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Histories Meet in SMRT's New Portland Office



Finding our diamond, er, bakery in the rough.

After 18 months of searching for a new office space, we began to fear we'd have to leave the Portland Peninsula, our home for the last 136 years. When 20,000 s.f. of high bay, raw space opened up on the Washington Avenue corridor (or, "WAVE"), we immediately saw design potential. The historic, 100-year-old Nissen Bakery building presented the opportunity to celebrate collaboration, contribute to a sustainable Portland, and shape a space that is completely our own.

The space had strong bones, great height and immense windows. Abundant natural light was the top priority for our studio space – we got that and then some. Spectacular views stretch from the historic Eastern Cemetery, across Back Cove and out to Mount Washington on a clear day. We knew, with hard work and design finesse, that this was a bright future for SMRT.



"With history on the Portland peninsula spanning well over a century, SMRT was committed to finding unique space in the city for our next stage of growth. The historic former Nissen Bakery, with its high ceilings, abundance of natural light, and great views gives us the opportunity to create a highly collaborative, sustainable workspace encompassing WELL principles."

— Ellen Belknap, AIA, president

Show how the bread is made.

During the transformation of "75 WAVE", the history of making and baking informed our design. We wanted to "show how the bread is made." To create a space to nurture our open culture of exploration, inquiry and design. Movable panels line the main corridor, much like the conveyor tracks in the old bakery. The panels create movable pin-up and sketching space. They carry our projects along their design journey, inviting feedback, opportunities for learning and collaborative problem solving, while doubling as privacy for the work areas set behind.



Inherently cool and industrial, our design preserves and enhances the history of the bakery. The former grain silo, now home to our new materials library, is a laboratory for inspiration. As architectural designer Lodrys Gomez put it, "It's so bright, so tall, and so open – you want to immediately dig in and get your hands dirty creating."



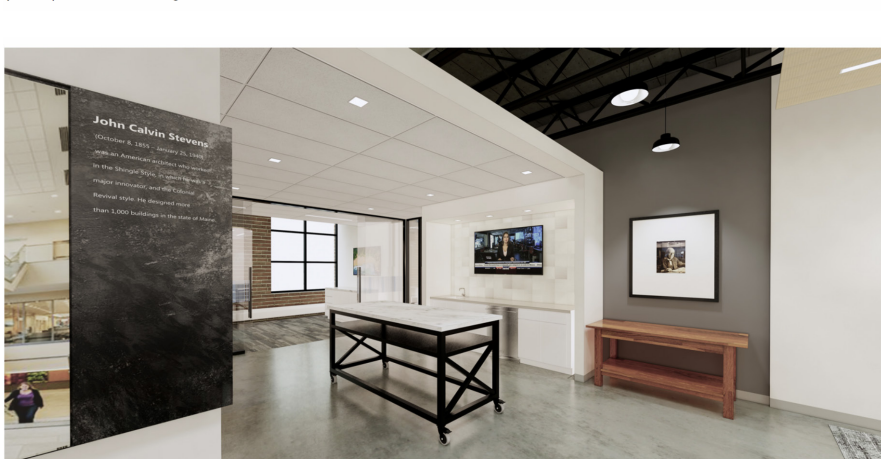
The workspaces are designed for flexibility, accommodating different tasks on different days. The adjacencies between our departments, huddle rooms, and focus areas offer multi-functional collaboration and privacy on-demand. Our colleagues have significant flexibility within their personal space, with unfixed furniture elements and sit-stand desks that can be fine-tuned to individual preferences.

Decisions with impact.

As we drive to achieve significant sustainability goals within the firm and in our project work, moving into a more efficient and sustainable space is a priority. Our footprint is smaller, our systems more efficient, and we've reduced the embodied carbon by choosing to renovate an existing building. We thoughtfully reused and restored existing materials to celebrate the building's industrial past.



Our new space is centered on community, collaboration and creativity. At the same time, we committed to pursuing WELL certification. WELL is a building rating system focused on the health of the occupants. Once approved, our space will be the second in the state to achieve this certification. We have taken care to make sure that employees have the healthiest of workplaces – plenty of natural light, desks and work stations they can configure to their own needs, natural materials and plants, plenty of bike storage with lockers and access to showers, art, and a wellness room for new moms,



What's old is new again.

As a 136-year-old firm with more than a century of history on the Portland peninsula, it feels fitting to start our next chapter by breathing new life into a 100-year-old space. SMRT has hit a lot of milestones in the last few years. We've grown dramatically thanks to our innovative, cutting-edge clients. We've launched a new brand and brought on stellar new talent. With our move, our space will support our culture of transparency and teamwork.

We love this city by the sea and are excited to engage with our neighbors in this culturally rich neighborhood. The Washington Avenue corridor is bursting with restaurants and eateries celebrating farm-to-table and diverse cuisines, coffee spots, breweries, and art. We can't wait to invite you in to share a beverage or a bite.