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Cover Photo: © Charles Callister Jr.
Oriental Warehouse, San Francisco

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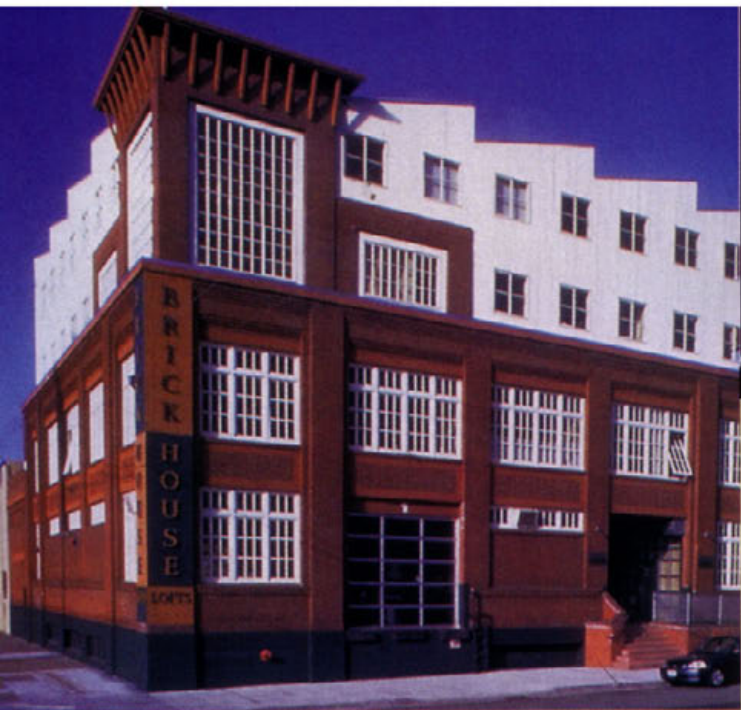
URBAN TRANSFORMATION

Michael Muscardini knows the viability of mixed-use projects firsthand. His Oakland, Calif.-based remodeling firm, Creative Spaces, last year helped turn a local inner-city warehouse into a successful residential-office development. Now, in the Jack London Square section of Oakland, the Brick House Lofts are flourishing where chipped brick and concrete once stood in decay.



The project developer, Horizon Partners of Oakland, was among the first to grasp the potential of the old warehouse, built in 1911 by the Fuller Paint Company. Horizon brought in Flynn, Craig + Grant Architects of Danville, Calif., to transform the cast-in-place concrete and brick structure into condominium lofts and custom commercial space. The developer then hired Creative Spaces to convert the drawings into the real thing.

"Horizon had a good feeling about Creative Spaces because they had a lot of experience doing custom work and had done a lot of interesting nontraditional work in the Berkeley and Oakland areas," says Terri Flynn, a partner at Flynn, Craig + Grant. "Horizon felt Creative Spaces would do a quality job and wouldn't be afraid of our details and crazy angles and other concepts."



The centerpiece of the project, Flynn says, was the two-story, 18,600-square-foot Fuller Paint warehouse. Muscardini and Flynn agree that one of the bigger design challenges was adding a 6,000-square-foot third floor that would look like an original part of the building.

"Adding the third-floor units was like constructing a whole new building on top of the concrete roof of the existing warehouse," Muscardini says. "But when it was completed, you really couldn't tell the old from the new. The architect's design used a clever sheet-metal, sawtooth-type pattern along with a brick veneer that matched the original brick."

The third-floor addition allowed for four 1,600- to 1,800-square-foot, two-story loft condominiums, the second floors of which each contain

a second bedroom, bathroom, and den area that overlook the first floor.

Creative Spaces also remodeled the second floor of the warehouse into four condominium units, while converting the front half of the original first floor into a real estate office and a pharmacy. Behind the office and pharmacy, facing the rear of the building, are two condominium units showcasing the original 14-foot warehouse ceilings.

The units face a brick courtyard constructed from the remnants of an additional small building. A third building was turned into an office for an architectural firm. The remodeling team even tackled the basement of the old paint warehouse, converting the space into a large office unit and a separate storage space.

While plans called for all new sprinkler, electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems, there is one part of the old building Muscardini says he would have liked to have kept. "The warehouse had one of those old-fashioned elevators like you might see in New York," he says. "You got on the elevator, pulled down the oak, grate-like door, and then punched a button to go up or down."

Problem was, says Muscardini, not only did the elevator fail to meet code, but it only went up to the second floor. "We had to replace that old antique with a brand-new elevator," he sighs. "It's kind of a shame." —J.K.