

Guest demand leads to in-room beverage program at Houston hotel

BY LAUREN ESPOSITO

HOUSTON— The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa is a fixture in this city's lodging landscape as one of its most famous luxury properties. Currently undergoing a major renovation to keep the luxury property in top condition, the hotel is also adding some new amenities, one of which is an in-room beverage program.

According to Jim Mills, general manager of the 290-room hotel, the Houstonian had never had an in-room beverage system in its history. However, after the number of guest feedback comments in favor of an in-room beverage program began to accumulate, the property decided to take a closer look at the possibility of adding the amenity. "At first we struggled with the decision to add the in-room beverage program," said Mills. "Clearly there was a certain number of guests who wanted it but we had to make sure it would be a good investment."

The hotel began to track the

guest comments and see if there was one main demographic requesting an in-room coffeemaker. But it turned out the requests were as varied as the Houstonian's guest population. "When we tried to figure out if it was one particular group asking for in-room coffee, we found it ran across a number of segments. Weekend leisure travelers, groups and business travelers had all mentioned it from time to time and expected it at a property like ours," Mills reported. "We viewed it as a way to distance ourselves from our competitors in the area."

The Houstonian then began the task of selecting the right machine. "We knew that we wanted a single-cup coffeemaker [instead of a four-cup machine.]," Mills said. "We didn't want anything with a glass carafe because we didn't want to give our housekeeping staff extra work either washing

them or carting them down to the dishwasher."

After testing numerous machines, the Houstonian selected one-cup coffeemakers from

mess and no worrying about the carpet staying clean."

Ease of use was also an important factor since many guests are less familiar with the one-

use are printed right on the side of the machine. It's very easy."

Because it was part of a renovation, aesthetics were also considered. Mills noted he wanted to make sure the coffeemakers coordinated with the residential theme of the Houstonian's new guestrooms.

"We like our rooms to look like rooms in a home, not hotel rooms, and try to carry that theme through to everything the guest uses," Mills said. "The new in-room coffee machines fit in very well with that idea."

The coffeemakers, along with coffee, tea, mugs and paper cups, are all stored on an in-room sliding trays,

making them convenient for guests as well as the Houstonian's housekeeping staff. "Basically, all our housekeepers have to do is wipe the exterior of the machine clean," Mills said. "And we have a connectivity panel right near the machine so the guests don't have to go searching for an outlet." **HB**



The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa in Houston is adding one-cup coffeemakers to its refurbished guestrooms.

Keurig, Inc. "First and foremost, we thought the coffee the machine produced tasted the best," said Mills. "We also liked that instead of the coffee-filter pods other machines have, the coffee is in sealed cups. That way there is no dripping, no

cup coffeemakers compared with the four-cup machines. "Everyone knows how to make coffee using the drip machines, but can be confused by the new models," Mills explained. "We liked that on the coffeemakers we suggested instructions for