

Program Summary:

Transformation of a 13-story historic skyscraper into a boutique 239-room hotel, preserving historic fabric while integrating contemporary design, advanced systems, and adaptive spatial reuse.

Program Statement:

This adaptive reuse project transforms a 1911 historic landmark into a refined, contemporary hotel that thoughtfully balances preservation with innovation. Originally a symbol of technological progress and commercial vitality, the building had suffered decades of neglect and insensitive alterations. The design reimagines the long-vacant office structure as a dynamic hospitality destination, addressing challenges such as low ceiling heights and a dense column grid to create open, intuitive, and welcoming spaces.

Key architectural features—including sculptural marble staircases, mosaic-tiled elevator lobbies, decorative cornices, and original steel windows—were meticulously restored. A once-enclosed light atrium was reopened, reintroducing natural light into the building's core. Contemporary elements like a suspended bar shelving system and a translucent reception screen enhance the guest experience while respectfully integrating with the building's historic character.

Modern structural upgrades and discreetly integrated life-safety and mechanical systems deliver present-day performance without compromising architectural integrity. Located in a prominent Historic District and designed in compliance with historic tax credit standards, the project exemplifies how adaptive reuse can revitalize a landmark with clarity, elegance, and purpose—honoring its past while shaping a bold and enduring future.

RR-115.01

Building Area: (sf)
170,000

Cost per Square Foot:
\$440 / Sq. Ft.

Construction Cost
\$75,000,000

Date of Completion:
October 2024



RR-115.02

THE HISTORY

This thirteen-story steel-framed building, constructed in 1911, employed what was then a cutting-edge structural system, showcasing the era's emerging advancements in steel construction and high-rise urban architecture.

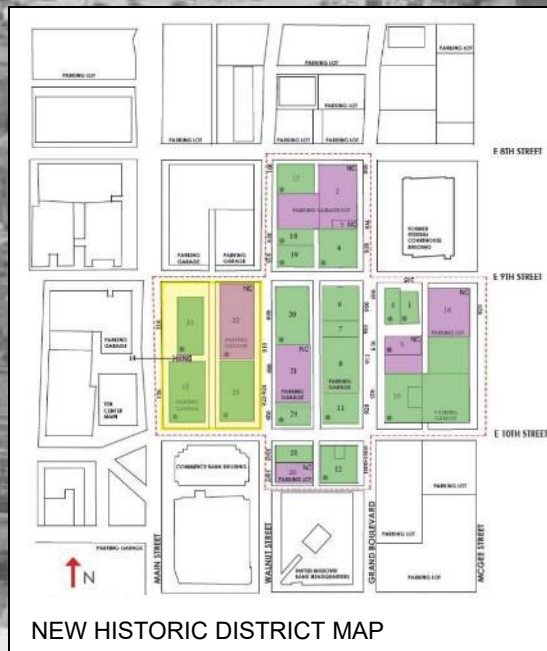
It was once home to dozens of doctor's offices and among the premiere office spaces in the downtown area, with national companies like Sinclair Oil and Ozark National Life Insurance Company using several stories of the building.

The building's exterior remained remarkably well preserved, featuring a finely articulated stone masonry façade adorned with ornate elements such as ram's head gargoyles, decorative cornices, and carved classical motifs—testament to the building's original grandeur and enduring architectural significance."

RR-115.03

CREATING A HISTORIC DISTRICT

Despite its well-preserved character-defining features, the building initially failed to qualify for federal historic tax credits—much to the surprise of the project team. The State Historic Preservation Office questioned whether its architectural style and original commercial use warranted individual listing. In response, the team led a successful initiative to establish a new historic district, ultimately securing designation not just for this building but for 26 others. This strategic move unlocked critical preservation funding and helped catalyze broader local revitalization efforts.



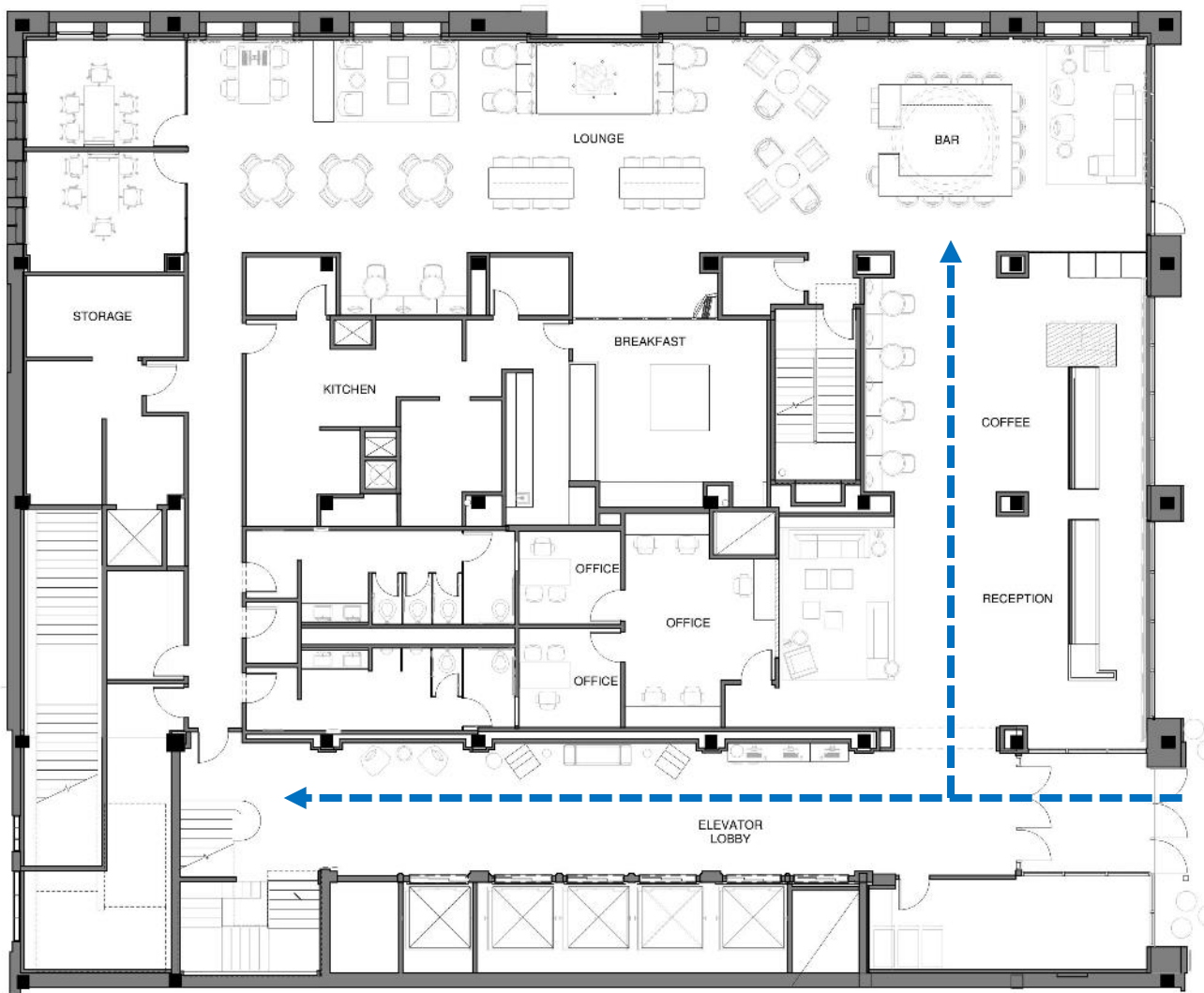
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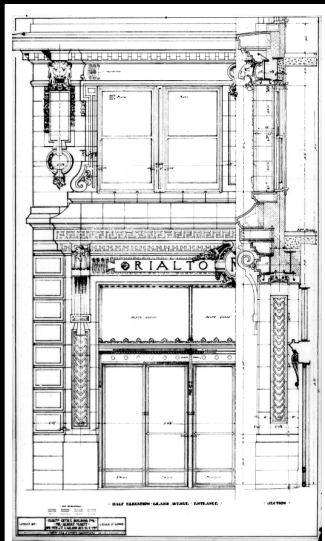
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

The first floor plan reflects a guiding adaptive reuse principle: enhance function without obscuring history.

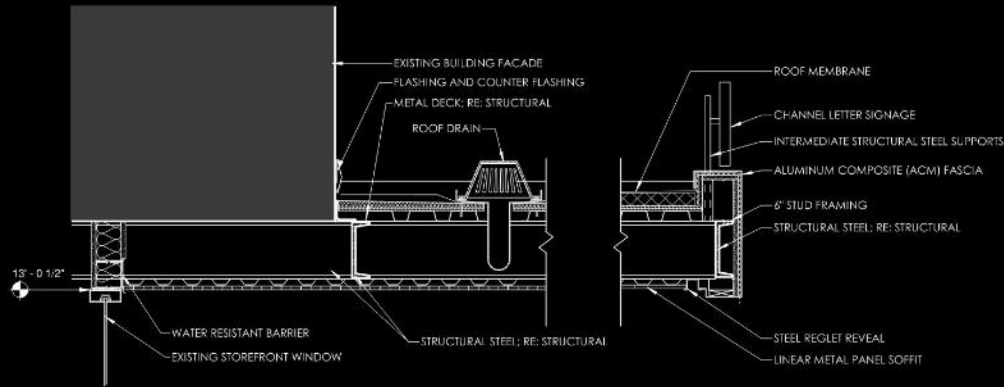
A clear visual access was created, anchored by restored and new elements. The historic elevator lobby was reutilized as the main entry point of the hotel. A new opening was created perpendicular to the lobby flow to integrate guest circulation for a modern arrival experience. This intervention supports intuitive flow, while the preserved elevator lobby forms a powerful historic threshold.

Overall, First floor plan illustrates a restored elevator lobby, continuous reception counter, and bar. All elements are integrated into a coherent historic-meets-modern spatial sequence.





ORIGINAL
ENTRANCE ELEVATION



CANOPY INTERVENTION SECTION



NEW ENTRANCE CANOPY AND EXTERIOR LIGHTING

RR-115.05

ENTRY CANOPY

One of the project's first visible interventions is a new steel entrance canopy—a contemporary gesture designed to complement rather than compete with the historic façade. Its clean lines and light touch offer a respectful contrast to the building's richly detailed masonry, serving as a subtle yet functional addition. The canopy reflects preservation best practices, emphasizing reversibility, minimal impact, and a clear distinction between historic and new elements.

To further enhance the building's street presence and celebrate its architectural character, a custom exterior lighting scheme was introduced. Strategically placed fixtures highlight key features of the stone façade, including decorative cornices and carved details. The lighting not only improves nighttime visibility and safety but also reinforces the building's historic identity, ensuring its craftsmanship is appreciated both day and night.

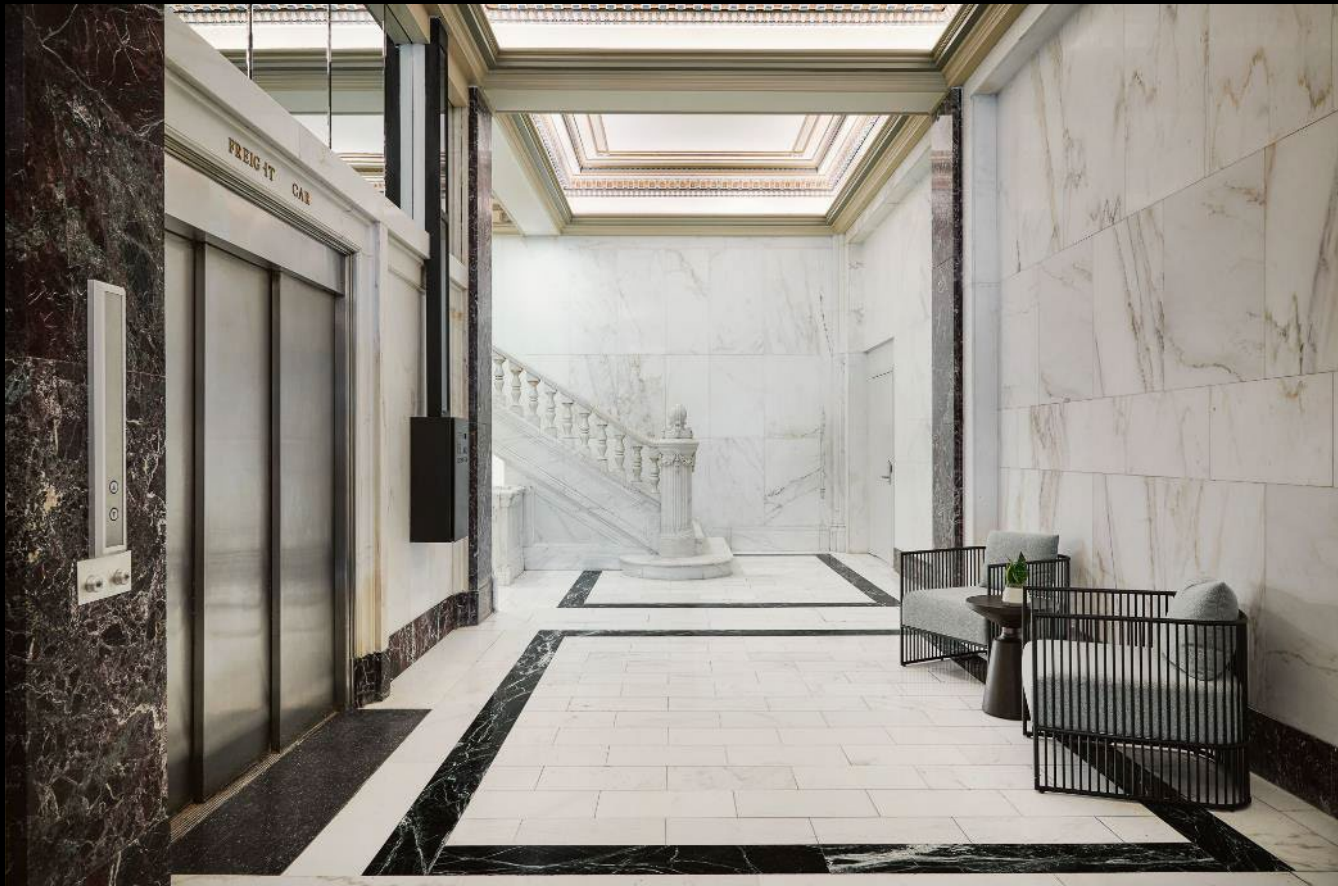
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ELEVATOR LOBBY

Stepping inside the building, guests are greeted by the historic marble-clad elevator lobby, meticulously restored to preserve its original grandeur. The design retains the original marble walls and floors, mosaic tile flooring, sculpted marble staircase, and decorative ceilings—each element carefully cleaned, repaired, and preserved.

To repair damaged sections of the historic marble, the team employed color-matched composite fills—a conservation technique combining marble dust and pigments to match the original stone's tone and veining. Carefully tinted and sculpted by hand, these fills blend invisibly with the original marble, maintaining its historic integrity and appearance.

This thoughtfully curated threshold between past and present reflects the project's core ethos: honoring the building's architectural heritage while seamlessly integrating modern design interventions.



RR-115.07

STRUCTURAL INNOVATION — CARBON FIBER REINFORCEMENT

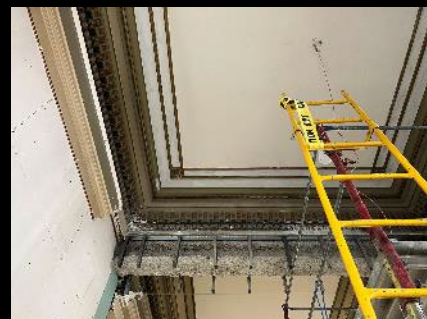
To create an assembly space on the second floor while preserving the richly detailed 22-foot hand-painted ceiling below, the team used an innovative, minimally invasive carbon fiber reinforcement system. This lightweight, high-strength material provided essential support without impacting the delicate historic fabric. Additionally, the intricate crown molding in the elevator lobby was restored using 3D-printed plaster to replace damaged sections, then carefully hand-painted based on color analysis to match the original gold and blue hues. These approaches demonstrate how cutting-edge technology can preserve and enhance historic architectural details while meeting modern requirements.



ELEVATOR LOBBY

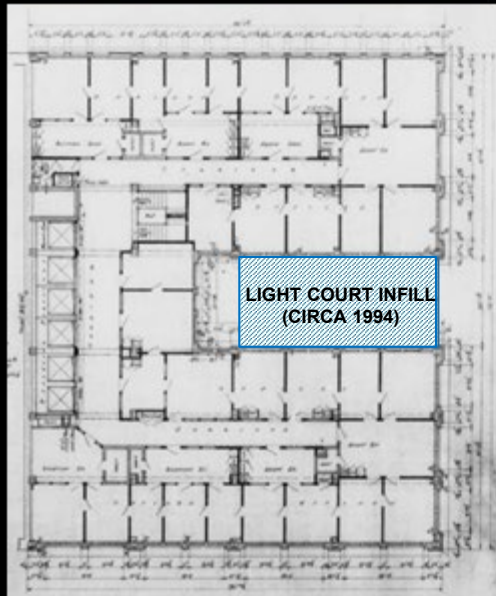


BEFORE





BEFORE INFILL



LIGHT COURT INFILL
(CIRCA 1994)



RR-115.08

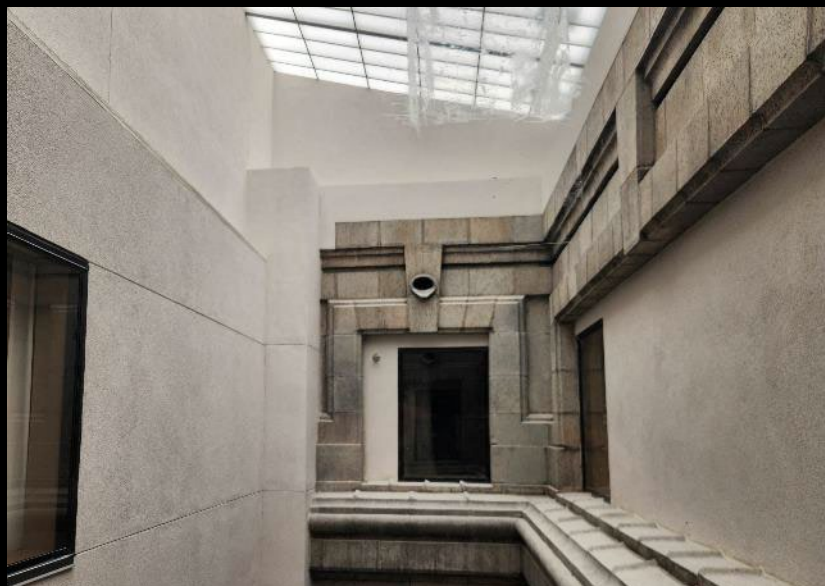
RECLAIMING THE LIGHTWELL

During design, an infilled historic light court was discovered. The infill was part of several alterations and modernizations the building experienced throughout the 20th century.

The building originally featured a U-Shape design providing ample natural light to interior office spaces.



BEFORE



RR-115.09

RECLAIMING THE LIGHTWELL

As part of the renovation, the lightwell was reopened and restored, significantly enhancing both the building's historic integrity and economic viability. The original facades within the lightwell were carefully rehabilitated using Glass Fiber Reinforced Concrete (GFRC), an innovative material that replicates the texture and detail of traditional masonry while offering improved durability. This restoration not only reintroduced abundant natural light but also enabled the addition of three new guest rooms per floor. The intervention transformed the guestroom floor plan, improving spatial quality and room count while maintaining strict compliance with preservation standards.

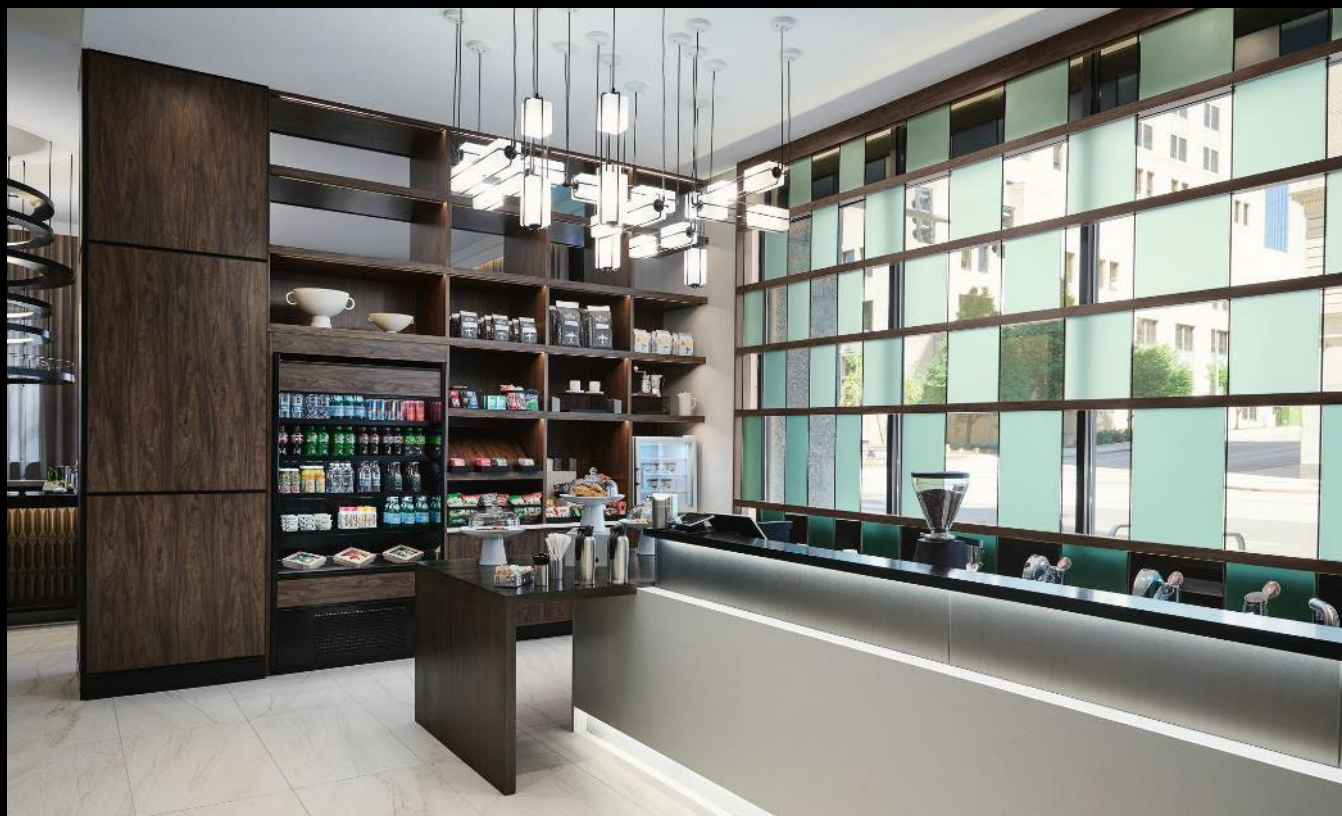


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INTERVENTIONS IN DIALOGUE — RECEPTION & SCREEN

Bold new design elements—such as a tensioned acrylic screen behind reception—create a striking contemporary counterpoint to the building's meticulously preserved historic features. This innovative screen pays homage to the building's pioneering steel-frame construction while defining the reception area with clarity and sophistication.

This delicate yet powerful element seems to float, creating a luminous veil that both reveals and conceals, sparking a modern dialogue between past and present.





RR-115.11

CELEBRATING THE STRUCTURAL GRID

Rather than concealing the building's dense column grid, the project embraced it as a central design element. Each original structural column was thoughtfully wrapped in warm wood and back-painted glass, transforming what could have been a spatial obstacle into a powerful architectural rhythm that unifies the entire interior.

The carefully chosen materials bring warmth and reflectivity, enhancing natural light and inviting guests to engage with the building's industrial heritage on an intimate level.

Above the bar area, the celebration of structure continues with a suspended metal shelving system. The shelving floats gracefully in space, its sleek, minimalist form complementing the wood-and-glass-clad columns with curved black steel. Together, these features transform the building's structural framework from a hidden necessity into a defining design narrative, showcasing how thoughtful adaptive reuse can turn constraints into character.



RR-115.12

DISCOVERY & RESTORATION — HISTORIC MOSAIC TILE

During construction, the team uncovered a remarkable hidden gem: original mosaic tile flooring in the upper floor lobbies—long forgotten beneath layers of old carpet. Committed to authenticity, the team worked closely with a custom tile manufacturer to carefully match the original tile's color, size, and grout composition. Missing and damaged pieces were then individually and meticulously replaced, ensuring seamless integration with the historic flooring.

This collaborative effort combined craftsmanship and precision to preserve an essential element of the building's architectural heritage, turning an unexpected discovery into a powerful preservation triumph.

RR-115.13

WHY IT MATTERS — LEGACY & IMPACT

This project goes beyond design—it reshapes a neighborhood, reestablishes architectural heritage, and showcases how adaptive reuse can inspire economic and cultural renewal. By preserving key elements while introducing contemporary design interventions, this project honors the past without replicating it. It's a model for how preservation supports the future.

It's more than a renovation: a catalyst for economic development, a reinvestment in urban legacy, and a celebration of early skyscraper heritage.

