

1206 Nance Street Renovation

The former Fifth Ward Hotel is a rare survivor of Victorian commercial architecture in Houston. Completed in 1882, it was three stories with load bearing masonry walls, cast iron columns, and timber framed floors. In the early 1950s the upper two floors were removed, due to deterioration of the mortar and in 1993 the building was completely gutted because of an electrical fire. It stood vacant until 2002 when the current owner sensitively rehabilitated the exterior and received a local Historic Landmark designation.

The current occupant designed the interior for use as an architecture studio and part time art gallery. The design solution focuses on creating an efficient and contemporary office space, while minimizing the impact to the historic structure. The architect located support spaces in the center of the plan, between the open office and gallery spaces, such that partitions would not come into contact with the exposed masonry shell. Very high ceilings allowed room for a semi-enclosed mezzanine, creating a convenient place to conceal unsightly items such as air conditioning, a water heater, electrical and security panels, and telephone and network equipment. In addition, an open area of the mezzanine accommodates the architect's reference library and drawing archive. Historic blue and yellow paints were selected to coordinate with the historic green color used for the doors, windows, and columns. To further exemplify the marriage of old and new, the architect salvaged and incorporated a pair of steel rolling fire-rated doors from a neighboring warehouse building slated for demolition.

The existing building is located in a dense urban environment and already contained many inherent sustainable qualities. The reuse does not contribute to urban sprawl or to the urban heat island effect. Existing lights from a nearby freeway was sufficient to light the site so there was no added light pollution. The Architect utilized the existing infrastructure and reused 100% of the shell and structure. The site is part of the City's Brownfield Redevelopment program and is located near several means of alternative transportation, including light rail. Adaptive reuse of the existing building allowed the architect to maintain the neighborhood historic fabric and take advantage of 16 glazed windows and doors for natural light, ventilation and views. During daylight hours, only 0.3 watts/sf are required to light the interior (20% of energy code max. requirements). The architect also incorporated additional sustainable features into the improvements, such as zoned lighting, reuse of salvaged materials, bamboo and waxed concrete flooring, low-flow water-saving type water closets, faucets with aerators, workstations made from recycled materials, and a permeable crushed concrete driveway.

PROGRAM

Office

Workstations with file cabinets and overhead display and storage (12)

Gallery

Art space with wall art hangers and accent lighting

Support

Reception Desk

Waiting Area (2)

Conference Room (8)

Toilet Rooms

Reference Library

Coffee Bar / Supply Room

Storage Room

