



**The Vinoy Renaissance  
St. Petersburg Resort & Golf Club**  
501 5th Ave. NE  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

**No. of Rooms: 361**

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## CASE STUDY



## THE RIGHT LAUNDRY EQUIPMENT GIVES HOTEL GUESTS THE FEEL OF LUXURY

Though nearly 100 years old, the Vinoy Renaissance St. Petersburg Resort & Golf Club continues to impress guests with its ornate lobby, soaring ballroom, five classic restaurants and spacious, well-appointed guest rooms, all enhanced by attentive service. Yet, much of what makes the hotel grand happens out of the guests' sights.

One of the amenities that contribute to the hospitality and reputation of the property is the quality of the linens. Tablecloths and napkins must be spotless, the towels fluffy. The ultimate reason for the stay – a good night's sleep – should be enhanced by bedding that is soft, comfortable, and appealing. At the Vinoy, UniMac® on-premises washer-extractors and tumble dryers utilize the latest in laundry technology to efficiently and cost-effectively ensure all hotel linens exceed guest expectations.

### A PLACE IN HISTORY

Positioned on the St. Petersburg, Fla., waterfront, the Vinoy Renaissance has a storied past, having gone through more than one renaissance of its own. Opening at the peak of the Florida boom in the Roaring '20s, the Vinoy is an intricately decorated 361-room hotel.

During its early years, the Vinoy was a stopover for celebrities, the wealthy and U.S. presidents, but its popularity began to stagger following World War II. Leading into the 1960s, changing tastes and a lack of maintenance continued the Vinoy's steady decline; however, the residents of St. Petersburg did not give up on the hotel, and a 1984 referendum saved it from demolition.

A \$93 million renovation project restored the Vinoy to its former glory, and by 1992 it once again was welcoming guests and taking its place as the epicenter of St. Petersburg's downtown waterfront. Its current owner, the Renaissance Hotels and Resorts by Marriott, is committed to ensuring the Vinoy is one of its premier properties by offering top-notch amenities and hospitality.

### RECENT TIMES

Since the Vinoy's renovation, the hotel industry has focused on making sleep the most memorable part of a guest's stay. The purchases of high-end mattresses and pillows have put an increased importance on the quality of linens provided to guests and the associated upkeep.

Throughout two shifts the Vinoy laundry room staff ensures that linens maintain quality standards. On the first shift, three team members load the washer-extractors and tumble dryers, while two or more iron and fold the linens. A three person team then feeds the units during the night shift.

A diligent staff is only part of a laundry operation's success, however. Updated equipment is also a key factor.

In 2011 management became aware that the equipment, which dated back to the 1990s, could not keep up, according to Joe Lopresti, the Vinoy's director of engineering.



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“Our two 750-pound and one 300-pound capacity washer-extractors reached the end of their useful life,” Lopresti said. “The machines had become expensive to run and maintain, and were excessively increasing our utility costs.”

### **BETTER EQUIPPING THE STAFF**

The old equipment also impacted the laundry staff’s efficiency, Lopresti said. The crew had to wait for the washers to finish a cycle and then had to distribute those loads into their four 150-pound tumble dryers. The limited dryer capacity made it necessary for the large washers to run under capacity.

When the Vinoy staff began to think about upgrading their laundry capabilities, they turned to equipment consultant Jason Downey of Southeastern Laundry Equipment to help identify the best approach. Following an extensive evaluation of the Vinoy laundry facility, Downey and Southeastern developed a plan recommending the right size low-maintenance UniMac® equipment to best fit the department’s needs.

“Every laundry is different; in Vinoy’s case, the staff does more pounds of laundry than most hotels their size, and handle many high-end types of linen,” Downey noted.

To reliably serve the Vinoy’s needs, Downey recommended installing washer-extractors with a smaller capacity than the old machines while improving throughput by increasing the overall number of washers to six. The resort accepted the recommendation and Southeastern installed five 150-pound high capacity UW washer-extractors and one 60-pound mid-performance UW washer-extractor, as well as four 170-pound ultrafast UT tumble dryers.

With this equipment mix, staff no longer had to worry about a single machine breaking down and impacting the laundry room productivity for the entire day.

“If service is needed on our laundry units, they are easier to repair due to the way UniMac equipment is packaged,” Lopresti added. “Plus, quality replacement parts are readily available for order through Alliance Laundry Systems’ Genuine Parts program (UniMac’s parent company). As Genuine Parts are identical to those used at the time of production, our machines will continue to perform at the highest levels.”

### **CONTROLS ADVANCE THE OPERATION**

By selecting the new UniMac equipment, Vinoy operators have been able to take total control of the laundry facility with the UniLinc™ control system. The system, which monitors and manages machine performance and maintenance data, enables staff to select advanced programming of the wash cycles for fabric type and soil level, plus pinpoint drying times for the tumble dryers.

“These advanced features enable the laundry manager to focus on the very busy work flow instead of worrying about equipment performance and maintenance,” pointed out Lopresti.

In addition, while the crew is washing and drying the Vinoy’s considerable stream of laundry, Lopresti can monitor the operation’s performance from his office or anywhere he has Wi-Fi access, thanks to UniLinc’s wireless networking capabilities.

Should a problem develop, he can determine when and where it started and look for



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performance trends. The control system also tells him whether the problem is with the equipment, or if it is due to how it is being operated. In both instances, data provided by the UniLinc™ system enables Lopresti to develop maintenance programs geared towards laundry room operations.

“The fact that I can dial into the router wherever I want and see how the laundry units are performing has been a huge benefit to our operation,” Lopresti added.

With UniLinc, the engineers can also receive error reports and other performance information. As valuable as this data is, its usefulness goes beyond equipment maintenance. If quality issues arise, maintenance can pull reports for analysis by their chemical representatives. Meanwhile, the executive housekeeper can obtain production reports that enable management to gear throughput based on anticipated events such as conferences or holidays.

“For my department, this arrangement means my engineers don’t need to spend a lot of time in the laundry, but can still monitor the equipment,” Lopresti said. “The laundry room is a crucial part of the Vinoy image. We can keep it running and free up our people for other maintenance rather than spending time putting out fires.”

The ability to network the control system wirelessly also proved to be valuable when it came to the installation process. In a historic building such as Vinoy, tearing up walls to install wiring could greatly compromise the architecture and cause structural damage in the process. Without having to hard wire behind the machines, they did not have to deal with an elaborate system setup. It took just a few hours to seamlessly install the wireless adaptors to the machines.

### AN IMPACTFUL PERFORMANCE

Tumble dryers require large amounts of energy and can represent 70 percent of utility consumption in the laundry room. The OPTidry™ Over-dry Prevention Technology offered with UniMac® tumble dryers automatically stops machines once the load reaches the ideal level of dryness. Since installation, Lopresti estimated the OPTidry has saved the operation \$30,000 in gas costs alone.

In addition to conserving energy on drying times, OPTidry preserves both the softness and life of linens. Studies have shown linens that have been treated in tumble dryers with this technology experience 31 percent less fiber loss.

The UniMac washer-extractors also help improve the Vinoy laundry facility’s bottom line. The high-performance washer-extractors provide an advanced water management system that includes 30 programmable water levels. This allows laundry staff to precisely match wash cycle to linen type, which can help save thousands of gallons of water each year. In addition, the 150-pound washer-extractor’s 300 G-Force extraction speed results in shorter drying times, further increasing throughput.

Though hotels such as the Vinoy may be best known for their classic design, changing times require these properties to exceed guests’ expectations in all facets of their operation. Vinoy’s use of UniMac laundry equipment proves it is possible to not only exceed these expectations, but do so at the lowest cost of ownership.

