PLANNING A GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

This guide will give you the tools and ideas you need to maximize the impact of your Groundbreaking ceremony. Hosting a Groundbreaking ceremony is the perfect opportunity to create anticipation and excitement among the local community and press for your new hotel. Planning a Groundbreaking ceremony can be relatively easy or very difficult, depending upon the time of year, the weather and number of individuals involved, as well as the cooperation of the local press.

If you need any assistance or have any questions regarding anything in this guide, please contact your Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group project manager.

Planning:

- Your Groundbreaking ceremony typically takes place shortly after the “earth” starts to move around your site, construction trailers are on site and some work has begun. However, you can hold this event whenever it makes most sense but typically before the walls go up.
- Make sure you work with, and plan the event with, your general contractor. They should be fully engaged in the early conversations, as they know the hotel site better than anyone and can offer do’s or don’ts. Additionally, they may even be willing to assist with some of the costs as you will be giving them recognition throughout this event.
- Schedule the event during daylight hours, which is ideal for photo opportunities. Pick the time of day that will be most comfortable from a weather standpoint. Decide if you will rent tents to protect from rain, wind or sun. Keep in mind the availability of representatives who need to be on hand.
- Groundbreaking ceremonies are simple, short events that last no more than one hour from start to finish, including speeches, photo opportunities and refreshments. There is no need to go overboard on food and entertainment. Save that expense for your Grand Opening event.
- Establish a budget for the event. If no budget is available, determine ways to get the donations needed or facilitate trade outs to make the ceremony happen.
- Make a list of all the individuals to be invited. It may include:
  - City, county and even state and federal officials
  - Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau
  - Local business leaders
  - Economic development groups
  - Ownership of your hotel
  - Architect
  - Financier
• Contractor
• Carlson Rezidor corporate staff
• Local Press

• Develop a contingency plan for bad weather. This could include a short ceremony outside for officials to dig the first shovel of dirt with the remainder of the ceremony held at a nearby inside location or in a tented area. In case of rain, purchase umbrellas from a dollar store to hand out to attendees.
• Determine who you would like to speak at the event and make certain they will be able to attend.

The Press:

The press is perhaps the most important part of your Groundbreaking ceremony. You need the press in attendance to get the publicity, which is typically why a Groundbreaking ceremony is held. The goal should be to engage as many media outlets as you can which will result in free advertising and press coverage which are coming from credible, third party endorsements. Use the internet to identify what media makes most sense for you. Send your press release and include print, television and radio.

Prepare a Press Release:

Carlson can provide you with a sample press release that can be used to prepare a press release around the construction beginning on your hotel. You can also use this format and include details on your Groundbreaking ceremony as well. Please contact your project manager and they will email you the Press Release template.

Preparing for the Ceremony:

• Call the local chamber of commerce or economic development group to ascertain if they have a groundbreaking kit. Most organizations of this type will have rope or ribbons to mark off the site as well as a golden (or other colored) shovel and hardhats for the ceremony. They will typically provide those gratis for members of their group. You can rent or buy the shovels and hard hats at a local party or rental store.
• Decide upon and make arrangements for the following:
  • Decorations and if they are needed. Keep in mind both the original and contingency plans.
  • Refreshments. Keep it simple and light, like cake and punch or finger sandwiches. Most people attending the event have tight schedules and don’t have time for extended buffets. This is especially true if your Groundbreaking ceremony will take place during the day.
  • Seating. Arrange both indoor and outdoor alternatives. If seating isn’t feasible for everyone because of audience size or where the event is being held, arrange for seating strictly for program participants and other dignitaries.
  • Arrange for a tent, if it is needed.
  • Arrange for a sound system, if one is required.
  • Arrange for trash receptacles, if applicable.
  • Determine if you will have entertainment. Again, keep it simple.
• If you are considering giveaways or gift bags be creative. Think about small garden hand shovels with a tag and a message, chocolate hard hats or hammers or logo’d water bottles. There are numerous websites dedicated to these types of gifts.

The Invitation:

• Send invitations out at least 4 to 6 weeks in advance
• Include any details guests should know about the event (for example, if they should dress casual and wear boots, as the site may be muddy)
• Keep it clean and simple. The sample invitation below is only meant as a guideline:

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Country Inn & Suites By Carlson  Anytown  You’re invited.....

Groundbreaking Ceremony

August 21, 2012 – 2:00PM to 3:00PM

You and a guest are cordially invited to attend

View Architectural Renderings, Virtual Tours and Meet the Builders and Investors

Enjoy refreshments and great entertainment

Please RSVP by July 10, 2012 to email@countryinns.com or call (123) 555-1212

1234 Main Street, City Name, ST 55345

Main Street and Circle Avenue

www.countryinns.com/anytown
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Conducting the Ceremony:

• Mark off the dig site with rope or flags to let people know specifically where to go. Arrange for a plastic drop cloth pathway if the site is muddy.
• Make sure that all participants in the dig have a hard hat. Be aware that such hats may be necessary for all participants if the ceremony is taking place within a designated hard hat area. Never have anyone inside a hard hat area without following the proper protocol established by the city, state and federal governments.
• Make nametags for all dignitaries attending the event so that they can be easily identified. Arrange for
someone to greet them as they arrive and seat them.

- Make certain all speakers understand their parameters and the amount of time they have to speak.
- Call participants to order before the ceremony begins. Welcome everyone to the ceremony and introduce the first speaker when it is time to begin. Outline any logistic requirements such as the refreshment site or location of restrooms.
- Take as many pictures of the event as possible. If the press is there and are taking pictures follow-up with them to obtain copies.

Take care of cleanup once the event is concluded. Make sure that all trash is picked up and that the site is returned to the condition it was before the event began.

Last updated: 3/31/15