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Shinola Hotel adds polish to downtown Detroit

By [Megan Rowe](#)

With its soon-to-open hotel, Shinola joins the ranks of retail names expanding into hospitality as part of a lifestyle branding strategy.

The Shinola Hotel, expected to debut in the company's hometown of Detroit by year's end, is a joint effort between the maker of luxury watches, bicycles and leather goods and Bedrock, a Detroit real estate development firm owned by billionaire businessman Dan Gilbert.

Gilbert, a champion of revitalizing the city, has been an active buyer of central business



A rendering of the Shinola Hotel from Farmer Street

district parcels; Quicken Loans, his most recognizable holding, now is headquartered there.

For the Shinola Hotel, Bedrock bought several historic properties on the Woodward Avenue site, where the 129-room boutique property will incorporate a renovated century-old former hardware store and the neighboring Singer Building, along with two additional newly built structures. It will connect to adjacent retail.

Husband-and-wife team Sergio Maclean and Audrey Laurent, whose newly minted Mac&Lo will manage the hotel, relocated from New York to Detroit to ensure the Shinola ethos is integrated into the hotel. The couple together and separately have worked on a number of high-profile projects globally and have been responsible for the concept, development and turnkey operations for the Nolitan Hotel, Z Hotel, and Delicatessen Restaurant in New York City.

"In our minds there was no better way than to be rooted in the community, to understand the mindset and the culture and make sure to align the hotel with that," Laurent says.

Designed by New York-based Gachot Studios, The Shinola look will lean toward midcentury modern, with a nod to the older structures' Art Deco origins. The lobby, designed with a residential feel and furnished with vinyl records and Shinola turntables, is meant to be a "social living room" for the city's residents.

Because Shinola's image is built around American craftsmanship and high quality, attention to detail has been a key consideration during design and construction. Laurent says Shinola has been involved at every step.



A rendering of the entry view of the Shinola Hotel

Any product placement will be subtle. "We don't want it be so overt that you feel like you're in a retail store," says Andrew Leber, Bedrock's recently hired vice president of hospitality. But there will be touchpoints: Guestrooms will be furnished with Shinola-branded power supplies, and larger rooms will sport Shinola turntables and bookshelf speakers. The Detroit connection will be subtle, too, with a custom line of amenities named after T.B. Rayl, the hardware retailer that occupied one of the buildings.

Another potential magnet for locals and guests will be menus from James Beard award-winning chef Andrew Carmellini. His NoHo Hospitality Group will run the F&B program (details have not been finalized).

The Shinola is part of a flurry of downtown Detroit redevelopment that includes two additional hotel conversions slated to open during the same time frame: the Element Hotel, carved out of the Metropolitan Building; and the Siren Hotel, taking over the Wurlitzer Building. West Elm, another retail/lifestyle brand, is also planning to open a hotel for Woodward Avenue.

At the moment, Leber says, "you can't get a hotel room in this city. There is so much demand, especially on the weekends." Events at Little Caesars Arena, which opened in 2017, are driving much of the business, and companies like Google, Microsoft and Ford have moved offices into the city.

According to Lodging Econometrics, the number of projects in the Detroit-area pipeline is up 4% for the most recent quarter versus 2017, with a total of 77 properties representing about 8,000 rooms. Eighteen projects are in development, 50 are projected to break ground in the next year and nine are in early planning stages. IHG, Marriott and Hilton are the most active franchisors for these new hotels.

Bedrock and Shinola are eyeing locations for future joint projects. "Realistically, we think everywhere Shinola has a brick-and-mortar presence is a city we would want to consider, since we already have brand recognition," Leber says. The company runs 30 stores across the globe, the majority in the U.S.