

Program Summary:

A blighted historic corner store is renovated into a vibrant architecture office utilizing thoughtful preservation and forward-thinking design.

Program Statement:

The corner store was built in 1895 and has served the community as a commercial establishment for much of its life. The tenant and designer of the building is a local architecture firm that values both historic preservation and modern aesthetics. The goal of the project was to showcase the firm's capacity for both historic preservation and forward thinking design while creating a place to collaborate.

The building was a natural fit for this goal as it was built in two stages. The original building, a historic Creole cottage structure, served as a corner store, bakery, and a chapel over the years. In 1984 a sculpture artist converted it to a single family residence, and added a low slope shed roof structure with steel trusses to create an outdoor studio workspace. This shed roof structure is distinct from the historic structure but not a distinct style of architecture as it's purpose is solely pragmatic in nature.

The Creole cottage had historic doors, windows, casework, beautiful wood ceilings, and a unique wainscott. The shed roof structure was little more than concrete floors, steel superstructure, and plywood roofing and walls. Celebrating and juxtaposing the Creole cottage framework and the raw nature of the rear shed roof structure allowed the building to become a canvas for the architects to showcase the dynamicism of the firm.

A-225

Building Area: (sf)
2,221 sqft

Cost per Square Foot:
\$257/sqft

Construction Cost
\$571,019

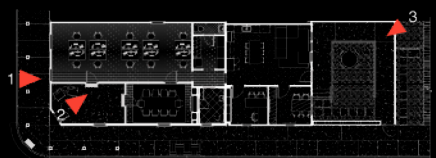
Date of Completion:
5/23/2024



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Visioning

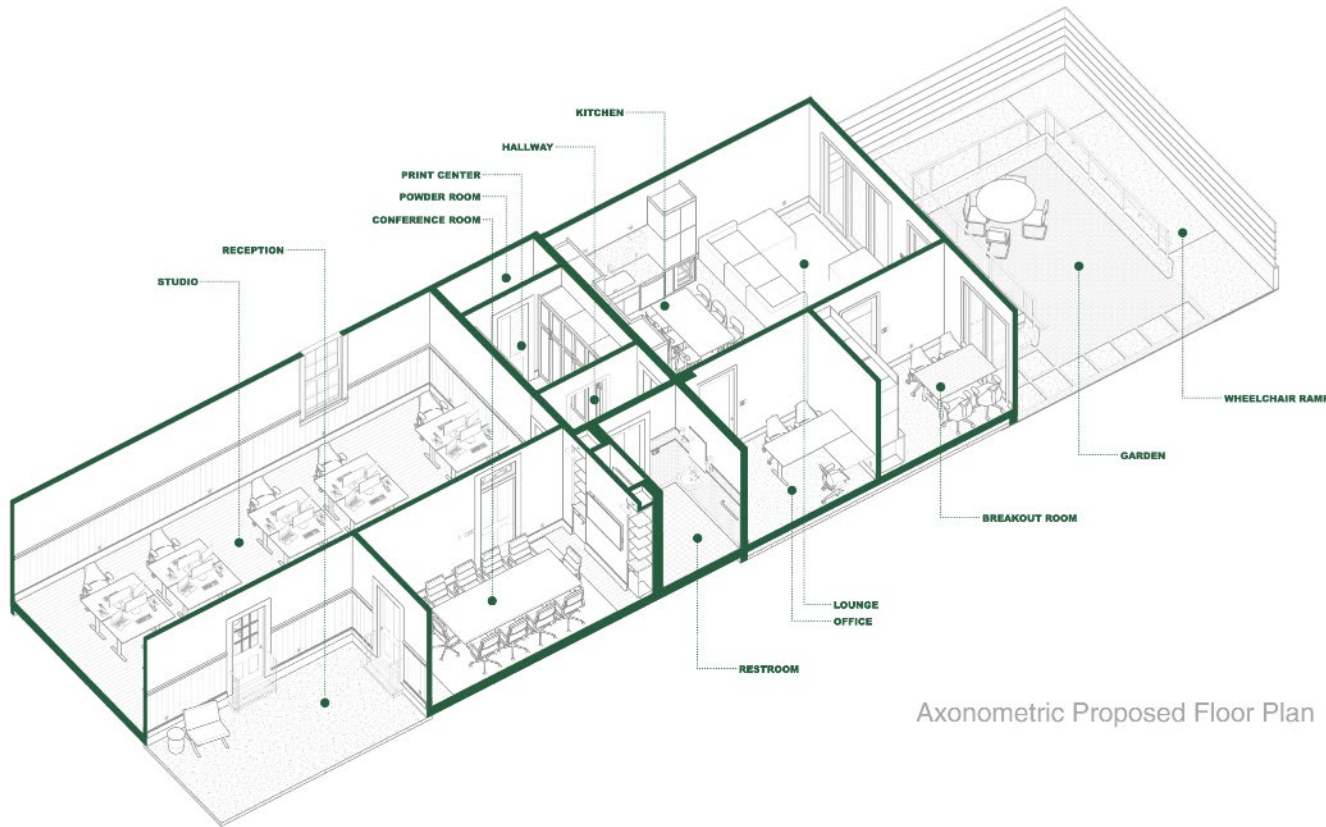
In Fall 2021, Hurricane Ida tore the roof off the firm's previous office, displacing the team to a coworking space for three months. That experience became the catalyst for the search for a new office space. The displacement itself informed the design process; the team drew on what they valued in a traditional office setting, as well as the elements of the coworking space they enjoyed most while displaced. The goal was to create a dynamic workspace that fosters collaboration. Upon acquisition of the property, the entire staff participated in a design charrette, producing several schematic designs. The selected scheme best achieved the vision; balancing dedicated collaboration opportunities, zones of respite, and areas for focused work.



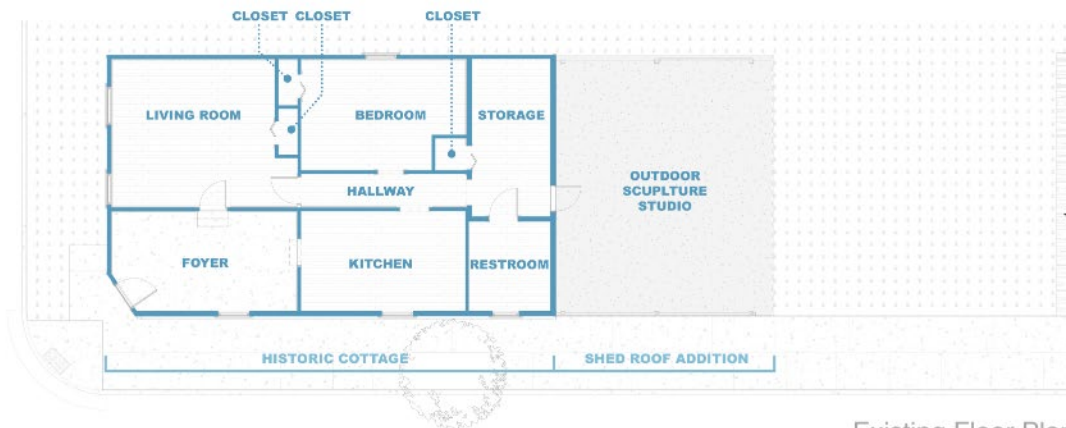
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Plan and Program

The overarching concept of the design centers on the idea that an architecture studio should support both focused work and collaboration. The plan provides dedicated studio space, multiple informal areas for calls and gatherings, and formal spaces for staff and client meetings. The design works with the historic layout of the structure, establishing a reception area at the original entrance that connects to both the studio and the main conference room. Demising walls were maintained throughout, while support spaces like restrooms and a print center fit into the smaller historic rooms. This creates a sense of compression as you transition into the contemporary rear addition. This addition is built within the existing shed structure. The addition contains a lounge that rivals the studio in square footage, offering a true retreat overlooking the garden.



Axonometric Proposed Floor Plan



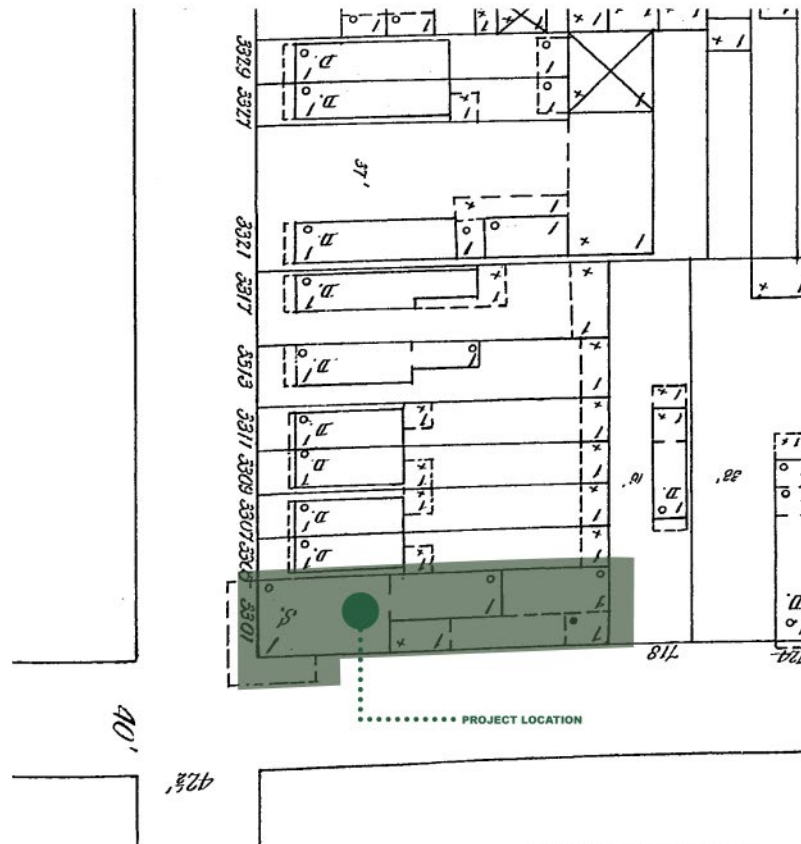
Existing Floor Plan



Existing Entrance, 1



New Entrance, 1



1896 Sanborn Map



Proposed Floor Plan

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Preservation

Research showed that the historic structure originally had a large awning. This awning was replicated in the new design to create a place of shelter for pedestrians and clients from the harsh rains of New Orleans. Care was taken to repoint and preserve the foundation and refinish the entrance. The original door was rebuilt and restored with a glass lite, drawing natural light into the reception area. Historic windows and doors were preserved throughout. The reception floors are original, however the original wood floors of the cottage were too damaged to be preserved and were replaced. Original wood ceiling and wood wainscott wood were restored and repaired as required.





1



2



1



3

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Transformation

The former shed roof structure presented an opportunity for a true transformation. A new raised polished concrete floor was built to match the floor level of the existing historic structure. Large glass windows flood the kitchen, lounge, and breakout room with natural light. An ADA ramp was designed to frame a courtyard that doubles as an informal gathering space. V-groove siding was installed as cladding at the rear of the building to distinguish the two structures.



3



A-225.06

Reception and Conference Room

The building is designed to be a showcase of the firm's design aesthetic. The goal was a serene waiting area that transitions seamlessly into a conference room capable of accommodating large client groups and ensuring every team member would have a chair at staff meetings. Custom millwork frames an inset TV for presentations, with integrated shelving for books. A custom 1'-0" scale was painted along the corner of the room and around the ceiling, giving clients an immediate reference for visualizing the size of spaces.



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Studio Space

The studio is a place to both collaborate and to work independently. A custom felt wall installation was designed to mimic the meandering of the Mississippi River to absorb sound. The original wood wainscoting and ceiling were carefully restored, and paint selections throughout were chosen to complement the ceiling's natural patina, creating a cohesive palette. Modern lighting was applied to make the space more functional.





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Kitchen And Lounge Area and Breakout Conference Room

With square footage rivaling the studio, the kitchen and lounge serves as the social center of the building. The space accommodates casual staff lunches, informal meetings, and a separate breakout room off the lounge for private meetings or calls and smaller gatherings. The space prioritizes comfort and views, with amenities that encourage rest and even naps. The kitchen and lounge celebrates the existing structure with exposed metal trusses and new polished concrete floors, and is always bathed in indirect northerly light from the garden.



2



3

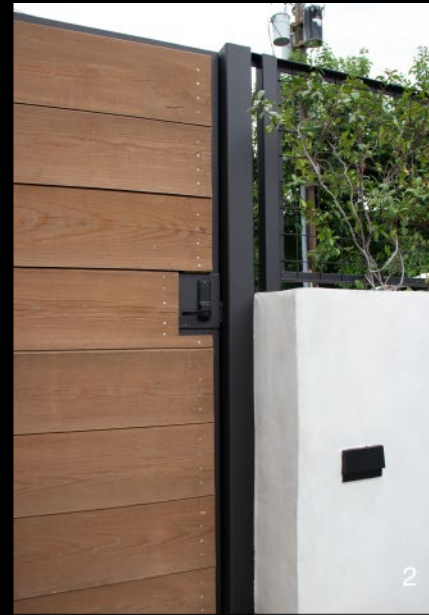


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Rear Garden, Wall and ADA Ramp

An important part of the design was to make the building fully accessible to clients and staff while maintaining the historicity of the Creole cottage. The ADA ramp was designed to frame the garden and be integral to the design of the outdoor space. The original concrete floor of the shed roof structure was demolished, and a new polished concrete floor was built so that the ramp could be used to access the Creole cottage. A single downspout captures stormwater from half the cottage and the entire addition, directing runoff into an on-site gravel retention bed. Jasmine creates a natural barrier on a custom planter and metal fence, and a wood fence with a custom gate emulates typical fence typology in New Orleans.





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A Place to Collaborate

The building is both a celebration of New Orleans vernacular architecture and its built environment. It is designed to enhance collaboration, and showcase the firm's design aesthetic and passion for forward thinking design. Every firm member can point to a part of this project and know that they had an idea that has been built that enhances the team's performance. It is a place of shared ideas that creates a workplace that is engaging, thoughtful, and comfortable. Our conclusion is that the focus on community spaces is incredibly effective and has led to a culture of collaboration.

