

Meet the Neighbors. Introducing the visionaries who are reimagining their industries by giving new life to the communities they call home.

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Lobby of the
Hotel Hive



Since opening its doors in 2014, Hive has consistently been ranked as one of DC's top 5 hotels on Trip Advisor.

trend characterized by the less-is-more mantra that favors experiences over material possessions. And naturally, as a real estate mogul himself, Jim was interested most of all in the impact this minimalistic approach was having on the brick and mortar business. He did his homework, taking cues from micro-apartments and freshly conceived social spaces before identifying what the city was missing: a micro-hotel, a new way of staying defined by smaller rooms yet bigger experiences. Jim had already been looking for a reason to enter the world of hospitality, and this served up the perfect excuse. He even knew where he would do it—a turn-of-the-century building nestled in the historic Foggy Bottom neighborhood, which he immediately began reimagining to suit his vision. So he had the idea, he had the place; what he didn't have, though, was a name.

"I had been struggling with the name," Jim explains, "because I knew how important it was going to be. So one night, we're just sitting around with friends drinking wine, and my wife looks at me and says: 'How about Hive?'" It was perfect—the very encapsulation of the spirited, immersive social atmosphere Jim was hoping to create. And just like that, Jim's new brand was born. Not even pausing to savor the moment, he immediately went to see if the domain was open. It wasn't, but no website had been built yet, so true to form, he wasn't giving up. "One day," Jim recounts, "I just decided I was going to track down this person who owned it and offer them six figures, or honestly whatever it took." But before he set out on his quest, he decided, just for good measure, to type in the URL one last time. It had somehow miraculously become available overnight, and Jim didn't

Jim Abdo

The developer DC can't stop buzzing about

"My wife says that giving me coffee is like throwing kerosene on a raging fire," Jim quips, looking torn as to whether he should drink the cup currently placed in front of him. "I'm already at my two-cup limit today, and if I have more than that, things can get dangerous." Minutes later—after casually stealing a few

sips in spite of himself—he decides that if he's going to do it, he might as well go big, trading the plain black coffee for a latte that he swears is the best in town. That's Jim for you, though—he's never much seen the point in doing anything halfway.

Years ago, Jim became fascinated with the notion of living simply, the



In his quest to avoid Hive becoming “an over-finished, vanilla box,” Jim “had to force the building to do things it wasn’t necessarily designed to do. It was an exhaustive process,” he says.

hesitate to make the purchase. “Best \$7.99 I ever spent,” he says with a grin.

Four years later, Hive is a favorite local watering hole, rooftop destination, and acclaimed hotel all in one. The concept is simple yet powerful, built around the idea that people today—whether at home or on the road—are looking for unique experiences, better value, and opportunities for social interaction. Gone are the days when travelers check in just to spend all their time in a hotel room, which is why Hive was designed with a particular emphasis on the common spaces and ambiance. In addition to its primetime location that places

guests at the heart of the nation’s capital, Hive also offers plenty of other perks, like its in-house &pizza set-up, as well as the dynamic lobby and rooftop areas that are ideal for working or grabbing a drink with friends.

Structurally, it was important to Jim that the place have character, which he achieved by retaining parts of the building’s original materials, like the exposed brick that reinforces elements of its past from room to room. He refers to Hive’s style as “refined minimalism.” While he drew inspiration from other micro-hotels around the world, he wanted his to “feel more approachable and less sterile than a lot of what you

see in other markets.” Jim also wanted Hive to embody the city it calls home, so he chose to source spirits exclusively from neighboring distilleries and to feature a locally inspired art installation, which was envisioned as much to give a voice to the community’s artists as it was to make the hotel’s elevator from 1916 feel bigger—Jim isn’t a fan of confined spaces. As a solution, he decided to make the elevator itself all glass, and to work with a non-profit to source local applicants who were interested in leaving their mark on the elevator shaft’s walls. Today, the artwork changes from floor to floor—with a new artist’s work represented at each stop—as a way to honor the vitality of the city while solving for the space’s restrictions at the same time.

One thing you won’t find within the walls of Hive, though, is attitude. “What we’re all about is humility and being kind,” Jim says. “I’m sure we’ve all checked into places where you just sense this complete and utter lack of interest in you and your stay. But here, every person on our team genuinely cares about their guests.” They also go to great lengths to personalize each and every experience—and trust me, they’ve seen it all—from business travelers, to parents dropping their kids off at college for the first time, to police officers in town for a convention, to State Department employees just looking to grab a drink at the bar. It’s an environment that has something for everyone, which is why the demographic is all-encompassing, spanning all ages and walks of life. The hotel’s communal spaces hum with an excitement and energy that seems fitting considering this vibrant mix of people that can be found here on any given day. “We’re the luckiest bar owners in the city,” Jim gushes.

A big part of the hotel’s allure, no doubt, is what customers get for their money. “To me, value doesn’t mean having to sacrifice on location, service, or quality,” Jim asserts. And

at Hive, much of the value customers find goes even beyond the many benefits you can quantify. There’s a warmth and authenticity to the place that feels a world away from the contrived and lifeless hotels of the past, which Jim attributes in large part to the collaborative mentality he and his team have cultivated. “When we first opened,” Jim recalls, “we worked really hard to curate the way we wanted the hotel to be run. The amazing thing is that the team here really embraced the mission from day one—they wanted (and still want) to have ownership over it, to be a part of what we’re building here.” When Hive opened its doors in 2014, Jim was spending 12 hours a day there—sometimes even longer—bartending, greeting guests, rearranging furniture, whatever it took to ensure they were delivering on their promise of excellence. “I’ve always been a big believer in leading by example,” Jim says.

He’s also never been afraid to roll up his sleeves, always willing to take a chance on the unknown. When Jim was putting himself through college, he lived in an old, post Civil War mansion in Ohio. He had a tiny studio apartment on the third floor, and in exchange for rent, was helping the owner to renovate the home, which entailed a full demolition. That’s where Jim’s passion for historic structures was born, and it only continued to flourish from there. After graduating, Jim started Abdo Development, a real estate company that first made a name for itself by targeting distressed buildings in DC at a time when everyone was abandoning the nation’s capital. “I just knew it was the time to think inward, not outward,” Jim reflects. “And I didn’t want to do it in a conventional sense, either. So I started focusing on transitional neighborhoods with old, beat up buildings, and making an investment to bring those back.”

Today, Jim is among an elite group of DC developers, although, unsurprisingly, he’s far from

done exploring new directions, always upping the ante on what he’s accomplished to date. At the moment, he’s focused on growing the Hive brand nationwide, in addition to seeking new manifestations for the concept itself. “Forgive the pun,” he starts, “but I’ve realized that there’s a really nice cross-pollination between hotels and co-working spaces in the sense that they leverage many of the same onsite amenities.” While Jim believes that future iterations of Hive will unite the two concepts by including a designated co-working area, he plans to create a prototype on 14th Street in the meantime that’s a work hub by day, and a social club after hours.

Years ago, right around the time when Hive first opened, Jim participated in a live event called Art Tank—inspired, of course, by the popularized show Shark Tank, although Jim can’t resist asking facetiously if I’ve ever heard of it. The idea was for a selection of local artists to pitch their inspiration for projects to be installed around town, with the panelists—a hand picked group of developers—able to bid on an artist of their choice. The pitch Jim that stuck out to Jim? An ambitious plan to paint a bridge in Foggy Bottom, with the intent of beautifying a long-standing “eye sore” in the community. Jim told the artist: “Look, you and I might go to jail for this, but I’m willing to fund it...” We’re inside one of Hive’s rooms at the time, and as Jim speaks, he peers out a window, trying to find a good vantage point to show me the final outcome of his efforts. The angle isn’t quite right, so I tell him I’ll have to go see it another time. And although I would like to see it, there’s no doubt in my mind that it’s there—regardless of the obstacle, Jim’s will always seems to find a way.

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