

# HOTEL ULYSSES

## ACTIVATING MOUNT VERNON

Located in the heart of Baltimore's storied Mount Vernon neighborhood, Ulysess, whose name references the ship that brought Bavarian immigrants to Baltimore at the turn of the century, is a creative ode to the city's eccentricities. The 116-room hotel occupies the 1912 Latrobe Building that once housed apartments for affluent gentlemen and was designed with the idea of a traveler returning to Baltimore from a Grand Tour accompanied by an assemblage of souvenirs.







Google Earth

### **Applicant Contact Information**

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### **All Companies Involved with the Project**

Owner and Interior Designer: ASH  
General Contractor: Southway Builders Inc.  
Architect: Quinn Evans  
Civil Engineer: STV  
MEP Engineer: Burdette, Koehler, Murphy & Associates  
Structural Engineer: Mincin Patel Milano  
Lighting Designer: Flux Studio  
Historic: EHT Traceries  
Kitchen Consultant: EVI  
Lenders: Main Street Bank, Midland State Bank, and Twain Financial  
Maryland Historical Trust (federal historic tax credits)  
National Park Service (federal historic tax credits)  
Photographers: Brett Wood, Joe Romeo





Photograph: Brett Wood

## COMPLETENESS

The project is complete and has been operating for nearly a year. ASH Invested over \$30m in the renovation of the hotel and was one of only a few hotel deals to close on construction financing in August of 2020. The project utilized federal historic tax credits and PACE financing and the deal generates competitive market returns. The building was largely vacant when ASH acquired the property. By transforming this corner of North Charles Street from a largely empty and inactive day-time use to an active, 24/7 use, the hotel has created an anchor for the commercial corridor, increased street level activity, and created customers for the adjacent businesses.

The hotel has garnered national and international recognition through multiple promotional campaigns, helping to change and bolster the perception of Baltimore on the national stage. These campaigns (multiple design, interiors, travel publications, social media etc) remind people that Baltimore is on the map, and while incalculable, aid in the City's overall public image. Closer to home, the hotel and particularly its restaurant, Ash—Bar, and drinking parlor, Bloom's, have garnered numerous accolades in local publications as well as long lines out the door.

A sampling of recent national and local publicity includes:

- Esquire: [www.esquire.com/food-drink/bars/a43989427/best-bars-america-2023/](https://www.esquire.com/food-drink/bars/a43989427/best-bars-america-2023/)
- Conde Nast Travler (<https://www.cntraveler.com/hotels/baltimore/ulysses>) "A fantastical, spectacularly designed dive into the uncanny, Ulysses offers a delightfully camp antidote to the tired trend of muted minimalism."
- NY Times <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/22/t-magazine/ulysses-hotel-baltimore.html>
- Vogue <https://www.vogue.com/article/hotel-ulysses-baltimore-first-look>
- Baltimore Magazine - Ash—Bar [www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/fooddrink/review-ash-bar-mt-vernon-hotel-ulysses/](https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/fooddrink/review-ash-bar-mt-vernon-hotel-ulysses/)
- Baltimore Fishbowl: [baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/the-ulysses-a-new-boutique-baltimore-hotel-fit-for-john-waters-and-his-characters/](https://baltimorefishbowl.com/stories/the-ulysses-a-new-boutique-baltimore-hotel-fit-for-john-waters-and-his-characters/)





Photograph: Brett Wood

## A SENSE OF PLACE & QUALITY

Ulysses' distinct interior design aesthetic is inspired by Art Deco movie palaces, the work of Baltimorean legendary movie director John Waters, ancient temples, and the color-blocked patterns seen from a moving train. Baltimore's history as a melting pot led to a pastiche of design elements from India, Italy, and Turkey, including globally-sourced antiques that add a depth of soul and history.

Hotel floors group guest rooms by color – azure, citron, cerise or jade – which teem with visual myth and rhythm such as the sporadic flamingo motif – a subtle nod to John Waters – found on the four-poster beds' scalloped canopies or in the bedside tables' carved legs.

Ulysses common spaces take design cues from historic architecture of past and present. Ash-Bar, the all-day hotel restaurant, is inspired by the languid communion of old-world cafés and Bloom's, the decadent drinking parlor located in the Poppy Room, combines the art deco glamor of its 1920s glory with the irreverent revamps of the '70s and '80s.



Photograph: Brett Wood





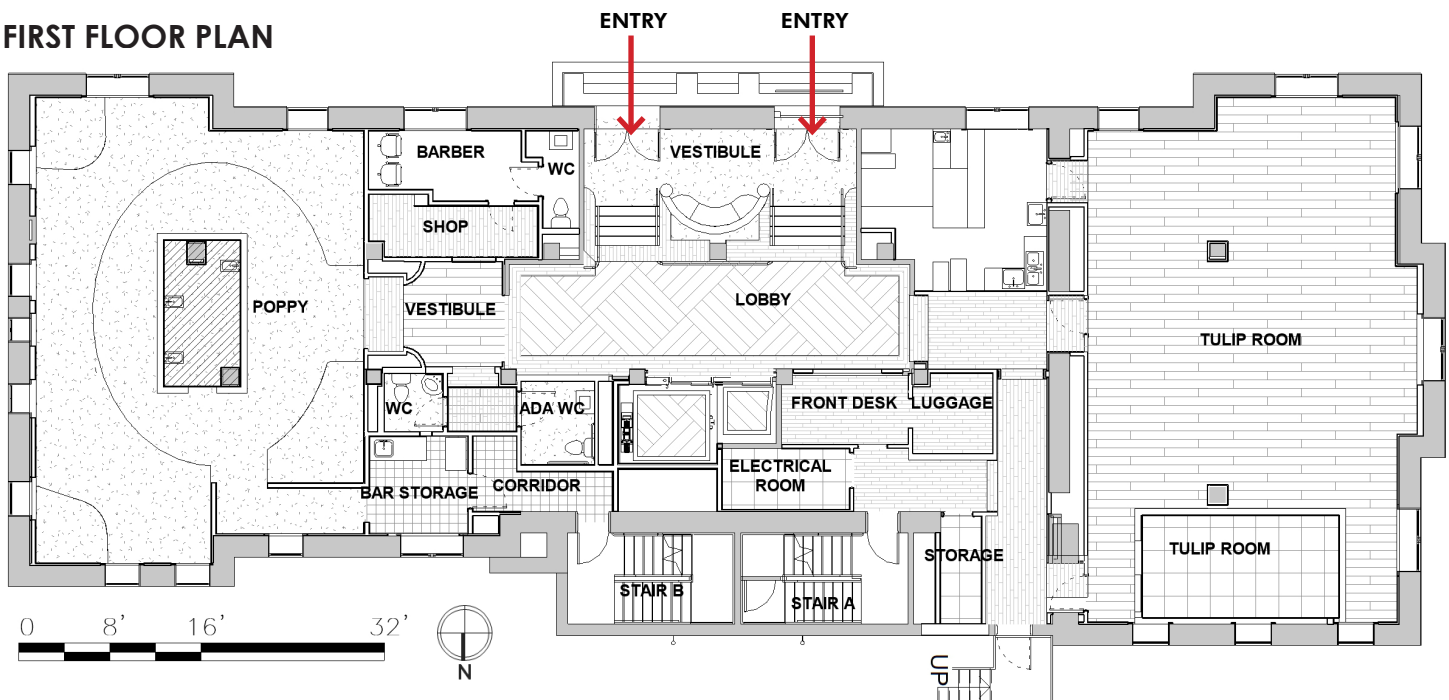
Photograph: Brett Wood

## A SENSE OF PLACE AND QUALITY

Though most of the building interior had been gutted in the 1980s office conversion, the existing building infrastructure presented a few significant challenges. Limited floor-to-floor heights, an archaic floor structure, tiny elevator shafts and restrictions on any ceiling penetrations above the historic lobby necessitated creative design solutions. The AE team designed in flexibility to the floor plans that could accommodate unforeseen conditions and atypical structure by way of oversized mechanical shafts adjacent to each guest room, which ultimately enabled the unique interior design aesthetic for each of the 116 guest rooms.

The shiny surfaces and patterns designed into Ash-Bar and Bloom's draw the eye inward and work cooperatively to take full advantage of the low ceiling heights.

## FIRST FLOOR PLAN







Photograph: Joe Romeo

BEFORE



## SUSTAINABILITY

Adaptive reuse is inherently sustainable by reusing an existing, underutilized asset. The urban nature of the property and its presence on North Charles Street makes it walkable and transit accessible. No new parking spaces were added as part of the project. The project utilized a high-efficiency VRF system for heating and cooling, and water-sense plumbing fixtures throughout.

The project provided jobs for 140 individuals during construction (85% Maryland-based, and of those, 30% Baltimore-based) and has hired locally for the majority of hotel, bar and restaurant staff. The hotel has over 75 employees, all of whom are paid competitive wages and have access to a full suite of benefits

Changes to the building exterior were minimal and consisted of improving the existing Lower Level accessible entrance, new canopies, new window openings at the former party wall, new lighting and signage. Key historic interior spaces that remained – primarily the lobby and vestibule - were retained and serve as a backdrop for the reimagined interior aesthetic.





Photograph: Brett Wood

## VISIONARY & EMULATION

A living homage to the Latrobe Building and its early Italian Renaissance style, Ulysses is a three-dimensional scrapbook of the many former selves of the historic building. Each thing here represents a moment – from the lights and linens to the stationery and doorknobs, it’s a design story built on history.

Built in 1912, Ulysses was originally designed for the specific needs of new and local bachelors as it sat at the nexus of the railroad and the shipping ports in Baltimore, which was second only to New York as a global port-of-entry. Prior to apartments, the same site once accommodated the home of seven-time Baltimore mayor Ferdinand Latrobe (for whom the building was named.)

After a brief time as offices, Ulysses is now entirely renovated and reemerged as a hotel. With 116 rooms, four auspicious suites, a clandestine drinking parlor, and an all-day bistro, Ulysses is a place for transportive gathering.

Drawing upon the history of the building as a home for turn-of-the-century travelers, design elements in Ulysses’ common spaces and guest rooms are inspired by the 1920s and 1930s steam train cars and ocean cruise liners, melding grandeur with intimacy. Orate carpets line the rooms and hallways, reimagined in modern patterns. Gold leaf accents can be found in guestrooms, from framed mirrors and art prints to wall sconces. Mid Century Modern furniture intermingles with antiques.

The hotel also preserved original elements, from the delicate stained-glass skylight in the ninth-floor elevator vestibule to the ornate pilasters and crown molding in the lobby, or the brass postal box and chute from the building’s original internal mail system and exterior façade of the building. Intermingled amongst the original design elements are globally sourced antiques that add a depth of soul and history.

Designed as a salon for daily consumption, Ash-Bar, the all-day hotel restaurant is inspired by the languid communion of old-world cafés but operating at the pace of contemporary life. Playing with compressed space, the restaurant’s dining room pulls cues from the 1920s and 1930s steam train cars and turn-of-the-century ocean cruise liners, where grandeur and intimacy find common ground. Low ceilings create an intimate space, while rounded corners allow the space to flow without hard distinctions between bar and restaurant, lounge seating and banquet tables.

The hotel’s bar, Bloom’s, combines the art deco glamor of its 1920s glory with the irreverent revamps of the ‘70s and ‘80s. A softer counterpoint to the restaurant, the space is overflowing with plush fabrics and rich colors of royal purple and crimson, juxtaposed with fully mirrored walls and ceiling.





Photograph: Brett Wood

## A NEED

ASH was seeking another location for a logical expansion of its hospitality division and identified both Baltimore, and the Mount Vernon neighborhood as a perfect fit. With projects completed in Providence, Rhode Island, Detroit, MI and New Orleans, LA, the ASH hospitality portfolio is defined by its irreplaceable, historic assets located in rapidly evolving urban centers that lack hotel options for visitors, and that are affordable without sacrificing modern comforts or a unique identity. ASH's hotels are further connected by their local design influences and dynamic public spaces.

The Baltimore market has been characterized by two types of hotels in the recent past: corporate, franchised properties catering towards a certain type of business and convention travelers and unflagged properties in fringe locations with downscale reputations and amenities. The hotel at the Latrobe building sought to create a home for a wide and growing segment of travelers for which there are few current options—new economy business travelers, conventioners driven by style and point of view (typically in creative and tech industries), visitors and tourists seeking an experience in line with Baltimore's growing creative reputation, and educational and healthcare (so called "meds and eds") professionals who tend to be younger and attracted to experiential lodging.

The Hotel Ulysses at the revitalized Latrobe building represents a new type of lodging in the Baltimore market, marked by a design-centric approach to public spaces and guest rooms, innovative food, beverage, restaurant and retail programming and an independent spirit in sync with the burgeoning creative community of Baltimore. The hotel shares brand characteristics with ASH's hotel projects in Providence, Detroit, and New Orleans, which are characterized by their design focus, relative affordability, emphasis on culture, architecture and history, adjacency to major business, creative, educational, medical, governmental, convention and mass-transit anchors, and positioning in rapidly emerging urban neighborhoods propelled by considerable public and private investment.

In the case of Ulysses, being rooted in the historic neighborhood of Mount Vernon created an opportunity to inject this beautiful but somewhat sleepy part of town with new vitality. ASH's goal was to create a town square of sorts for the neighborhood and the city, where all different types of people could come meet for a coffee or a cocktail or just a chat. Hotels are inherently public spaces and ASH takes its job of serving the public very seriously. The Ulysses is typical of other hotels ASH has created - inherently transporting, also rooted in their community. That alchemy of global but local, tangible but otherworldly, is the stuff of magic that only hotels can accomplish.