

Refitted for Work

Ten adaptive use and renovation projects turn even unlikely candidates into modern office space.

CONVERTING INDUSTRIAL warehouses, manufacturing facilities, train depots, power stations, and similar building types into office space for contemporary businesses is not an easy task. Even buildings initially designed for office use only a few decades back can be outmoded for the modern workplace, with its emphasis on plenty of natural light, open-plan offices, spaces that foster the exchange of ideas, flexible infrastructure for changing needs and technologies, and strong connections with their surrounding contexts.

Turning to adaptive use and renovation of older structures, rather than relying on new construction, can have multiple benefits. Older buildings convey a sense of their community's history and provide a workplace with a distinctive identity. Oftentimes, these structures have the kind of distinctive craftsmanship that new construction cannot match. If the original architecture is undistinguished—or even downright plain—it can serve as a blank canvas for creative architectural intervention. In heavily built-up urban environments, reusing an

older building can be a way to snare a prime downtown location.

Adapting old structures is also inherently sustainable: every wall and floor that is reused saves material resources. In some cases, contractors, architects, and other real estate professionals have retrofitted buildings for their own headquarters as a way to showcase their capabilities and demonstrate innovative approaches to transforming the unlikeliest of old structures into workplaces for the future.

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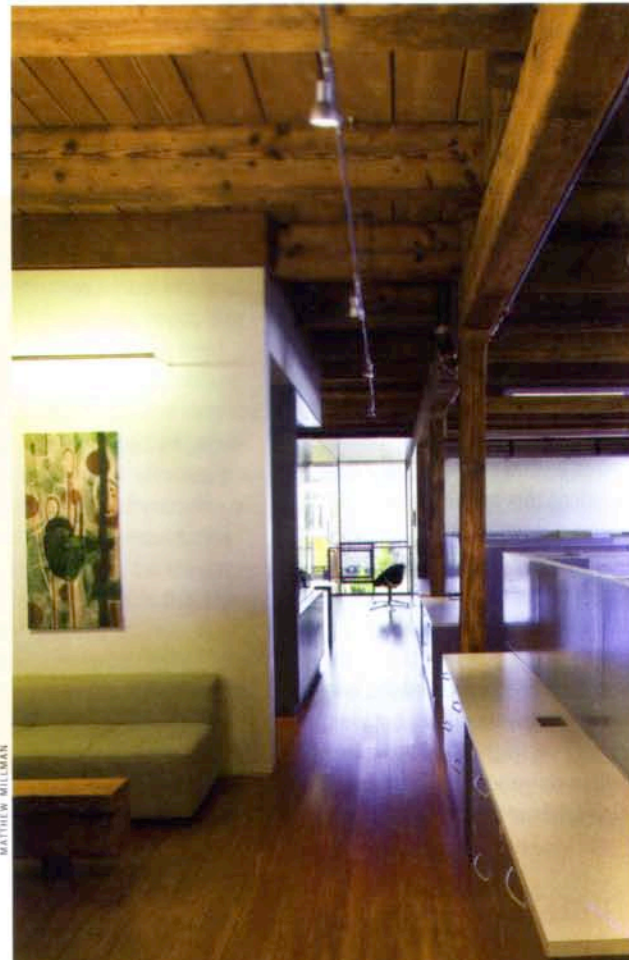
1. 355 11th Street

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

San Francisco-based general contractor Matarozzi/Pelsinger Builders decided to turn a derelict industrial warehouse, designated a historic resource by the city, into a multitenant mixed-use building to house its new headquarters as well as office and ground-floor commercial space for lease. The architect, Aidlin Darling Design of San Francisco, inserted metal and glass apertures into the original structural frame to provide access points and bring in natural light. The largest aperture extends as a bridge across the double-height lobby,

leading to the reception area.

A new perforated metal skin on the east and west facades blocks solar heat gain, with the small holes enabling cross-ventilation and daylight penetration while maintaining the original structure's industrial character. As night falls, the historic timber frame gradually becomes visible through the perforations. Original timber was retained or reused on the interior as well, and sandblasted to add warmth. The building was completed last year; Gold certification in the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system is pending.



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