

= Virgin Hotels Chicago =

The Virgin Hotels Chicago (formerly Old Dearborn Bank Building or 203 North Wabash Avenue) is a historic building in the Loop community area of Chicago , Illinois , that has been converted from use as an office building to use as a hotel run via a mobile app based business model . The 250 @-@ room hotel is the first of Richard Branson 's Virgin Hotels brand boutique hotels geared toward the female business traveller .

= = Old Dearborn Bank Building = =

Situated at the intersection of East Lake Street and North Wabash Avenue , the Old Dearborn Bank Building was constructed between 1926 and 1928 with ornate medieval and mythological terra @-@ cotta decoration that was typical of movie palaces that were its contemporaries . The neoclassical architecture designed building is one of only two Rapp and Rapp buildings designed as an office building . Soon after the Old Dearborn Bank opened in 1928 , it was acquired and its parent company was liquidated in the United States ' Great Depression . The building , which is 27 stories high , was designated a Chicago Landmark on June 4 , 2003 . The 300 @-@ foot (91 @.@ 4 m) light brown brick building with a steel structure includes 25 floors above ground and two below .

The owners of the building defaulted on a \$ 9 million loan from John Hancock Life Insurance resulting in the acquisition of the loan (and thus the property) for an undisclosed amount by Urban Street Properties LLC in April 2010 . The building had been acquired by the previous owners for \$ 9 @.@ 5 million in 2001 .

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On October 24 , 2011 , Virgin Hotels , part of Virgin Group , purchased the building with the aim of opening it as their first hotel in 2013 with approximately 250 rooms . The transaction was an all @-@ cash deal that was valued at about \$ 14 million . The company hired The John Buck Company to renovate the building . The lead architect for the renovation was Booth Hansen . The co @-@ designers for the interior renovation were Rockwell Group Europe and Virgin Hotels ' in @-@ house design team . The purchase was part of Virgin Hotels ' 2010 business plan to acquire distressed properties in North America cheaply during the property downturn .

The building opened for business as a hotel on January 15 , 2015 . It is the first of what was planned to be twenty Virgin Hotels locations that operate under this business model . The renovation took longer than planned due to the building 's city landmark status , which required continuing coordination with the Commission on Chicago Landmarks . Original features that were retained include a 1920s oak cigar bar , brass elevator lobby doors and a tiled ceiling . The final layout of 250 rooms includes 40 single @-@ room suites and 2 penthouse suites . 40 rooms are pet friendly .

Under the auspices of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks , the renovation included brick , window and steel frame replacement . The focal point of the renovated building is the publicly accessible Commons Club on the second floor , with a contemporary @-@ style bar , a full kitchen , a lounge area , curated books and local memorabilia . At the time of opening , four additional dining options were expected within three months . The area was carved out of a former second @-@ floor banking hall .

The hotel has no check @-@ in desk ; it uses a smartphone check @-@ in system in which you scan a QR code and retrieve your room key from a vending machine . The visitors use a mobile app , named Lucy , that the company describes as a " personal comfort assistant " . According to Mary Forgiione of The Los Angeles Times , the app can order more pillows , handle room service orders , and serve as a remote control for both the television and the hotel 's music library . The website also suggests that the app can control room temperature , interface with the chat board , provide local knowledge , and coordinate your messages with hotel staff .

When asked about the operation , Virgin 's Richard Branson said " There won ' t be hidden

charges , and you won't get charged \$ 10 for a chocolate bar you know you can buy at a store for \$ 2 . " Branson has stated that the brand is geared toward the female business traveler . The rooms feature a patent @-@ pending ergonomic bed and several female friendly features in the dressing room , shower and closets .

== Reviews ==

Bloomberg Business 's Jennifer Parker noted that the hotel was on the cutting edge of technology upon its opening , but questioned whether the hotel had any gender leanings . She found fault with the gym , toiletries , and delayed spa opening , but enjoyed the social ambiance , the normal retail prices of minibar items (rather than more standard hotel overpricing) and the top notch free Wi @-@ Fi . She found many of the appealing elements of the designed to be dubiously marketed , but appealing nonetheless .

Chicago Tribune 's Pulitzer Prize @-@ winning architecture critic , Blair Kamin , praised the incorporation of various wildlife into the decor and numerous elements of the rehab resulting from the alliance of real estate developers and historic preservationists , but made it clear that Virgin Hotels Chicago is not the Four Seasons Hotel Chicago or Ritz @-@ Carlton (Four Seasons) . He describes this as a successful recycling of a second @-@ tier historic building .

== Old Dearborn Bank Building 2007 Gallery ==