

COMMERCIAL Construction & Renovation

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Attitude matters

How citizenM is reshaping
how the industry thinks
about hotels

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June 2021

Hip. Cool. Repeat.

How the Bellyard is
helping redefine Atlanta's
Westside streetscape

Brendan Abraham, General Manager
Bellyard

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How the Bellyard is helping redefine Atlanta's Westside streetscape

The Bellyard on Atlanta's Westside can dazzle guests at every turn. For starters, the coolest new Midtown hotel on the block features 161 suites and guestrooms decked out with the latest and greatest in technological offerings.

You want cool? Check out the room numbers branded into the floor. Or, take a long look at the art from local designers displayed throughout the hotel, or custom furnishings, cowhide carpeting and that Japanese soaking tub tucked into a massive shower.

The Bellyard West Midtown Atlanta, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel from Marriott, is the perfect complement to Midtown Atlanta's swath of super hip, smart restaurants, and retail and office spaces. Once the home of cattle stockyards and myriad rail lines, Atlanta's Westside is the latest "must be" place in the city's growing legacy.

To get an inside look at the Bellyard project, we sat down with GM Brendan Abraham and Alex Campbell, AIA, LEED AP, Regional Design Leader, Studio Leader, Director, at NELSON Worldwide.

Give us a snapshot of the Bellyard brand?

Brendan Abraham, Bellyard: The boutique hotel offers guests a lively atmosphere to stay, work, nourish, lounge and connect in Atlanta. Inspired by Atlanta's progressive expansion to the west, Bellyard immerses guests in West Midtown's rich history

through industrial-cool, locally crafted design that nods to the stockyards and railroads. The bar and lounge, Drawbar, features craft cocktails made with locally sourced ingredients and fruit syrups that complement the Southern fresh menu.

What type of consumer are you targeting?

Bellyard's Abraham: Bellyard welcomes business and leisure travelers; locals; young professionals; and creatives to relax in our contemporary yet home-like atmosphere.

What type of things are consumers looking for today?

Bellyard's Abraham: As travel picks up, guests are looking for a clean, comfortable environment for their adventures. To create a welcoming experience, Bellyard implements Marriott International's enhanced health and safety precautions, which include frequent cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectants, social distancing protocols, hand-sanitizing stations throughout the hotel, state-of-the-art cleaning technology and air purifying systems.

Travelers also are seeking a memorable and personalized experience as they check

in to their hotels. With Bellyard's local touches and hybrid social, dining and work spaces throughout the property, our boutique hotel offers a haven to each guest.

Alex Campbell, NELSON Worldwide:

Today's guests are looking for exceptional experiences. Destinations that offer the comforts they desire and the unexpected touches that make connections with places and people memory worthy. Guests are looking for "more"—more than they can have at home, more than they have come to expect in the past from previous hospitality stays and brands need to deliver on that desire for "more" in new ways through service, amenities, and beyond.

Take us through the design strategy.

NELSON Worldwide's Campbell: Our strategy is always to meet the design goals of our client by providing them with the best branded experience while being conscious of budget.

What's the biggest issue today related to the construction side of the business?

Bellyard's Abraham: COVID-19 caused delays and even halts to nearly all hotel projects since it hit as travel demand declined and work shortages for vendors and suppliers



arose. Bellyard opened without delay, and our team looks forward to welcoming visitors from near and far to the hotel's safe, modern and comfortable atmosphere.

NELSON Worldwide's Campbell: The availability of materials and cost is by far the biggest issue impacting construction right now. These conditions are creating a serious impact to our client's budgets and schedules.

Walk us through the Bellyard design.

NELSON Worldwide's Campbell: The project began by defining the hotel's brand. Rooted in the rich history of West Midtown and The Interlock local touches and carefully curated brand moments created a space where guests feel comfortable in a unique boutique setting they can't get at any other hotel in Atlanta. The wood and steel materials,

combined in a rich and sophisticated way, speak to the history in a subtle and up-to-date approach extending branded touch points through the entire guest experience.

How does the design of the hotel cater to how today's guests' stay?

NELSON Worldwide's Campbell: The Bellyard caters to today's guests by offering amenities and a genuine localized experience. The hotel is designed to allow a truly authentic Atlanta experience. Inspired by the rich history of the West Midtown neighborhood, modern elegant touches nodding to the stockyards and railroads alongside furniture and fixtures curated by local artisans and designers created space for guests to not only enjoy the vibes of the hotel, but the surrounding neighborhood.

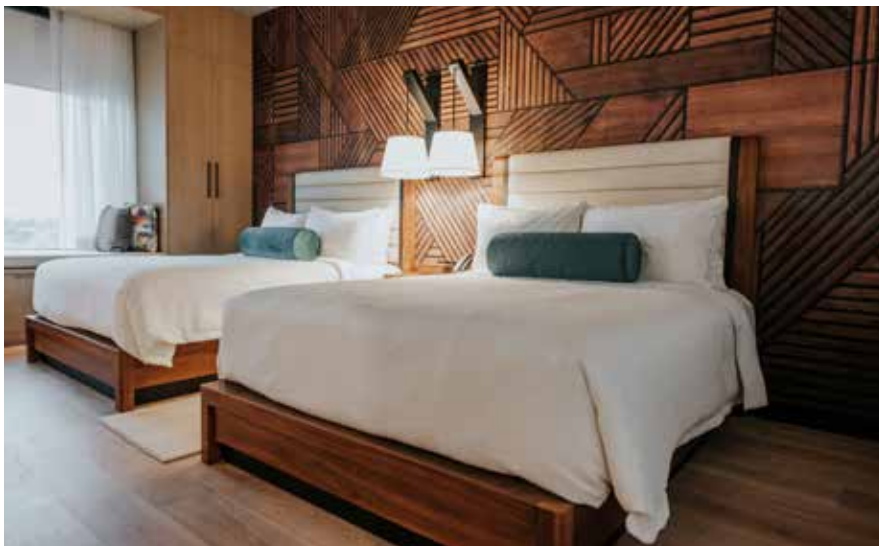
We are laser-focused on providing guests an inviting experience that exceeds expectations.

— Brendan Abraham, Bellyard

All guest rooms provide a retreat for relaxation while the public spaces feature an array of engaging experiences, including a lobby bar, courtyard, exclusive restaurant and a signature rooftop terrace with a panoramic view of the Atlanta skyline. Dynamic seating and lounge areas also allow guests to feel comfortable for every occasion—eating, drinking with friends, working or relaxing.

Talk about sustainability. What are you doing?

Bellyard's Abraham: Bellyard has many sustainability measures within the four walls, including a full recycling program and LED lighting throughout the property with motion



sensors to conserve energy. All thermostats also are equipped with motion sensors as well as a program called Telkonet, transforming guestrooms into smart rooms that automatically default to a set temperature following guest check out. Bellyard and Drawbar use all biodegradable paper products.

What do you see as some of your biggest opportunities moving ahead?

Bellyard's Abraham: We envision Bellyard becoming a hotspot for both travelers and locals to enjoy the culinary excellence of Drawbar—the hotel's cocktail-centric, American tavern-inspired eatery—while



taking in picturesque views of the Atlanta skyline. The hotel's approximately 7,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space serve as an ideal location for business and social events alike.

Are you optimistic about what you see in the hotel/resort sector?

Bellyard's Abraham: It is positive news to see the hotel industry is recovering from the pandemic sooner than expected. We have seen strong weekend demand in the Atlanta market since opening, and we hope to welcome even more travelers, as well as corporate and group business, shortly as restrictions continue to be lifted.



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Why did you pick the location you did for your hotel?

Bellyard's Abraham: As the only hotel in West Midtown Atlanta, Bellyard puts West Midtown on the map, bringing refreshed options within steps of local shops, booming entertainment venues and chef-driven restaurants.

What trends are you seeing?

Bellyard's Abraham: Since opening reservations, we have seen an upward growth of bookings from travelers across the nation. We have already experienced high demand at Drawbar as guests are eager for a refreshed dining experience as restrictions lessen.

What's the secret to creating a "must visit" hotel/resort in today's competitive landscape?

Bellyard's Abraham: We are laser-focused on providing guests an inviting experience that exceeds expectations. To fully immerse guests in the local culture, Bellyard offers room packages featuring offerings from nearby establishments such as Saint Germain French Bakery, Pour Taproom, Velvet Taco, Savannah Bee Company and East Fork.

NELSON Worldwide's Campbell: There is not a single secret, but the underlying thread to create a "must visit" destination is having something truly "one-of-a-kind." Whether it be a unique service that goes above and beyond, an elevated offer that sets oneself from the competition or a branded partnership that creates a collaborative experience that cannot be replicated, this premise of one-of-a-kind is critical. This will create allure as well as fuel conversation and buzz to encourage additional visits.

What's the biggest item on your to-do list?

Bellyard's Abraham: Our top priority is always to create meaningful connections with guests and provide a home-like, inspiring environment infused with the utmost hospitality for them to relax, socialize, work, eat and drink in Atlanta.

Describe a typical day.

Bellyard's Abraham: My favorite part about managing a hotel is that every day is different, and each day provides its own set of challenges and successes. One of the first essential tasks to start my day is to check in with each department and make sure everyone is taken care of departmentally. From there, I immediately shift my focus to ensuring I am getting to know our guests.

Tell us what makes the Bellyard brand so unique?

Bellyard's Abraham: Bellyard extends a distinctive experience filled with palpable

individuality. The hotel is ingrained in the fabric of this vibrant city, tapping a variety of local partners to bring the destination to life—from design by NELSON Worldwide of Alpharetta, Georgia to authentic French pastries and coffee from Atlanta-based Saint Germain French Bakery and an extensive collection of local art with pieces from Tiny Doors Atlanta, Amy Parry Projects, Iron to Art, ART & Associates, Lauren Williams Art and Pierpoint LLC.

From the moment they step into the lobby, guests become engrossed in the community of The Interlock and West Midtown. ■



One-on-One with...

Brendan Abraham, GM, Bellyard

What's the most rewarding part of your job?

Being able to create meaningful connections with our guests and team members. I especially enjoy being able to change someone's day or stay with my interactions.

What was the best advice you ever received?

Success is not forever, and failure is not fatal.

What's the best thing a client ever said to you?

Over the years I've had many clients create meaningful experiences for me; however, my favorite part is hearing about how one of our team members went above and beyond. At the end of the day, when my team is taking care of the customer, I know that I have done my job successfully.

Name the three strongest traits any leader should have and why.

Patience, charisma and organization.

What's the true key to success for any manager?

Be willing to come in every single day and do the jobs that others won't.

How do you like to spend your down time?

I love spending time with my family and discovering new spots within Atlanta.