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FUNCTIONALITY MEETS DESIGN AT FAIRLANE HOTEL: Q&A WITH OWNER ETHAN ORLEY

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A restored, historic bank building, the boutique hotel is a retro-modern oasis

NASHVILLE, TN – (January 28, 2020) – A popular tourist destination, Nashville, Tennessee has erupted in recent years, appealing to travelers young and old.

With that growth has come thousands of new hotel rooms within the past few years. 81 of those are centrally located in Nashville's Financial District, mid-century inspired and designed, and found in a historic, restored bank building now known as [Fairlane Hotel](#).

Fairlane Hotel came alive from the bones of a classic, mid-century bank building – one of Nashville's most iconic architectural buildings – including preservation of a travertine exterior, featuring spacious, retro-modern rooms complete with era-appropriate décor and playful details. Below, Ethan Orley, Managing Partner at Oliver Hospitality, co-partners with Philip Welker and one of the two masterminds behind the project, explains the inspiration behind the hotel, the design and more.

Q: Why this building?

A: In 2011, when we purchased the building, there weren't many independent boutique hotels besides Union Station and the Hutton Hotel. Certainly none in the downtown core. Nashville was just at the start of its upswing. The building wasn't a mid century marvel, however it was one of the best examples of the era in Nashville and one that the design community admired. All of our projects rely on some thread of a story to establish a design foundation. In the case of Fidelity Federal Savings & Loan, it was the idea of doing a posh modernist hotel that was conceived in 1972 but was built as a bank instead of a hotel. So, what would the design have aspired to be? No one would have thought that there would be over a dozen boutique hotels building built within nine years, but the great thing is that the building is so recognizable, which is what attracted us to it in the first place. We wanted to make this hotel stand out from the others by providing timeless authenticity, a reflection of a unified design theme vs. perhaps a trend-following design concept.

Q: What sparked the inspiration behind the overall design and aesthetic of Fairlane Hotel?

A: A main design priority was maintaining the integrity of the original bank building and creating an interior design that matched the masculine quality of the building's exterior structure. We focused on the architectural restoration of this iconic mid-century historic banking headquarters, keeping the building's original design in detail and décor as much as possible. The interior is a combination of international mid-century, 1970's and contemporary designs. The idea was to blend them in a way to convey the sensation that the interior was an extension of the exterior while feeling fresh enough for the on the go travelers. When you enter the building, there is a grandness to the design akin to some of the great mid-century lobbies of the era. As you move to the fourth floor restaurant, the space turns to a more masculine social club and American grill. The rooms above evoke a more contemporary vibe with their crisp airiness, however they are drawn back to the international style with our choice of fabrics, woods and shapes. Finally, the Penthouse is meant to evoke the bank President's personal 70's playpen equipped with a hanging fireplace, glam bathroom and true retro trimwork, not to mention an outdoor terrace featuring a 280-degree view of Music City.

Q: And how did you source the furniture and design element to make this vision come to life?

A: Handpicked vintage pieces can be found throughout all public spaces and business rooms, making up about a third of all of the furniture. We partnered with Reunion Goods & Services out of New York to incorporate a blend of textures featuring Nicaraguan wood, green velvet, built-in desks, and era-specific plant life, keeping many of the original elements of the building intact. The lobby includes some fantastic modern Mexican pieces sourced by Luteca as signature elements that complement the vintage pieces. Our Big Business Room features the original 1970's boardroom table and an reupholstered round sofa by Milo Baughman, plus thoughtfully selected plant life and floor to ceiling windows. A local artist, Casey Pierce, has done all of the artwork in the hotel, and continues to do so. He's essentially our artist in residence. We stayed away from any "Nashville" elements, which felt contrived and cliché. When something feels authentic and beautifully designed, it transcends perfectly into its environment.

Q: Why did you decide to make the Penthouse a bookable room vs. a rooftop bar or restaurant open to the public like so many other hotels in Nashville?

A: This building is one-of-a-kind to Nashville, and we wanted to be just that. There are already so many rooftop bars on our street, and we didn't want to be yet another. Philip and I had also experienced partying at several hotel penthouses in New York City that were comfortable both as a residence or as an event space. Plus, we have our 4th floor restaurant, Ellington's Mid Way, with an outdoor terrace, which provides that rooftop feel for guests wanting to dine al fresco. We wanted to have a jaw-dropping, awesome penthouse that would attract local artists as well as celebrities and musicians traveling through Nashville for various reasons who could throw a party for 100 or just stay the night. And we've accomplished just that. We have hosted A-list celebrities and artists for overnight stays, private parties, photoshoots and even private meetings. We have seen more and more event and party bookings recently, with Lady Antebellum shooting in the Penthouse for their recent Billboard feature and a full music video filmed in the Penthouse at the hotel that recently debuted by Emma White. The initial vision was just one large party penthouse; instead, we cut it into two: East and West that could be combined into one. This gave us more flexibility during times that it was not rented for events or parties, and that idea has worked.

For more information on Fairlane Hotel follow on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), or to book, call 615-988-8511 or visit www.fairlanehotel.com.