

# SAVE THE EARTH, HUG A HOTEL

The Las Vegas desert greener than you think

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Las Vegas is viewed by most as a city of excess. We seem to have and waste too much of everything: Food, lights, money, booze, Elvis impersonators. You may think our concept of “going green” is drinking tinted beer on St. Patrick’s Day.

But truth be told, when it comes to Las Vegas, image is everything.

Behind the scenes, many of the city’s biggest hotel conglomerates — including Harrah’s Entertainment, Las Vegas Sands Corp. and MGM Mirage — are working overtime to reduce their carbon footprint and become more environmentally friendly.

“We get a bad rap in Vegas as Sin City, but the reality is that Las Vegas is an energy efficient city,” said Eric Dominguez, director of energy and environmental services for Harrah’s Entertainment. “For example, we lead the nation in terms of solar production per capita. And we’re constantly looking for ways to make things better.”

### JUST LETTING OFF STEAM

Like an underground city, the chiller and boiler rooms at the Paris Las Vegas are located among a series of plain, conservatively lit hallways, tucked below the casino level.

While there are certainly many sexier sights in Las Vegas, these often unseen facilities are actually the hotbed of energy savings at this Harrah’s property. The extra steam from the boilers’ blow down, for instance, is used to heat the facility’s water and run equipment in the emergency generator room. This recycling of heat is using energy that would have otherwise been lost.

Some of the energy saving equipment was already in place when Paris Las Vegas opened in 1999, but there are many instances at Paris and some of Harrah’s older properties where the equipment has been or soon will be upgraded.

“Through conservation we’ve been able to reduce the need for fossil fuels, which has made a huge environmental impact,” said Dominguez. “We conserve 130 kilowatt of energy a year, which is like taking a property like Paris off the grid.”

Harrah’s Entertainment established its commitment to conservation in 2003 and became the first casino to receive the EPA Quality Award in April 2008. Many of the properties have CodeGreen Teams made up of employees focused on reducing the use of natural resources, conserving energy and promoting reuse and recycling. There are more than 74 major conservation projects in place at individual Harrah’s properties, including:

- Lower water flow control in guest areas
- A five megawatt co-generation facility at the Rio hotel to create and use electricity on site and recapture waste heat for hot water
- Employee training on environmentally-friendly practices

### LET THERE BE LIGHT

Another major initiative of the Harrah’s properties is the substitution of traditional light bulbs with more energy efficient ones.

The Paris, the Rio and Caesars hotels have replaced thousands upon thousands of light bulbs both inside and out. Bally’s is in the process of replacing 4,000 bulbs in its sports book sign alone. In the back of the house at Paris, every other light was removed.

That certainly doesn’t mean the City of Lights has gotten any dimmer.

“Whenever we can, where the guest doesn’t realize, we’ll change to more energy efficient light,” said Jeff McGillivray, assistant director of facilities for Paris and Bally’s. “It uses five times less energy, still looks good and it lasts longer, so we don’t have to change it as often.”

Not only can no one can tell the difference, said Dominguez, but the energy savings are incredible.

“But we’ve cut energy consumption five-fold,” he said, adding, “Every bit of energy we save here, is energy that doesn’t have to be generated at the power plant.”

Overall, Harrah’s Entertainment has seen a more than \$10 million savings per year from existing and completed conservation programs. Among this is the avoidance of more than 155.7 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions per year, which Dominguez equated with 81,170 round trip flights between Los Angeles and New York.



Clockwise from top of recycle graphic: CityCenter, seen in a rendering, will seek LEED certification when it opens in 2009; Rooms at the Palazzo have air conditioning controls that use less energy when the rooms are empty; Many of the light bulbs in the casino at Paris Las Vegas are energy efficient. (Courtesy photos)

### BRINGING IN MORE GREEN

While energy and monetary savings are expected, Todd Moreau, vice president of food and beverage for Harrah’s and Bill’s Gamblin’ Hall and Saloon, said there are also some unexpected advantages of going green — it helps the company make more money.

It started in May, when Moreau spearheaded a project to find a reusable solution for water bottles as part of a CodeGreen team. He found that in 2007, Harrah’s was disposing of close to 300,000 one-liter bottles of water in restaurants citywide.

Moreau decided that keeping these bottles out of landfills was a challenge worth tackling.

The outcome was a one-liter glass reusable bottle produced by AquaHealth. The stylish bottle, which is available in some Harrah’s restaurants, can be filled with water from an on-site filtration system, then washed along with the restaurant’s other china, and reused.

“We ran a test for 30 days in Bally’s Steakhouse and what we found out was that when we featured something green, that brand name had a bigger impact than any other sparkling or still waters,” said Moreau. “We’ve had, year to date, zero customer complaints.”

And along with helping the environment, to Moreau’s surprise, the program’s profit margin increased.

“We thought, ‘Wow, first we went green and as now a company we are making better revenues off of it,’” said Moreau.

### BORN GREEN

The Palazzo is the largest Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified property in the world, and currently the only LEED certified property on the Strip.



Photo by Jeannie Borbe  
Harrah’s properties are substituting traditional light bulbs with more energy efficient ones, such as those pictured above at Paris Las Vegas. In the foreground, construction continues on CityCenter, an MGM Mirage property that will seek LEED certification upon completion.

LEED certification is a premium certificate awarded to environmentally responsible properties by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Palazzo, which opened earlier this year, actually conserves enough water to provide each Nevada Citizen with 266 eight-ounce glasses of water a year and saves enough energy to light a 100 watt light bulb for 12,100 years.

“We are committed to developing sustainable properties,” said Nicholas Rumanes, vice president of corporate development for Las Vegas Sands Corp. “It’s a larger action as a good corporate citizen, and also to set an example for the rest of the industry to follow. It helps out our business plan, it helps out the environment, it helps out the health of our employees and also the health of our visitors.”

Key elements of the Palazzo’s earth-friendly initiatives include:

- Artificial turf, drip irrigation and moisture sensors in planted areas as well as water efficient shower heads, high efficiency toilets and low-flow faucets inside
- A solar heating system that heats the property’s swimming pools and directs extra solar heat into the hotel’s hot water system. There are also solar panels located on top of the facility’s parking garage.
- Air conditioning controls in the guest rooms, which automatically set back several degrees when guests are not in their rooms. Lighting occupancy sensors in team member services areas that shut off the lights when no one is in the area.

“The part of our green effort here that I really like is harnessing the solar energy,” said Rumanes. “Living in Vegas, it’s 87-and-a-half percent sunny a year. We get probably the most direct sunlight of anywhere else in the United States. And if you really thought of the long term effect if everyone went this green way, we would prevent the construction of these polluting, \$5 billion coal power plants down the road.”

The building itself was constructed using eco-friendly materials and more than 70 percent of the property’s waste during construction was diverted, thanks to a waste recycling program. The steel used averaged more than 95 percent recyclable content, while the concrete was 26 percent. There is even a special air filtration system, and a majority of the property is non-smoking, making for an overall healthier facility.

“The air gets really dusty in Las Vegas,” said Rumanes. “You can argue that the indoor air quality at the Palazzo is actually better than outdoors.”

Rumanes added that Sands Corp. is slowly upgrading the neighboring Venetian. He expects to see more green hotels in the future.

### SEEING GREEN

Like the Palazzo, MGM Mirage’s CityCenter aspires to attain LEED certification when it opens to the public in 2009.

The 18-million-square-foot, seven-building property (which includes ARIA Resort & Casino, The Harmon Hotel, Spa and Residences, Vdara Hotel, Mandarin Oriental, Veer Towers and Crystals retail and entertainment district) is being constructed with preference to materials made with recycled content, reclaimed materials or those that could be manufactured locally, as well as paints, sealants, adhesives, carpet and composite wood products that do not contain toxic substances.

Plans also include:

- A co-generation plant providing about 10 percent of the property’s electricity. The throw-off heat from the plant will be used to heat the property’s water.
- Specially-coated windows on ARIA and Vdara that help reduce heat transfer into the building by reflecting light.
- Settings on the rooms’ remote system in ARIA, The Harmon and Mandarin Oriental allowing guests to green their stay by indicating their preferred light level, room temperature and frequency of linen and towel changes. Systems can also be programmed to turn these settings down or off when the guest is not in their room.

CityCenter is expected to save 50 million gallons of water each year as a result of water conservation efforts, such as efficient irrigation systems, low-flow faucets and showers and low-flush toilets throughout the development. The property will even offer incentives for guests and workers to use alternative forms of transportation.

### GETTING WASTED

Another environmental effort by MGM-Mirage is a program implemented by Mandalay Bay Convention Center to recycle trade show waste.

The program enabled Mandalay Bay to recycle upwards of 74 percent of the trade show’s garbage.

In a four month period, with 29 trade shows, more than 6,000 cubic yards of recyclables were collected, while only 2,000 cubic yards went into a landfill.

Like most of the eco-friendly initiatives at Las Vegas hotels, these recycling efforts happen behind the scenes and are unseen by the public.

Las Vegas is still a city of entertainment and earth-friendly initiatives will never reduce the guest’s experience, explained Dominguez.

“We don’t turn the lights out on the Strip. It’s all about maintaining the image but doing it in a conscious environmental manner,” he explained. “We’ve got energy efficiency projects that are implemented to be seamless.”

Romanes agreed.

“If we do our job properly the average customer will not notice that this is a green facility,” he said. “I call it environmental luxury. We’ve proven that you can be luxurious and you can be environmentally sensitive.”