

Hospitality



Regency's Rebirth

An Interview with Jim McPartlin,
Managing Director, Loews Regency Hotel



Loews Regency Hotel entrance (left); The Regency Bar & Grill (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Jim McPartlin was named to his current post in 2013. He was most recently the General Manager of W New York Times Square. He spent several years with W Hotels Worldwide, including opening W Hollywood Hotel & Residences, as Director of Brand Operations for the Western Region, and as General Manager for W San Francisco. McPartlin has also held senior level positions with Andrè Balazs Properties, The Ian Schrager Company, and Kimpton Hotels. McPartlin received his Bachelor of Science degree from Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York.



Jim McPartlin

PROPERTY BRIEF Loews Regency Hotel (loewshotels.com/Regency-Hotel) offers all the benefits of Midtown Manhattan with a Park Avenue address. With thoughtful service genuinely delivered, their goal is to make sure guests can focus on their plans while visiting New York City, be it for work or play. They can take care of the little but all-important details, like complimentary pressing of two garments upon arrival and a Julien Farel professional hair dryer in every room. Guests will appreciate free Wi-Fi for up to three devices throughout the hotel, including in their rooms. A recent revitalization of the property includes The Regency Bar & Grill; Sant Ambroeus Coffee Bar; 379 all-new apartment-styled guestrooms including 58 suites with luxurious amenities; and the Julien Farel Restore Salon & Spa, along with a state-of-the-art fitness center featuring state-of-the-art equipment.

What were your goals with the recent transformation of the hotel and how were you able to make the property relevant while preserving its heritage?

It started with Jon Tisch (Chairman, Loews Hotels & Resorts) and the vision he had for the property. He's the first to acknowledge that it took him a long time to get his head around doing the complete change that was required.

His father and uncle built this property and he had to think clearly about bringing

it into a new era. After three to five years of working with designers, he felt he needed to pull the trigger.

Our \$35-million budget went to \$45 then to \$75 and then to \$100, and he stopped thinking about it after that. We were seeking some new blood, but we also wanted to honor the folks who have worked here for a very long time and want to continue taking care of our guests as we start this new chapter for them.

Jon was intimately involved in the process the entire time.

Do you need to have a property that appeals to those repeat guests who are focused on the heritage while also appealing to the guest seeking a modern feel?

Without a doubt. We held three receptions in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Palm Beach for what we call the Loews Loyalists comprised of about 200 regulars who have been coming here for years. Jon wanted them to get previews of what the property would look like through storyboards, and he introduced me and the Director of Sales & Marketing to make sure they understood the direction we were heading in before we actually opened the doors.

Jon always listens carefully but also has his own strong point of view and aesthetic, so if the designers brought in pillows that were too delicate or fabrics that were too easily stained, he would emphasize that he wants good design but it has to be durable because we're going to run high occupancies and everything needs to hold up.

When the guests came back, they raved. People loved the fact that he had brought the Regency into a new era, but that it still felt like the Regency.

How critical is the suite product from a competitive standpoint and is there a consistent feel throughout the accommodations?

We reduced our suite count by about 50 percent. There are only 58 suites now, including our specialty suites.

Jon's idea was to have the hotel feel like a very chic apartment on Park Avenue, but an apartment that would attract somebody that used to stay at a W when they wanted to party, but now they've grown up.

Our idea was to make it relevant for that person who has attained a certain stature, while acknowledging that the days of the butlers and tight ties are falling by the wayside. That's not to say you won't have a luxury experience, but it has to feel a bit more natural and not quite so forced.

It was very important to Jon for that feeling to come through and it comes out beautifully with the rooms, but we also have some fun with the specialty suites. Each feels like an incredibly decadent apartment.

Lauren Rottet, who designed the entire hotel, did a really interesting take on Marilyn Monroe in that we have glam Marilyn and we have Marilyn in pop culture: one represents her as she was when she was a movie star and the other represents her legacy after she left us. They both play incredibly well together.

My personal favorites are the ones that Meyer Davis did for us. He is also the designer that handled The Regency Bar & Grill. These are sort of masculine rooms that have great structure, bones, and furniture, where you walk in and instantly feel the "wow" factor.

What makes a hotel restaurant successful, especially in a city like New York where there are so many great stand-alone offerings?

The power breakfast, which was originated by Jon's dad, is very much part of the DNA of the property. It leads to a unique problem in that it is sometimes difficult to get a reservation for our own hotel guests. Most hotel restaurants sit empty or are very quiet in the mornings, but we are extremely busy.

My executive assistant doubles as the restaurant manager in the mornings because she's so good at it.

We had to make sure we honored that tradition when we opened, and we did. The very first day, we were sold out. On average, we do better than 200 covers for breakfast.

Our partner in the restaurant does a wonderful job, and we have a very strong following in our lunch and dinner crowd too. So it works for us. But it can be a challenge for a lot of reasons in New York, especially since, today, the hot restaurants are often downtown. This requires that we bring sensibility at the property level while acknowledging our neighborhood. ●