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East Brown Cow hosts open house at Thompson Block

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Portland, ME East Brown Cow welcomed community members, local officials, artisans and partners to an open house at the Thompson Block. The event celebrated East Brown Cow's recent expansion of their hospitality offering, The Docent's Collection, within the space, providing an exclusive opportunity to tour and explore the new private lofts on the fourth floor of the historic building located at 121 Middle St.

Located in the historic Old Port, The Docent's Collection provides a "home-away-from-home" experience for both short- and long-term stays. Originally launched in 2019 as 121 MIDDLE by East Brown Cow in partnership with Commonwealth Hotels, the hospitality offering was rebranded as The Docent's Collection in 2022. In the same year, The Docent's Collection grew from encompassing one building at the Thompson Block (121 Middle St.) to two buildings with the addition of two lofts on the upper floors of the neighboring 115 Middle St., known within the collection as the A. Robinson Block.

Guests at the event reflected on the growth and success of The Docent's Collection due to its unique approach of combining a modern, mobile-first experience with the comforts of boutique lodging with first-class amenities.

"We are proud to invest in the history and architecture of this community," said Tim Soley, president and CEO of East Brown Cow. "The Docent's Collection was created to honor the timeless character of Portland's Old Port, blending historic charm with modern design. By offering an experience that celebrates the neighborhood's heritage, we invite locals and visitors to enjoy all that makes this area unique. We are grateful to share this evening with the community partners who helped to bring this vision to life."

Located on the top floor of the Thompson Block, the lofts were converted from class B office space and showcase historic design features. Each loft is thoughtfully curated with a fully equipped kitchen, large dining and living area, and custom furnishings. The technology-forward mobile check-in process allows guests to customize their preferred level of interaction with the hospitality team, who engage with guests as a personal "docent" both within and beyond the lofts' walls. Local touchpoints are woven throughout featured art collections, interior design and amenities, which include handmade furniture from Thos. Moser, work from local artist Tanja Hollander, and freshly-ground coffee beans from local roaster, Coffee by Design.

Originally completed in 1867 and designed in the Second Empire style by architect George Harding,

the Thompson Block has been under East Brown Cow's stewardship since 2000. Over the past several years, East Brown Cow has led extensive renovations, ensuring that its historical significance and architectural integrity were not merely preserved but revitalized.

"Our work is about more than modernization; it's about re-energizing a landmark within Portland's Old Port," said Jacob Soley, East Brown Cow's director of development. "This restoration of the Thompson Block highlights how the fusion of historic integrity with modern design can revitalize this streetscape as the thriving center of community and culture it has long been treasured for."

Upcoming plans for The Docent's Collection include further expansion along Middle St., with construction underway at 178 Middle St. and 184 Middle St. The upper floors of these 19th century buildings, known respectively as the Boyd Block and the William Widgery Thomas Block, are being converted into 19 additional one- and two-bedroom lofts, set to join the collection in 2025.

With the holiday season approaching, East Brown Cow invites the community and travelers alike to experience The Docent's Collection firsthand. To celebrate Travel Tuesday, a limited-time promotion will be available, encouraging guests to discover the charm of Portland's Old Port through a unique blend of luxury and a location steeped in local character.

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