

# HOME AWAY FROM HOME

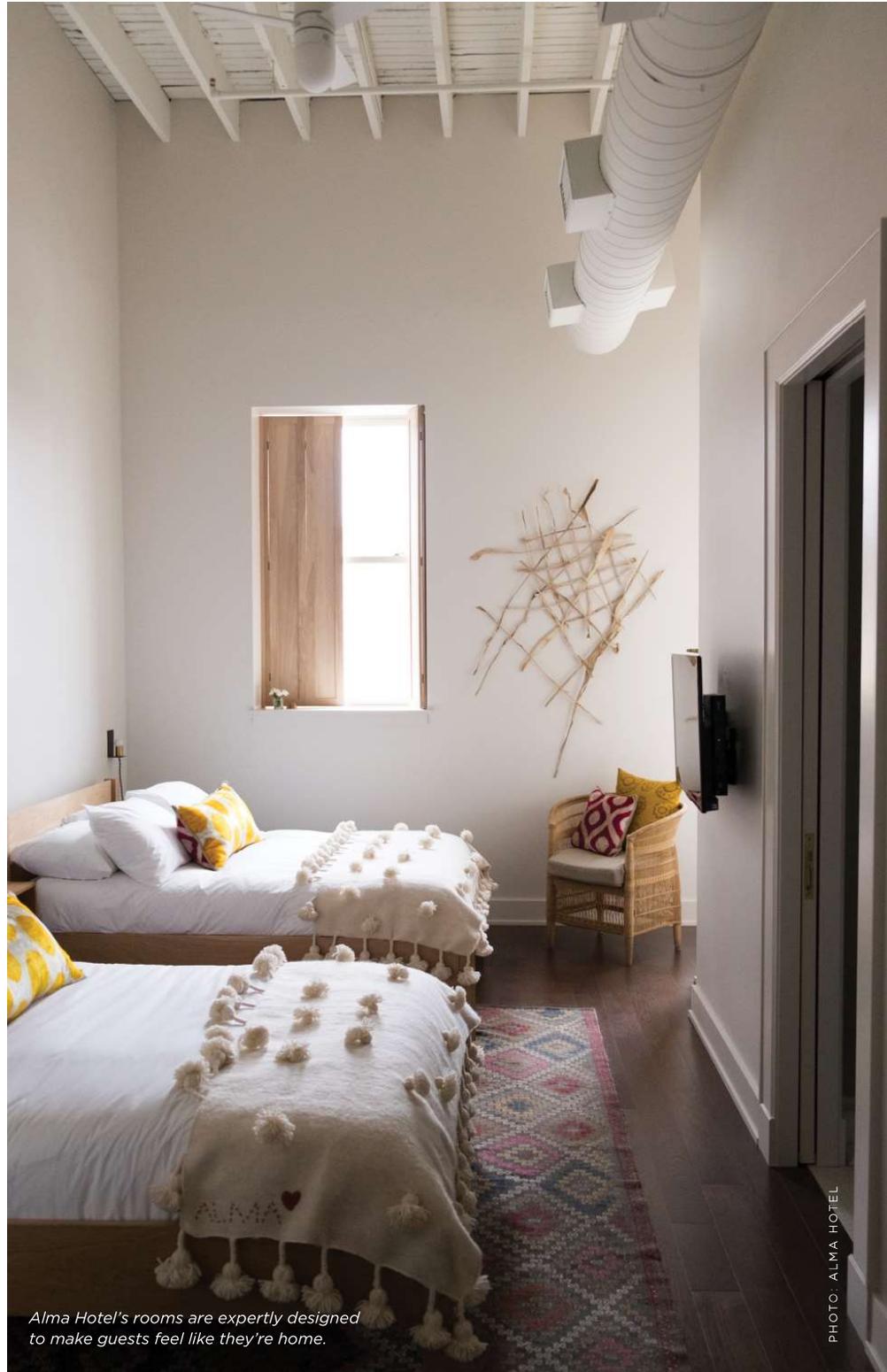
While they're not the largest in the state, these hotels and inns are packed with idiosyncrasy.

BY MORGAN HALASKA

## Alma; Minneapolis

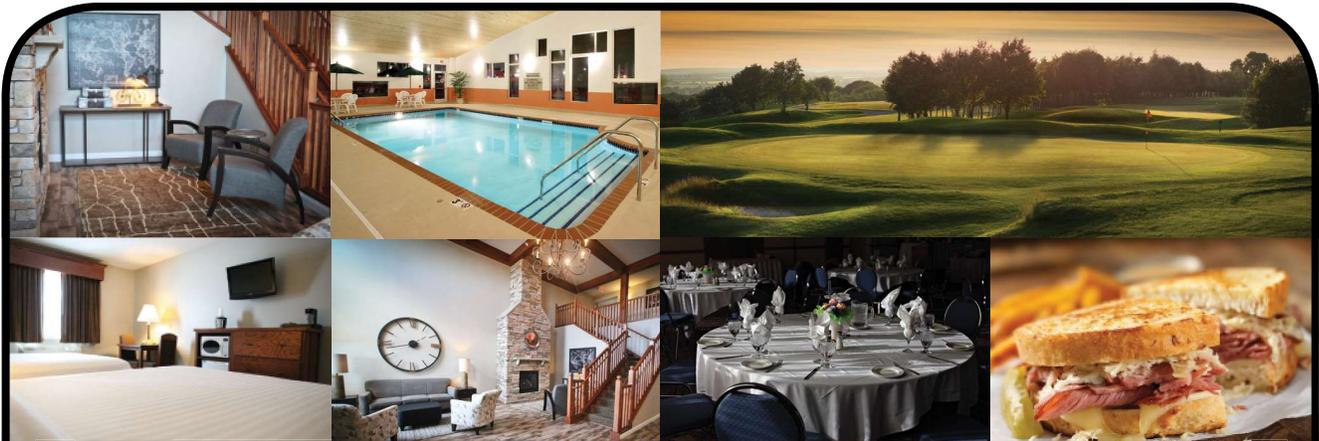
In 1999 Alma opened as a restaurant; now it's a boutique hotel, café and restaurant. Alex Roberts, head chef and owner, purchased the historic building—which sits on the corner of University Ave. and 6th Street in the Marcy Holmes neighborhood of Minneapolis—about three years ago, and the revamped Alma reopened this past November. The concept of an inn upstairs and a restaurant downstairs may seem new, but it's actually an age-old model that Roberts adopted from the time he spent at a corner place in Florence. While the standard hotel amenities aren't there (i.e. fitness room, swimming pool), "what we do have is extremely comfortable rooms," says Hannah Bredahl, private dining coordinator for Alma. "The amenity that we have is that downstairs from your comfortable room, there's a restaurant, there's a full-service café, there's space to be able to work all day. . . . There's nothing better than being able to walk into a room that's clean and well put together and crawling into a bed with crisp, cotton linens that's well made and be able to retire for the night after a nice meal, either in the café or restaurant, which has probably been after a day of busy travel, maybe a busy event."

The seven rooms are styled by Talin Spring of Spring Finn & Co. and feature all the creature comforts of home and more, like a natural bath and body line created by Margo Roberts, Alex's wife. The James Beard-recognized restaurant has been open for 17 years and serves seasonal fare, and while the café is new, the food, pastries and desserts meet the same Alma standard. "There's just more of a difference in the style of service in all the spaces,"



Alma Hotel's rooms are expertly designed to make guests feel like they're home.

PHOTO: ALMA HOTEL



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Atlantic	38	30	50	25	20
Pacific	62	50	75	40	40
Atlantic/Pacific Combined	90	90	175	N/A	N/A
Nicollet	50	50	125	N/A	N/A



Above: Hotel Landing is Lake Minnetonka's first hotel in over 50 years. Right: Alma features a hotel above its restaurant and café.



says Bredahl. “The café has a much more casual-style service whereas the restaurant is very much elevated service. Granted we don’t have white linen table cloths and our servers don’t wear uniforms.”

Event space ranges from private dining for 12 on the restaurant’s intimate mezzanine, to a full restaurant or building buyout (70 and 140 guests, respectively). Private Dining Rooms West and East, which are divided by a partition, can be used separately or together for 20 guests each or 40 together. Alma as it is functions now—as a hotel, restaurant and café—isn’t even a year old yet, and the staff is still learning the different ways to use it to its fullest. “The space as a whole is getting used for more and more things every day, and it’s always exciting to see how it’s evolving and to see what we’re capable of,” says Bredahl.

### Hotel Landing; Wayzata

Opened June 16; 92 guest rooms and suites; 6,700 square feet of meeting/event space

As the first hotel in over 50 years to grace the shores of Lake Minnetonka, Hotel Landing is certainly tapping into its glory years when hotels were booming in the late 1800s. The hotels slowly closed over the years as people began to build private residences instead. “Lake Minnetonka, following the

early recreational use beginning in the late 1800s, was high in demand,” says Steve Bohl, president, BohLand Development and BohLand Hotel Group. “As Minneapolis grew, the demand for residents to live on the lake became the predominant use.”

But Hotel Landing, which is locally owned by BohLand Hotel Group and managed by Hay Creek Hotels, is situated on the last block of The Promenade of Wayzata and drawing in the crowds once again; the hotel is expected to see 25,000-30,000 guests a year. “Wayzata has a vibrant food scene, it’s close to downtown and not far from the airport,” says Andrea Vieyra, director of sales and marketing for the hotel. “It’s a perfect destination for someone wanting a change of scenery from the typical options in this area.”

The two-story on-site restaurant headed by chef Ryan Lund, called **ninetwentyfive**, will serve New American cuisine. Lund’s most recent venture as executive chef at Kitchen Window Cooking School and Event Center (after spending a decade at Lucia’s Restaurant and Bar in Uptown Minneapolis) allowed him to design the menu and source food locally, and he’ll be sourcing fresh, high-quality regional meats, cheeses and produce once

again for Wayzata’s newest restaurant on the scene. Its wine room, which boasts an extensive wine case, has a communal table for 12.

Meeting and event spaces range from a 16-person boardroom and 28-person meeting rooms (two of which can be combined to hold 58) to the 2,700-square-foot ballroom. The hotel uses technology that’s new to the Midwest; called iRis, the platform allows guests to communicate remotely, like check in or request concierge assistance. The European-style Läka Spa focuses mostly on body and facial treatments like massages, facials, body scrubs and body wraps.

### AC Hotel Bloomington Mall of America

Opened Feb. 21; 148 guest rooms; 750 square feet of meeting space

Even though AC Hotel Bloomington Mall of America is quite literally across the street from one of the largest shopping malls in the U.S., a step inside will transport guests to a

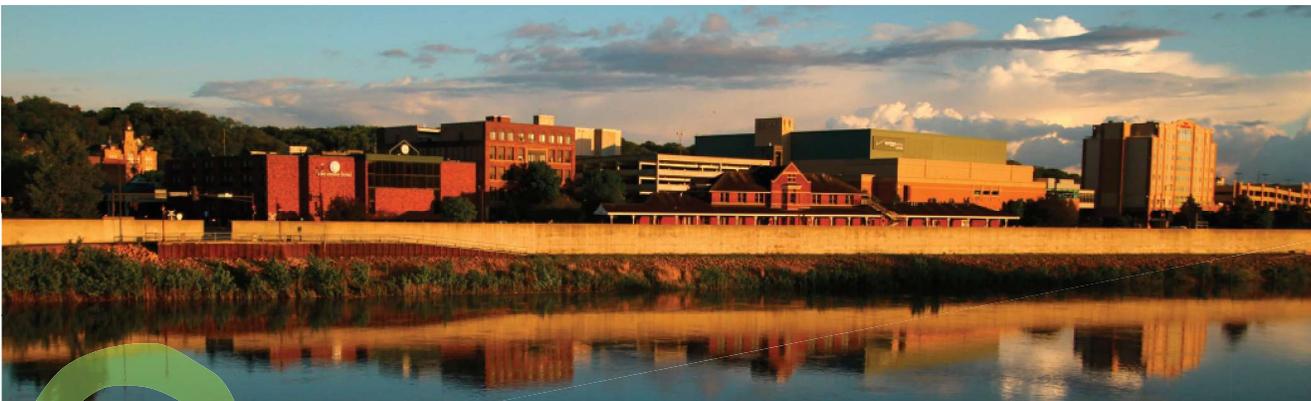
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Above: AC Hotel Bloomington Mall of America boasts a European aesthetic. Right: A rendering of how Moxy Uptown will look once open in October 2017.

decidedly European environment, one that does away with frills. “AC Hotels were really designed to remove the friction from travel,” says General Manager Shane Christenson. “The design is modern, it’s not trendy ... it’s simple but gets you everything you need.”

Developed by Antonio Catalan in 1999, AC Hotels partnered with Marriott in 2011 and has been rapidly spreading across the country (AC Hotel Bloomington Mall of America is the 14th location to open in the U.S. with 30 opening this year and more than 100 in the pipeline; the downtown Minneapolis location opened in fall 2016 and a West End location is slated to open by early 2018, if not sooner).

AC Hotels offer European amenities—or “mantras”—that promote a calming stay for guests, like lavender sachets before bedtime. Breakfast is communal-style dining, serving delicacies like cured meats, artisan cheeses, butter croissants with Nutella and jam, and Spanish-style egg tarts.

“We don’t want to have those things that don’t make sense for the business traveler or quick leisure traveler that’s coming in for the weekend,” says Christenson. Notably, there is no on-site full-service restaurant; guests are



encouraged to taste local flavor outside the hotel and staff will recommend establishments unique to the area. The AC Lounge does, however, serve tapas as well as wine on tap and craft cocktails (like its 45th Parallel Sour).

Even though AC Hotels are distinctly European by design, each hotel pays homage to the city in which it calls home. “We try to connect the local community ... our craft brews that are in our bar are all served in cans because we believe that a can from a craft local brewery tells a story,” says Christenson. Among the hotel’s walls are paintings from local artist Patrick Pryor.

There are three meeting spaces, including a boardroom for 12 and two media salons that seat six people in each; the salons are equipped with Workware technology that

PHOTOS: AC HOTEL; MOXY UPTOWN

allows guests to connect laptops to the 55-inch TV wirelessly. “[The meeting space] is a little bit quieter and has a little bit less traffic ... and we’re finding our clients love it for that,” says Christenson.

### **Moxy Uptown; Minneapolis**

*Slated to open October 2017; 125 guest rooms; penthouse-level Green Room accommodates 25-50 people; lobby can host functions*

Hotels breaking the mold might seem like a new thing, but not to Benjamin Graves, president and CEO, Graves Hospitality. “We’ve been working with Marriott for a number of years [on Moxy Uptown] actually,” he says. “Marriott brought us into the fold when they were first acquiring the brand and they were looking to do some things like check-in at the bar, which is something we did in New York at our Hotel Williamsburg [opened in 2011].”

“The heart and soul of the hotel is the bar,” says Graves. Guests are offered a drink upon check-in, but they can also opt for checking and keying in via the app. With a garage door and sidewalk seating on one side of the bar, guests can experience the hustle and bustle of Lake Street from the comfort of their bar stool.

It’s no mistake that Moxy is Uptown’s first hotel. “Moxy is really meant to be a lifestyle hotel that’s placed in vibrant, urban neighborhoods,” says Graves. The hotel is geared to experience-based traveling. “[The Moxy] guest like[s] to stay where they play.” There’s a focus on the essentials. Instead of a closet, for example, there are pegs on walls to hang your things in plain sight. Says Graves, “We’ve got everything you need but nothing you don’t.”

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