

# perspectives **hotel development**

By Alia Akkam

## COMEBACK KID

While San Francisco's recovery has been slow, a slew of new hotels offers a sign of hope



Despite facing a tumultuous few years with a decline in tech jobs, reduced downtown traffic, and rising crime, San Francisco is slowly emerging from the pandemic, during which travel all but froze, costing the city \$8 billion. Another factor: Since San Francisco is a gateway city that is dependent on inbound travelers coming from Asia and Europe, recovery has stalled, especially as tourists from China have yet to return to previous numbers. "San Francisco will rebound," says Sam Suleman, executive vice president and principal at San Francisco-based investment, management, acquisition, and development company Equinox Hospitality, "but it's going to be slow." Tech's move to remote work has also been a challenge, "creating a perfect storm for San Francisco," he continues, noting that the city is working to improve conditions.



AvroKO played up the Jay San Francisco's Brutalist-era bones through features like a multistory circular staircase, shown in a rendering



A rendering of the Jay's rooftop, where angled forms mirror the exterior



Guests will be greeted by a sculptural reception desk and modern furnishings at the Jay, shown in a rendering



A rendering of the restaurant's dramatic entryway at the Jay

Though a full return to the 2019 heyday could be years away, there are signs of hope. According to the San Francisco Travel Association's updated 2023 Visitor and Lodging Forecast, demand for hotel rooms grew year-to-date by 15 percent with hotel revenues rising by 30 percent. Average hotel occupancy is expected to increase to 66.8 percent, up from 62 percent in 2022, with visitor volume growing 6.2 percent compared to last year. And those much-coveted international travelers are coming back, projected to spend \$4.2 billion this year alone.

A city on the verge of a renaissance deserves hotel stock that reflects the future, whether it is an updated grande dame or a shiny new lifestyle concept. To answer the call, an impressive array of newcomers and recent renovations are ushering in San Francisco's new era.

### New Energy

Indeed, the city literally brightened with the arrival of the **1 Hotel San Francisco** in 2022. Located on the Embarcadero, the property, designed by SH Hotels & Resorts in collaboration with local studio NICOLEHOLLIS and Seattle firm Dawson Design Associates, which handled the 200 guestrooms, exemplifies tranquility with its mix of greenery, salvaged barn lumber, reclaimed redwood, and terracotta accents. The urban oasis celebrates the natural beauty of the Bay Area with a palette of earth tones, raw materials, and layered textures that reinforce the brand's nature-first ethos.

In the long-beleaguered Mid-Market neighborhood, Serif, a multiuse development featuring the handiwork of Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), Handel Architects, and IwamotoScott Architecture, is home to Sydell Group's **LINE Hotel**. Joining outposts in Los Angeles, Washington, DC, and Austin, the 236-room property comes courtesy of longtime collaborator Sean Knibb, founder of his Venice, California-based namesake studio, who embraced raw materials like plywood and concrete, as a way to showcase artwork. Celebrating the city's



Fluted wood columns anchor the lobby of the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Downtown SoMa by BHDM Design



Artworks fill the brasserie La Société at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Downtown SoMa



Cozy seating adorns the moody-hued Regency Club in the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Downtown SoMa



Subway tiles meld with tones that evoke the Golden Gate Bridge at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Downtown SoMa

modern art scene, guests are welcomed by a wall sculpture combining discarded and upcycled items by local artist Sasinun Kladpetch, while a live-art chandelier by Brute Botanicals and a photo light box by Laura Plageman enliven the public areas.

Tenderheart, the hotel's the indoor-outdoor restaurant, along with coffee shop Alfred, rooftop bar Rise Over Run, and forthcoming lobby hangout Dark Bar instill a community vibe, while the guestrooms celebrate a slice of local culture. "We wanted to bring in the vibrant street art that makes the San Francisco cityscape so interesting," Knibb says. "The inclusion of graffiti wall art in the headboard composition is truly fantastic. It's a clever way to infuse urban elements into an otherwise serene and elegantly contemporary room."

### Neighborhood Gems

Over to the west in Japantown, the 131-room **Kimpton Hotel Enso**—the former Kimpton Buchanan—intentionally meshes with the surroundings. Eager to create a calming retreat that illuminates wabi-sabi, the Japanese notion of imperfection, Christian Schnyder, founder of Los Angeles studio Beleco, paired swaths of pared-down blonde wood with naturally woven floor and ceiling panels, shibori-dyed pillows, and carpeting that recalls tatami mats.

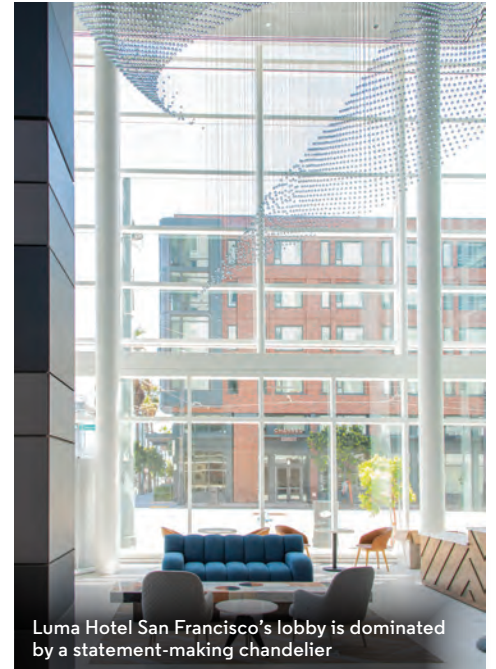
Down a flight of stairs animated by a mural painted onto the underside of a floating canopy is the subterranean lobby, which beckons with a bonsai tree, ceramic wall tiles with "a crackled glaze that reminds one of a Japanese teapot," points out Schnyder, and a "geometric wallcovering inspired by the modern graphics that Japan is known for."

On the east side, Mission Bay has welcomed the area's first LEED Silver-certified hotel, the **LUMA Hotel San Francisco**. Past the exterior designed by local practice Hornberger + Worstell are the interiors from Jill Cole, managing principal at Culver City, California-based Cole Martinez Curtis and Associates.

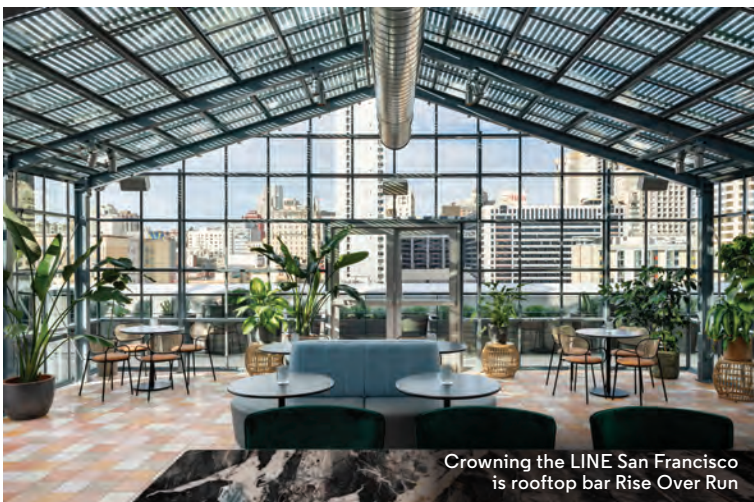
Part of a much larger Mission Bay development spanning thousands of new housing units, public plazas, a medical center, and office space, the 299-room



A garden-inspired chandelier hangs above a communal table in the lobby of the LINE San Francisco



Luma Hotel San Francisco's lobby is dominated by a statement-making chandelier



Crowning the LINE San Francisco is rooftop bar Rise Over Run



Combining a hospitality suite and a 1,000-square-foot patio, the Hammett Room is one of the LINE San Francisco's meeting spaces

hotel's entryway features backlit, laser-cut panels that reference the site's bygone environs. "The cool, neutral-toned palette with pops of teal pays homage to the reclaimed land, formerly salt marshes, that the hotel sits on. These colors play upon the touchpoint where water meets land," says Curtis. Artwork is also integral to the design narrative, with pieces by Jim Campbell, Adia Millett, and Local Language referencing the wetlands.

### Modern Makeover

Many old favorites are getting a second life whether as new brands or by undergoing

renovations. Consider the Park Central Hotel. Reborn as the 686-room **Hyatt Regency San Francisco Downtown SoMa** by New York's BHD Design, it is strewn with bold commissions from students and alumni of the nearby Academy of Art University. Even the historic **Westin St. Francis San Francisco** on Union Square received a modern boost this year when locally based BraytonHughes Design Studios renovated six of its luxury suites in hues of gold, blue, and green that pull from the city's landscape and architecture. Further, the local office of HBA is renovating meeting rooms and the lobby of the iconic **Fairmont San Francisco** in

Nob Hill, slated to debut in December.

Another much-anticipated arrival is **the Jay**. The former Le Méridien is opening this fall in the city's Financial District as a 360-room lifestyle hotel from KHP Capital Partners. "We recognized the recovery effort that downtown San Francisco is experiencing and wanted to support that by creating a soulful gathering place for residents and visitors alike," says Dane Patunoff, senior vice president of development and construction.

Situated in a 1989 John Portman-designed building, the Jay showcases a revamp by AvroKO's local office that "blurs



The residentially inspired lobby at the Hotel Avante features velvet and leather



The curving sofa at the Kimpton Hotel Enso represents the Japanese word enso, a circle made with one brushstroke



Cascading plants backdrop the reception desk at the Kimpton Hotel Enso



At the Westin St. Francis on Union Square, BraytonHughes Design Studios revamped six suites, including the 1,900-square-foot Windsor

Photos by JAMES BAIGRIE, DOUGLAS FRIEDMAN, ADAM KANE MACCHIA, and MICHAEL WEBER

the lines between Brutalism and modernism, past and future, juxtaposing cold concrete with warm materials and soft textures,” adds Patunoff. Greg Bradshaw, cofounder and principal of AvroKO, says that the team “leaned into the triangular patterning and angles created by the façade articulation” and emphasized Brutalist-era sculptural moments. Peeking out from the wood slats surrounding the three-story circular staircase leading to the third-floor lounge is a double-height concrete artwork by Guerin Swing. “We love the enveloping quality and

different perspectives you get walking up this stair,” he says. “Between these two forms is a large hexagonal wood ceiling with floating rice paper lights, a series of small couches and vintage lounge chairs, and potted plants, creating a space that anchors this third floor and becomes the heart of the hotel.”

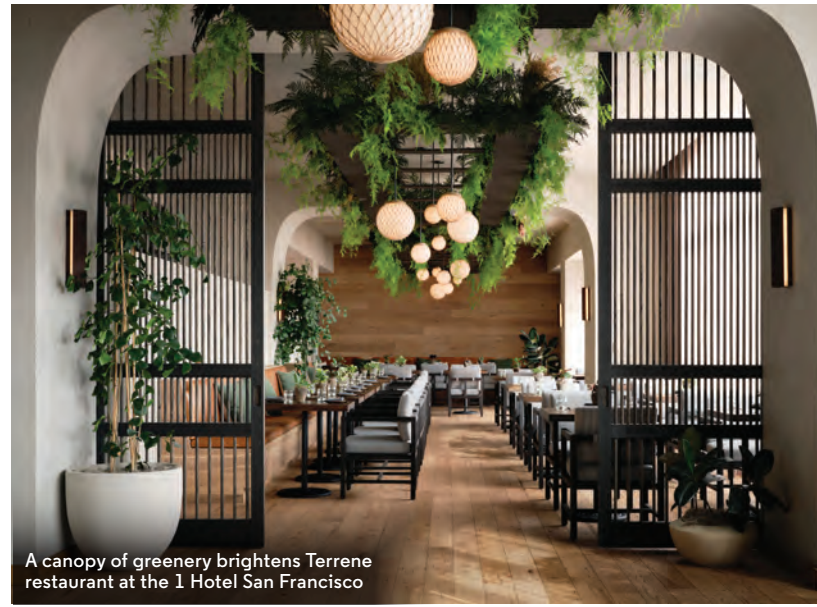
Found throughout are tributes to figures who quietly helped shape the city, like artist Ruth Asawa and author Peggy Caserta, responsible for the bell-bottoms craze. “We also honored San Francisco’s

influence on the world in the ’60s through a concept we called Blurred Lines. This shows up in patterns, distortions, and reflections, and different screening elements,” Bradshaw adds.

Another landmark, the 1911 Hearst Building on 3rd and Market Streets, is being reimaged by New York’s Roman and Williams as the 150-room **Hearst Hotel**, part of the Auberge Resorts Collection. Slated for 2025, the property delves into its past as the home of *The San Francisco Examiner* until the 1960s.



NICOLEHOLLIS and SH Hotels & Resorts' biophilic design for 1 Hotel San Francisco is captured at the reception desk



A canopy of greenery brightens Terrene restaurant at the 1 Hotel San Francisco



The 1 Hotel San Francisco's airy, earth-toned lobby



The streetside dining terrace at the 1 Hotel San Francisco

“The architectural foundation is rooted in strong classical lines, Tennessee Pink marble, a terracotta façade, and the entryway designed by Julia Morgan in the 1930s,” says Kemper Hyers, chief creative officer at Auberge Resorts Collection. “For the contemporary interpretation, we have drawn inspiration from the incredible homes Hearst built in California. The public spaces are a collector’s dreamscape. From the lobby bar and promenade full of Hearst’s collection of ancient fireplaces, doorways, and sculptures to the rooms with their velvet beds and writing desks and the rooftop, which channels the

gardens of San Simeon, Roman and Williams has designed a movie maker’s set piece that will create the most romantic, evocative hotel in the city.”

### Beyond Borders

Given that industry and innovation thrive across the San Francisco Bay Area, it’s not surprising that accommodations beyond the city limits are also taking more imaginative turns. About 40 miles south of the city, in the tech epicenter of Silicon Valley, BHDM Design made another splash with JDV by Hyatt’s 91-room **Hotel Avante** in Mountain View.

Sage, rosemary, and juniper, earthy colors synonymous with the Santa Clara Valley, were melded with custom graphics by Michael Hildebrand and Joe Christiansen’s terracotta art, and on each floor guests can find refuge in comfortable, multifunctional work lounges. “The scale of this property allowed us to lean into residential sensibilities,” explains BHDM principal Dan Mazzarini. “In the lobby, a cozy seating group uses velvets and textured fabrics, alongside a patchwork leather wall. Warm lighting makes sure that the space feels approachable and glowy.” **hd**