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GUESTS AT THE ROBEEY, AIMED AT FANS OF TIMELESS ELEGANCE, CAN ENJOY THE PRIVATE ROOFTOP LOUNGE (RIGHT), WHILE HIPSTERS CAN HANG OUT IN THE HOLLANDER'S SOCIAL ROOM AND COFFEE BAR (BELOW)

Dual aspect

Two sister hotels in Chicago are proving multidirectional in their overnight options

Side-by-side, yet wholly distinct, two new hotels are cementing the buzz of Chicago's Wicker Park and Bucktown neighbourhoods. The Robey and The Hollander, the second and third US properties from Mexican hotel group Grupo Habita, are located far away from the din of the city's congested downtown, yet have managed to generate an air of excitement that is all their own.

As the only skyscraper for miles, The Robey in particular commands attention at the intersection of these two creative 'hoods. Based in the 12-storey art deco Northwest Tower, which was originally designed as an office building in 1928 by Perkins, Chatten & Hammond, the 69-room hotel was transformed by Belgian design firms, and occasional collaborators, Nicolas Schuybroek Architects and Marc Merckx Interiors, and is fully dialled into the history of its landmark home. 'Every floor tells a story,' says Merckx. 'It's all about comfort and feeling at home, embracing the creative vibe and heritage of the neighbourhood.' As such, minimalist furniture, hardwood flooring and intelligent lighting by Chicago-based Filament 33 create a mood of simple luxury, both in rooms and in the French-American-style Café Robey. 'The design was conceived as a subtle balance between Americana style and pared-down, timeless, almost "Belgian" interiors,' adds Schuybroek. 'A harmony between old and new, European and American, unpretentious and elegant, timeless and warm.'

If The Robey is the more sophisticated of the two hotels, The Hollander is the hip, younger sister. Emerging from the adjacent 1905 five-storey brick Hollander Fireproof Warehouse, the hostel hybrid, home to eight shared rooms that can sleep up to 12 people



**A NEW MID-MARKET TEMPLATE?
THE HOLLANDER AT A GLANCE**

THERE ARE 66 BEDS IN 12 PRIVATE ROOMS AND EIGHT SHARED ROOMS

THE EIGHT SHARED ROOMS SLEEP FROM 8-12 PEOPLE, AND EACH BED HAS A PERSONAL READING LAMP AND A LOCKER WITH USB PORT

SOCIAL STAY ROOMS START FROM \$45 PER NIGHT, WHILE PRIVATE ROOMS COST \$165

THERE IS AN ON-SITE BIKE RENTAL AND REPAIR SHOP BY PITTSBURGH-BASED OUTFIT BANKER SUPPLY CO

GUESTS CHECKING IN HAVE AN OPTION OF SHARING THEIR INSTAGRAM PROFILES SO THEY CAN PRE-CONNECT WITH OTHER LODGERS

and a dozen private rooms, possesses a more youthful vibe. This is most evident in the hotel's Social Stay scheme, an innovative approach to shared accommodations that allows those booking eligible rooms to connect with their roommates in advance via social media. Throw into the mix an

on-site bike rental and repair shop, a social room and the hotel's own coffee bar, and The Hollander is destined to become Chicago's go-to hipster hangout.

Adrian Hunfalvay, founder of architect practice Delordinaire, which designed The Hollander in collaboration with French design studio Ciguë, points out the particular appeals of the former furniture warehouse. 'The original Hollander building is both banal in its simplicity yet impressive in its scale and its proximity to the city's industrial heritage,' he explains. The new design, typical of Grupo Habita, plays off the building's brute functionality.

The two properties will literally come together this spring when The Robey opens the Cabana Club restaurant and rooftop pool, which, due to planning restrictions, will actually be located atop The Hollander and accessible via an inner walkway connecting the two hotels. The hangout will also be available to guests staying in the private quarters at The Hollander, and will give visitors a taste of the two worlds Habita has managed to carve out in this creative-heavy corner of Chicago.

And why Chicago? 'For its authenticity,' says Habita co-founder Carlos Couturier. 'It's a true community with unique values. It's the crossroads of America – trains, planes and roads merge in Chicago. And lastly, for its great past and amazing architecture. As Frank Lloyd Wright once said: 'Eventually, I think Chicago will be the most beautiful great city left in America.' ✪

The Robey, 2018 West North Avenue, tel: 1.872 315 3050, therobey.com. Rates: from \$175.

The Hollander, 2022 West North Avenue, tel: 1.872 315 3080, thehollander.com. Rates: from \$165