**W Aspen**

Encompassing four stories and nearly 130,000 SF, this high-end luxury resort is located in the heart of downtown, at the base of Aspen Mountain [Picture 1]. The hotel’s amenities include the beautiful Living Room—a signature of the W brand, state-of-the-art gym, and rooftop pool and bar with a breathtaking view of Aspen Mountain. The 88 rooms are anything but standard with features like queen size bunk beds [Picture 2] or even quad stacked bunks! If just visiting isn’t enough, there are also 11 fractional ownership units – The Sky Residences.

This amazing hotel wasn’t built without its share of challenges, several of which were inherent to the project’s locale. The City of Aspen adheres to strict guidelines regarding construction work hours and noise levels. Monday through Friday, work is allowed only between 7:30am and 5:30pm, Saturday from 9:30am to 5:30pm, with no work allowed on Sundays. The noise level leaving the site had to remain below 65 decibels (lower than a city bus driving by). To remain within these parameters, Haselden’s Miscellaneous Metals team designed and installed a 16-foot modular sound fence (shown in progress) [Picture 3] that could be taken apart and repositioned when we needed to access certain exterior parts of the building. We also installed a specialty system that recorded all noises and noise levels, allowing us to track any spikes. The noise mitigation was especially important because of our proximity to neighbors (businesses, a hotel, and condominiums). Our furthest neighbor was a mere street’s width away, while our closest neighbor was within five feet. This provided for a very tight sight with no staging area. The City of Aspen also has a stringent height restriction for buildings; the W Aspen is within ¼-inch of that maximum height.

Other obstacles the team overcame related to the building process itself. Multiple issues arose during excavation: discovering contaminated soils (likely tailings from the Smuggler Mine); uncovering a concrete swimming pool buried beneath the old Sky Hotel; and the amount and density of the rock we were drilling into continually sheared off the caisson bits. To manage the contaminated soil, we hauled out the old soil and imported new, as well as sending our team (approximately 40 Haselden and subcontractor personnel) to a week-long HAZWOPPER (hazardous materials) class. Once we identified the swimming pool, we removed it and continued with our excavation. Dealing with continually breaking caisson bits was trickier, and we engaged four welders on-site throughout the duration of the dig to continually repair the damaged bits.

Site logistics also posed hindrances. To call this a tight site would be an understatement. With only four parking stalls to use as a laydown and hoisting area, Haselden employed the Lean construction practice of just-in-time delivery. There was not space to drive a forklift on site, meaning items that needed transferring from one side of the building to the other were hand carried. Even the jobsite trailer was tight—a two-story, stacked 8’x10’ Conex.

Additional challenges the team overcame revolved around the hotel’s layout. The complex design of this project began with the floorplan. Due to city codes and height restrictions, the north half of the building is five feet lower than the south half. This means none of the floors continue across the hotel in a straight line—each contains an elevation change [Picture 4]. To clarify the concrete connections in this intricate layout, we turned to our in-house Virtual Design & Construction Department to create a 3-D model the team could look at from all angles to fully understand the relationship between the joints [Picture 5]. The room design proved another challenging aspect. Well after construction commenced (and after the initial mock-up was complete), the flag and service level of the hotel changed from a 3-star Starwood to a 4.5-star Marriott W. This entailed a complete redesign of all hotel room layouts and finishes, many of which were now custom designed with intricate specifications. The degree of teamwork and the unified approach taken by Haselden, the developers, the design team, Marriott, and the subcontractors unequivocally paved the path for the successful transition of the hotel brand and service level. An example of this is the custom furniture, fixtures, and equipment that the owners procured for the property. Most of the furniture was sourced from overseas; when a specialty bracket was missing, or a piece of furniture didn’t fit together correctly, a new part couldn’t easily be ordered. In such cases, the team worked together to create from scratch the pieces they needed to make these systems work. Coordinating with the owner on the sizing was also a key element in ensuring a successful installation of the custom furniture, as most of them were built into the walls and floors, therefore many times openings in the walls/floors were necessary. The MEP subcontractors played an important role here as they had multiple connections to make. Using the Lean construction technique of pull planning was greatly beneficial to the team during this process and helped keep the project on track with the new timeline. Additionally, the spectacular rooftop patio posed the puzzle of holding water (pool, two hot tubs, irrigation system for the gardens) when normally a roof—especially in this geographic area—would be designed to shed water. We managed this with considerable use of waterproofing details as well as bringing in third party consultants on the waterproofing design (both on the roof and on the decks). Coordination of the lobby ceiling layout was also challenging. The city height limitation meant the ceiling to floor distance was a minimal 12-16”. All MEP systems had to be contained in that space, and the lighting, speakers, and sprinklers had to line up perfectly with the wood batten ceiling below.

The innovation throughout the W Aspen is apparent to anyone who walks through its doors. Eschewing anything standard, the Living Room—the W’s restaurant/bar—uses space dividers fashioned of etched acrylic rods with integrated lighting [Picture 6]. Extensive intricate millwork abounds throughout the lobby, first seen in the feature wall adjacent the stairs [Picture 7] as well as the cladding on the reception desks [Picture 8]. A star of the show is the silver nugget DJ booth cantilevered over the lobby [Picture 9]. Formed to resemble the largest silver nugget ever mined, the booth is constructed of aluminum triangles welded together, powder-coated, and painted, with acrylic panels between them that light up in conjunction with the music. The party continues outside onto the incredible exterior patio area with its unbeatable view of Aspen Mountain [Picture 10].

Ensuring the project’s neighbors—both business and residential—remained safe, comfortable, and undisturbed as much as possible during construction was of paramount importance to Haselden. There were alleys on two sides of the hotel that we only worked in during the off-season to allow better accessibility to the residents and visitors in the area. We employed a luffing tower crane—the largest in Colorado—in order to stay within the airspace of our property lines and provided on-site crane safety training. Haselden also conducted site-specific safety orientations. Logging over 85,673 hours, Haselden had two lost time incidents. Each week we held a community outreach meeting with the neighbors and the City of Aspen letting them know what had been accomplished the prior week and what could be expected in the week to come. We also sent a weekly newsletter to the community to the same effect. The feedback we received from both neighbors and the City regarding the minimal impact our construction site had on the surrounding residents was fantastic. Our relationship with City of Aspen has strengthened throughout this project as a result of our adherence to our solid Construction Management Plan and consistent follow-through.

In addition to creating an outstanding relationship with the City and the residents, Haselden showed support for the community through multiple events. A Ducky Derby sponsor for many years, in 2018 we were the platinum sponsor. To alleviate some of the traffic caused by project managers and superintendents driving around town to city offices, we bought Haselden bicycles which we donated to the architect, owner, and owner’s representative at the end of the project. Owner’s Representative Michael O’Connor noted, “Getting input from the team … to analyze schedule and provide invaluable insight to neighbor impacts allowed the W Aspen team to proceed into construction with a rock-solid budget and established neighbor relations before ever putting a shovel in the ground.” He goes on to say, “Their experienced field team is also capable of evaluating situations and always providing positive and well thought out solutions to the eventual issues that always come up during a major construction project.”

While losing the iconic Sky Hotel was a difficult decision for all involved, the time to replace the deteriorating nightlife haven had come. In its place is a new landmark that pays homage to its predecessor with the 39º bar and The Sky Residences, ready for a new generation to make its mark.

A sign on the side of a building

Description automatically generated

A bedroom with a bed in a room

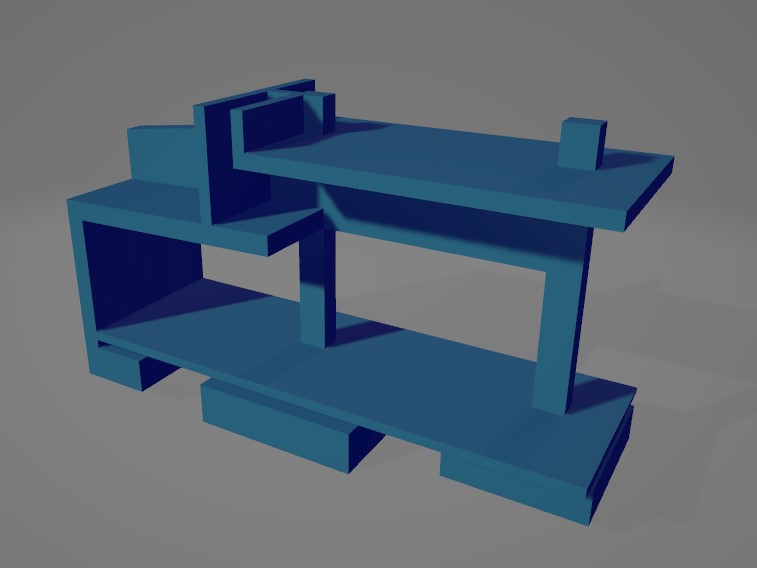
Description automatically generated

A building with a mountain in the background

Description automatically generated

A close up of a map

Description automatically generated



A room filled with furniture and a large window

Description automatically generated

A picture containing indoor, floor, wooden

Description automatically generated

A picture containing indoor, table, wall

Description automatically generated

A display in a room

Description automatically generated

A wooden table

Description automatically generated