



Waterfront Wonder

Port Huron's new boutique hotel, CityFlats, graces the riverfront with historic charm, modern comfort, and eco-consciousness

By Dianna Stampfler
Photos by Ashley Wierenga

Nearly a century ago, the Federal Commercial and Savings Bank opened at the corner of Military and Water streets along the Black River in downtown Port Huron. Its stately facade would later house the Michigan National Bank (a name that remains boldly emblazoned on the side of the building) before recently being transformed into the latest CityFlatsHotel.

The CityFlatsHotel brand was launched in 2008 by Charles “Chuck” Reid of Zeeland-based Charter House Innovations to showcase his company’s sustainable designs. The inaugural Holland location (rebranded this past spring as Tulyp Hotel — Tapestry Collection by Hilton) was the first hotel in the Midwest and only the second in the world to achieve LEED Gold certification. A sec-

ond CityFlatsHotel opened in downtown Grand Rapids in 2011 in the former Fox Jewelers building (also LEED Gold), followed by the Port Huron location in June 2022 — the first boutique hotel in the city of nearly 29,000 residents.

“We’re proud to be an independently owned, eco-chic, boutique hotel where historic charm meets modern comfort,” says Sara Bower, director of sales and marketing for Charter House Innovations, which also owns Sperry’s Moviehouse locations in Port Huron and Holland.

Each of the 18 CityFlatsHotel guest rooms features a different design. **Inset:** The downtown riverfront boutique hotel occupies a former 1900s bank building.



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Each of the property’s 18 rooms is individually curated, and no two are identical. The elegant master suite, which affords views of both downtown Port Huron and the Black River, features a rounded living room and large bathroom with a walk-in shower and soaking tub.

“Our eco-consciousness can be found in the details of our building’s renovation — sustainable cork flooring, energy-effi-

cient lighting and plumbing, and naturally hypoallergenic bamboo linens,” Bower notes. “Many guests are especially smitten with our beds and pillows, which is fabulous because our mattresses (CityDrem) are custom designed for our hotel and our pillows are high-end luxury, to ensure guests can truly relax. We strive for the perfect balance of comfort and sustainability (across our entire property).”

In addition to the comfortably stylish guest rooms, CityFlatsHotel Port Huron boasts an opulent 300-person ballroom within the grand banking hall from the early 1900s, complete with 30-foot-tall windows, towering ceilings, marble columns, gold leafing details, and the original bank vault, which is a popular spot for taking photographs.

“The ballroom also offers a new sound system and customizable spectrum lighting options throughout the space, to give an upscale ambience to the events we host — whether it’s a corporate celebration, anniversary or birthday party, or something else entirely,” Bower says. “One of our wedding coordinators recently said we’ve become a popular venue for Canadian-American couples because Sarnia, Canada, is literally right across the St. Clair River from us.”

Visitors will find plenty to whet their appetites at CitySide restaurant, a recreated blend of former on-site eateries that reopened this summer. During the boating season, the CityFloats bar-barge is a hotspot along the hotel’s riverside terrace, serving classic cocktails and a variety of appetizers and entrées. It’s also a prime location for viewing the annual Bayview to Mackinac Yacht Race, held each July and recognized as one of the longest and most challenging freshwater boat races in the world (it was first held in 1925).

“This boutique hotel is one of the newer additions to the Thumbcoast, and it’s a well-done collaboration of modern-styled rooms housed in a historic building,” says Katie Stepp, marketing manager at the Blue Water Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Best of all, it’s centrally located on the maritime waterfront in

downtown Port Huron with entertainment, eateries, and shopping.”

In June 2023, the Port Huron hotel (as well as the Grand Rapids location) announced a partnership with Choice Hotels — Ascend Hotel Collection, a collective of independent, upscale boutique hotels.

“What makes Ascend particularly special is that we can remain an autonomous and

local brand while continuing to offer a personalized experience for our guests,” Bower says. “The rewards program through Choice allows guests to trust that they’ll find that personal, boutique experience wherever they wish to go, and they can easily find properties in cities throughout the U.S. and worldwide. We also love that they’re committed to eco-friendliness.”



Top: An eco-friendly lobby welcomes guests with locally crafted furniture and cork flooring. **Above:** Sleek bathrooms are stocked with high-end products. **Right:** Desk areas include reclaimed wood and glass building materials.