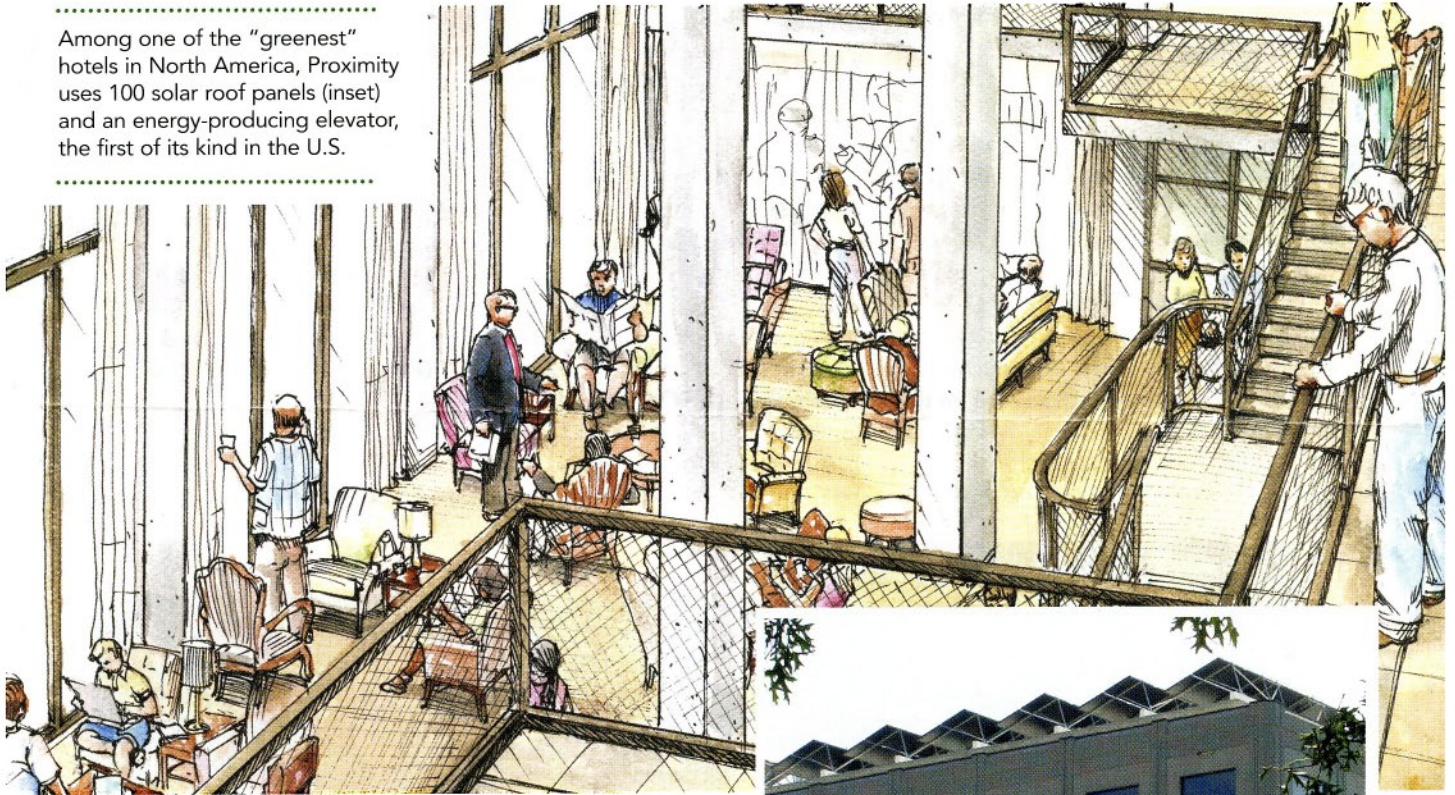


Eco Smart: GREEN BUILT



Among one of the "greenest" hotels in North America, Proximity uses 100 solar roof panels (inset) and an energy-producing elevator, the first of its kind in the U.S.



PROXIMITY HOTEL

Written by *Emily Gallimore*

Sustainable design doesn't have to mean rustic accommodations and earth-toned décor — consider Greensboro's Proximity Hotel. Set to open in September, the outfit is equal parts luxury and green living, built according to federal standards set by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating system.

Sacrificing neither style nor sustainability, hotel designer Dennis Quaintance brings harmony to the structure by drawing on a sense of local history, as he did with the reincarnation of the O. Henry Hotel in 1998. Named after Greensboro's historic Proximity Manufacturing Cotton Mill, the hotel's appearance recalls the industrial icon with a warehouse-inspired architecture and loft-style lobbies.

Proximity Hotel is situated just a block away from its sister hotel, the O. Henry, and is located on Green Valley Road, in the center of a bustling commercial district. Proximity's rooftop solar panels cause the eight-story structure to stand

out, but inside, Quaintance's environmental measures — like the regenerative drive elevator (a first in North America) and the energy-efficient filtration system — go unnoticed. The high ceilings, enormous windows, and classic-modern décor, along with a bistro, art display and fitness studio, have a high-fashion appeal; practicality seems to be an afterthought, but according to Quaintance, the hotel's environment-friendly design and operation will use 40 percent less energy and 35 percent less water than a hotel of comparable capacity.

Built from recycled gypsum, concrete, and sheetrock, among other materials, the building will eventually do double duty, functioning both as a hotel and a sustainable practices education center that will offer tours and outreach programs. □

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