



Back to the Future:
The Durham Hotel's space-age architecture, bold prints, and Mid-Century Modern décor are a fashion-forward take on nostalgia.



Photographs courtesy of The Durham Hotel

Retro Renaissance

The Durham Hotel's Mid-Century Modern renovation boldly echoes a Bull City rebirth

/ by M. Linda Lee

Atomic Appetite:
(above) The Durham's restaurant connects the American cuisine of the '50s and '60s with local meat and produce.


Bold and urbane with its silo-like tower and space-age style, The Durham Hotel pays homage to the revival currently taking place in downtown Durham, North Carolina. The 53-room boutique property, which inhabits the iconic 1969 Home Savings Bank building, opened in July of this year.

Just past the streamlined columns, the floor and walls of the exterior covered entryway are paved in geometric black and white tiles, inspired by a pattern by Annie Albers, a twentieth-century American textile artist. Inside the lobby, the work of Annie and Joseph Albers, who once taught at the progressive (but now shuttered) Black Mountain College near Asheville, further influenced the bright graphic pattern of the carpet. Floor-to-ceiling windows in the lobby and the guest rooms bring the outdoors in, typical of Mid-Century Modern design.

Credit Commune, a design firm based in Los Angeles, for the retro-chic interiors. "The hotel's design honors the former bank building's heritage, but still feels warm and residential in terms of its colors and textures," says the hotel's general manager Craig Spitzer. Royal blue and gold predominate in the clean-lined décor of the rooms, accented with pops of pumpkin orange.

Another reason to love this hotel is its commitment to all things local, from the playlist in the lobby, curated by Mac McCaughan (co-founder of local Merge Records), to the denim patchwork coverlets on the beds, made by Raleigh Denim. A welcome gift by Durham-based Burt's Bees greets guests in their room, Ezcazu chocolates appear on the pillow at turndown, and locally-made cocktail mixers and nut butters stock each mini bar. Even the lobby coffee shop boasts full-time baristas and java from Durham's Counter Culture Coffee.

In keeping with the local theme, James Beard Award winner Andrea Reusing, chef/owner of The Lantern in nearby Chapel Hill, runs The Durham's restaurant. Her dinner menu looks to area farms in a roast Rutherfordton chicken paired with field peas, and an eggplant "Parm" made with local eggplant, tomatoes, and Chapel Hill Creamery mozzarella. "We've created a throw-back hotel," explains Spitzer. "So the menu reflects hotel food from the 1950s and '60s, a simple American cuisine done with care and attention to detail."

Yoga classes on the rooftop (free for guests) and a complimentary breakfast (think eggs baked in crème fraîche with toast "soldiers") start the morning off right. At day's end, what could be cooler than kicking back, cocktail in hand, and watching the sunset over the city's skyscrapers from the hotel's open-air rooftop bar? 

The Durham Hotel
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(919) 768-8830, thedurham.com
Rates start at \$209