



A rustically elegant guest room with a balcony and queen beds.

Boulder Boutique

Charlevoix's new rock star, Hotel Earl, boldly honors an historic local builder's distinctive design style

By Dianna Stampfler

A century ago, Charlevoix architect Earl Young first began moving rocks and boulders of all shapes, sizes, and colors, turning them into a series of unique homes, inns, and lodges that remain a foundation of this Lake Michigan shoreline community.

Back in 1959, the Michigan native opened the Weathervane Lodge — affectionally called “The Lodge” — a two-story, 36-room complex designed in the Mid-century Modern style.

In 2018, the historic and well-worn motel

was purchased by Silva Property Management. After an investment of more than \$5 million, the dated structure was transformed into an elegant, three-story, 56-room boutique hotel. The massive boulder at the entrance, which has welcomed guests for generations, stands just as proudly as it always has, with a new neon sign that reads Hotel Earl — a tribute to the visionary builder.

Located on U.S. 131 just steps northeast of Charlevoix's famed drawbridge and across the road from Stafford's Weathervane Inn (built by Young in 1955), the Hotel Earl has become a friendly gathering place for locals

and visitors.

Towering floor-to-ceiling windows, horizontal rooflines, and private balconies give Hotel Earl a fresh, urban look, while rock accent walls and the restored “Witch's Hat” conical tower caps keep Young's storybook architectural legacy alive.

The check-in area and Lobby Lounge are adorned with rich wood tones and accents, along with vibrant splashes of color, while whimsical furniture and décor add to the hotel's charm. The bar, which is open to the public, serves tasty light fare as well as hand-crafted cocktails and a selection of Michigan

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HOTEL EARL



Above: The Lobby Lounge and other public areas are adorned with rich wood tones and accents. **Below:** A hotel suite's large bathroom provides plenty of space.

beers.

Guest rooms are rustically elegant, with posh bedding juxtaposed against polished live-edge wood headboards, contemporary colored accent furniture and geometric-patterned carpeting, quartz countertops, and chic lighting. Hand-painted murals by local artist Kris Beemsterboer and oversized monochromatic artwork adorn many of the walls. Vintage-looking Victrola Bluetooth radios add a bit of nostalgic flair, while also providing the necessary technology for today's travelers.

"From the beautiful grounds to the exceptional rooms, this place is amazing," Jessica Jordan says of a recent trip to Hotel Earl. "I've traveled to many hotels, and this hotel is one of the best. It's very complementary of the city of Charlevoix, and close enough to walk to various things to do."

The most coveted unit in the hotel is the 1,500-square-foot, third-floor Earl Suite. Perfect for bridal parties or other special occasions, the space includes one bedroom, two bathrooms (one with a soaker tub), a large living room with a fireplace, an adjoining full kitchen, a washer/dryer, and a large private balcony that overlooks Michigan Avenue, with views of Round Lake.

New features at Hotel Earl include an indoor swimming pool with a ceiling waterfall, an outdoor hot tub, and an enhanced fitness

center, as well as a high-tech, 12-seat private boardroom, and rooftop deck, popular with sunset-watchers and photographers.

"I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to continue the legacy of this property while honoring the design originally created by the architect and builder, Earl Young," says Paul Silva, owner of Hotel Earl. "I'm proud that we were able to embrace the origins of this hotel while creating a modern show-place destination."

TAKE A TOUR: Those inspired by

Earl Young's work should take a drive (or walk) through the Boulder Park neighborhood (southwest of Hotel Earl, near the Lake Michigan shoreline). Affectionately known as "Mushroom Houses" or "Hobbit Homes," these one-of-a-kind fairytale dwellings reflect Young's desire to incorporate nature into everything he built. Every stone, no matter its mass, was unearthed by Young himself, then purposely placed and meant to stand the test of time.

GEM Car Tours, which travel past all 28 local Earl Young homes, are offered April through November by the award-winning company Mushroom House Tours (mushroomhousetours.com). Edith Pair founded the company in 2009 and began by offering walking tours, before adding transportation for up to 11 passengers. ☞

PLAN IT!

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hotelearl.com

