walls and floors for a total makeover.

The exterior of the hotel, meanwhile, recently underwent restoration of the ornate cast stone that showed deterioration after storms in 2015. New landscaping also is being readied.



VIDEO: Skirvin Hilton undergoing renovations

The refresh is expected to be completed in September.

“The renovations will enhance the guest experience at the Skirvin Hilton, while maintaining the historic significance of the hotel,” said Joseph Khairallah, chief operating officer of Marcus Hotels & Resorts. “We are careful to pay attention to the historic nature and beauty of the hotel, as well as meeting the demands of today's travelers. The Skirvin Hilton Hotel continues to serve as an important part of the city's past and future.”



Steve Lackmeyer



Steve Lackmeyer is a reporter, columnist and author who started his career at The Oklahoman in 1990. Since then, he has won numerous awards for his... [read more >](#)

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