

# SECOND CHANCES

THREE OLD INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS GET A NEW LEASE ON LIFE WHEN A STOREFRONT, A FIREHOUSE, AND A FACTORY ARE REMADE INTO GREAT PLACES TO LIVE. BY CAROLYN WEBER



**Street Life** This Seattle storefront assumed a new identity when it was transformed into a live/work space.



**"T**here are no second acts in American lives," wrote F. Scott Fitzgerald. Had the legendary scribe been around during the past 40 years, he might have rewritten that famous line, at least where adaptive reuse is concerned. The practice of breathing new life into old commercial buildings is nothing if not a second chance for former factories, schools, agricultural structures, churches, and even gas stations to be reborn as one-of-a-kind residential properties.

Rehabbing an existing structure can mean added red tape, time, and money, but the pros outweigh the cons: finished projects that are sustainable and environmentally

responsible, financially successful, and enhance the community with a sense of character and history.

"You have to do as much research as possible about what you can't see," advises Adam Ginsburg, co-chairman of GDC Properties in Hawthorne, N.Y., and developer of 220 Water Street in New York City, a shoe factory turned luxury apartment building. "We used radar on the floors to find out where the rebar was so we knew the pattern before we started."

Even with plenty of due diligence, there still can be glitches. When a massive boulder was found under 220 Water Street, it meant rerouting the tie-in to the city's storm drainage system. Because of unpredictable occurrences, contingent funds are

crucial—as is an ability to adapt quickly. Architect Tyler Engle, designer of the Madrona Live/Work residence in Seattle, agrees. "There are always surprises—whether it's a sink hole, dry rot, or reframing, you have to be prepared."

Meeting current codes can be another complication when you're changing the intended use of the building, says Rachel Chung, studio director at Sorg Architects. When the firm redid a Washington, D.C., fire station in the city's historic Capitol Hill neighborhood, "wall and egress ratings had to be completely re-evaluated." If the property is historically significant, there usually are more parties involved and it may cost more in design time and finishes. But

Benjamin Benschneider Photography



there's an upside. "Make use of federal historic tax preservation credits," Ginsburg advises, adding that "historically accurate materials and details do add cost, but the credits offset them."

Despite the effort, the double-threat of historic flavor and fine design adds value to a project. "We strive for a balance between respecting history and delivering modern conveniences," says Ginsburg, who knows that character-plus-luxury gives him a leg up on competitors.

## MADRONA LIVE/WORK

Located in Seattle's Madrona neighborhood, this century-old storefront originally was a

grocery, then a malt shop, and most recently an office. Engle, of local firm Tyler Engle Architects, redesigned the space for a client who had remarried and wanted a fresh start in a new home.

The couple needed an office, a residence, and a place to showcase their fabulous art collection, as well as a home flexible enough to host events for large groups or intimate dinner parties. Engle took a 1,600-square-foot rectangle and divided it up so as to create rooms in a progression that offers privacy from the street. Office and gallery spaces are up front. An ipe-clad service core—containing the kitchen and a powder room—creates a buffer between the entry and the rest of the home.

### MADRONA PROJECT TEAM

**Architect** Tyler Engle Architects, Seattle  
tylerengle.com

**Builder** Christensen Construction, Bellevue, Wash.