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Summer Lovin': Anna Faris
The Return of Haute Cuisine
Lincoln Park's Hip New Hotel,
Chicago Beauty Secrets & More!

Park It!

With a singular location, quirky attitude and culinary star power, the Hotel Lincoln debuts as Chicago's hippest hospitality alternative. | By Thomas Connors | Photography by Mike Schwartz |



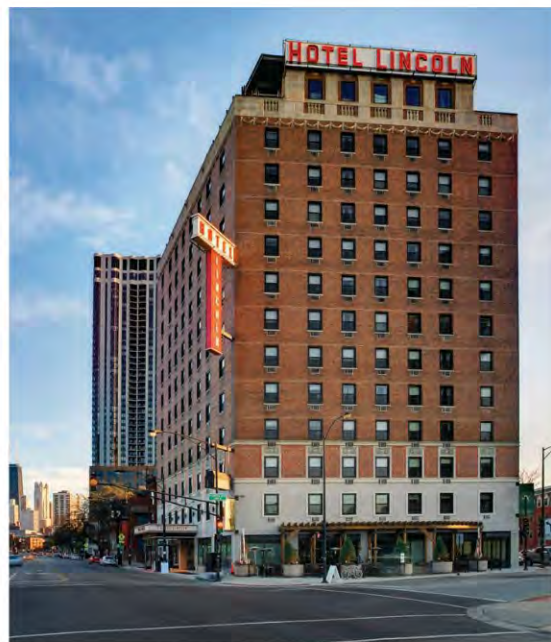
LAND OF LINCOLN
From top: The eclectic lobby at the new Hotel Lincoln; the hotel sits on prime real estate on Clark Street directly across from Lincoln Park and houses acclaimed restaurant Perennial Virant.

It's hard to beat waking up in a slick suite at a beautiful downtown hotel, walking to the window with your coffee, and taking in the glistening skyscrapers and bustling streets dozens of floors below. But with the opening of the new Hotel Lincoln, in-the-know travelers have what is perhaps Chicago's first real alternative to the titans of downtown hospitality.

Located in a now-prime location that was long devoted to lesser hotels, the 184-room Hotel Lincoln, from San Francisco-based hospitality group Joie de Vivre, offers a completely different, yet equally compelling, set of attractions to downtown's luxe hotels. Situated directly across from Lincoln Park on Clark Street between North and Armitage Avenues, it's one of the few hotels of note in Chicago outside of downtown. Just as attractive, it houses, on the ground floor, white-hot restaurant Perennial Virant, with celebrated chef Paul Virant also, remarkably, handling the in-room service menus.

Savvy travelers looking for an authentic Chicago neighborhood experience will love what's on offer: Sure, the Mag Mile is a 20-minute walk away, but Green City Market is right across the street. Yes, it will take a few minutes to cab to RL or Gibsons, but foodies will adore Perennial Virant, as well as dozens of neighborhood destinations to be found along North Avenue, Halsted Street and Lincoln Avenue. And while it's true that there are no 40-story views to make you feel like you're the protagonist in *Wall Street 3*, anyone who visits the hotel's beautiful rooftop deck will be bowled over by the unique, sweeping views of the park, zoo, lake and city skyline.

"I came across a phrase in a travel magazine recently: 'Live like a local; find the neighborhood hot spots,'" says General Manager CONTINUED...



...CONTINUED Bob Shelley. "That's where we sit—a hidden gem of the neighborhood. When people come to the city they like to find those gems. I think we'll appeal to the traveler who likes the neighborhood feel and the vibe of what Lincoln Park offers."

Underscoring the local feel of the hotel, its décor incorporates dozens of finds from neighborhood stores in its public spaces. And the guest rooms showcase pieces from local nonprofits Marwen, which works with Chicago students underexposed to the arts, and Project Onward, dedicated to the growth of artists with developmental disabilities.

With a mix of vintage pieces and reproductions inspired by modern furnishings of the '50s, '60s and '70s—along with bold carpeting in plaid, herringbone and geometric patterns—the hotel projects a selectively eclectic appearance. At Elaine's Coffee Call—an on-site European-style coffee shop managed by the Boka Restaurant Group, the impresarios behind Perennial Virant and many of the city's hottest restaurants—wallpapered walls have been intentionally compromised, rubbed with coffee grounds and bricks. The staircase from the lobby to the second floor, meanwhile, is lined with a crazy array of garage-sale-style art: kittens, landscapes and portraits.

While the guest rooms do riff off the random, found-object aesthetic seen downstairs, the artful balance of fun and function makes them wonderfully welcoming cocoons. The play of pattern and color and the vaguely vintage profile of the furniture endow them with an almost domestic air, a highly individual look that makes you feel as if you're getting snugly at a friend's place rather than at a hotel.

Come June, bon vivants will want to head to the hotel's rooftop bar, featuring bites and custom cocktails, also from the Boka group. With an indoor lounge and an expansive alfresco area, this away-from-it-all aerie is bound to give some of the city's popular outdoor spaces a run for their money. In the morning, sweat out the previous night's conviviality with rooftop yoga classes. You may never party downtown again. ■



LOCAL FLAVOR From top: A room featuring Jeff Koons-designed piggy banks for guests to donate change to local animal shelters; head to Elaine's Coffee Call, a European-style coffee bar managed by the Boka Restaurant Group, for fresh pastries and La Colombe coffee.