



PHOTOS: Patsy McEnroe Photography unless otherwise noted





# Modern Interpretation

## An Addition Makes Leasable Office Space More Appealing in a Highly Desirable Historic District

By Howard Hirsch, AIA, ALA, LEED AP, and David Genc, AIA

**T**he historically designated Fulton-Randolph Market District has become the trendiest neighborhood in Chicago for restaurants, retail, residential and offices. Once the home to meatpacking and processing facilities, the unique collection of masonry warehouses and factories has proved irresistible to developers who are creating a vibrant mixed-use district. Many of these masonry buildings were included in the historic district when it was formed, attempting to save the feel and scale of the area. But so too were vacant lots that were in prime locations or surrounded by contributing buildings.

Randolph Office Center is a new, 8-story plus penthouse, concrete loft office addition, built on a narrow and long vacant piece of land (formerly a parking lot), immediately west of and connected to an existing 6-story timber-loft office building. The existing building and the vacant lot were listed within the historic district. (This begs the question: How can a vacant lot be historic?) Because of this designation, any new construction, along with modifications to the existing building, needed to go through a full design review by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks.

### Direct Connection

The existing timber-loft building and the vacant lot next to it have been under continuous ownership and management since 1990. The existing building provided approximately 6,000 square feet of leasable space per floor, catering to mostly single-floor tenants. For the addition, the owner wanted the ability to increase each floor's leasable space to appeal to larger tenants. Therefore, each of the 6,000-square-foot floors in the addition were designed to align with the floors of



Built on a historically designated parking lot, Randolph Office Center's floors offer 6,000 square feet of leasable space, connecting directly to the adjacent loft's 6,000 square feet of leasable space.



BEFORE PHOTO: HIRSCH MPG LLC



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#### Judge's Comment

**"A beautifully detailed and imagined addition that has more than one interesting viewpoint. A striking juxtaposition of geometry and materials that anchors and ties together otherwise disparate structures."**

—Kenneth DeMuth, AIA, partner,  
Pappageorge Haymes Partners



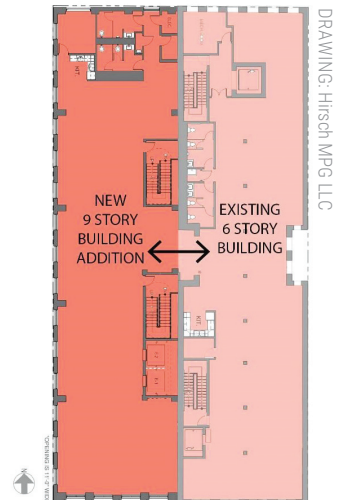
the existing building, providing a direct connection between the two and allowing the owner to offer 12,000-square-foot floors in the combined building. Now the building appeals to small companies wanting their own full-floor identity (typically reserved for much larger tenants), necessary in the post-pandemic office slowdown.

In addition, each floor was designed with its own independent HVAC and electric service, toilet room and kitchens, giving full-floor users independent control and identity.

Unfortunately, the stairs and elevator in the existing building were insufficient and did not meet building-code requirements for the new larger structure, so new stairs and elevators needed to be designed into the addition. These were located immediately adjacent to the existing building, so they could be used for full-floor tenants and two-tenant floor configurations.

#### Amenity Space

A partial ninth floor, a setback amenity space with roof-deck access, was provided as an amenity for the tenants, providing kitchen and bathroom facilities, multipurpose space, fire tables with deck seating, as well as incredible views of the Chicago skyline and Fulton-Randolph Market District. A fitness center in the basement was provided







as an amenity that was lacking in the existing building, making the combined building more desirable within the competitive Chicago office market. A new restaurant space on the first floor—with a folding-glass storefront to open the space to the extra-wide sidewalks on the block—and a shared lobby complete the new amenities for the tenants.

The exterior of the addition, clad in brick with deeply inset windows and stepped brick surrounds, was designed to be a modern interpretation of the traditional masonry lofts found in the district. Its 2-story scale relates directly to the 2-story expression of the existing loft building, setting up a dialogue between new and old. The straight, deeply set, east sides of the window openings are a direct relationship to the proportion and design of the existing loft building. The stepped-back west sides of the window openings erode toward the west, acknowledging the importance of the recent development of the Fulton-Randolph Market District. The inset bricks within these openings are of darker color to accentuate the proportions of the façade and to appear as a permanent shadow. Exterior lighting, uplighting these deep openings, reinforces the design intent at night.



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### Seamless Addition

The existing building and addition are located on 40- by 156-foot sites. The existing building has windows only on its 40-foot frontages facing Randolph Street to the south and an alley to the north. This makes the building difficult to layout

for tenants wanting conference rooms and private or open offices with natural light and views.

Directly west of the addition sit 2-story buildings that are also deemed historic and within the district. Working with the Chicago Department of Buildings, full-height windows were provided on the west façade of the addition, a location where windows would typically not be allowed (on a property line immediately adjacent to other properties). Protected by an immersion sprinkler system and utilizing sun-control louvers integrated into the insulated glass, these full-height windows flood the narrow, column-free footprint with natural light, resolving the issues inherent in a thin, deep footprint.

Because of the different construction types of the existing building and addition (the existing building's heavy-timber construction could not be built to a 9-story height for the addition), fire shutters were provided at the openings between the old and new construction, allowing for single-tenant use of the entire floor while effectively providing the code-required separation.

The use of custom brick, creative structural engineering, and the unique design of its masonry elements allowed this addition to retain its own modern identity while fitting in seamlessly with the adjacent loft building and character of the Fulton-Randolph Market District. 📍

#### Retrofit Team

**Architect:** Hirsch MPG LLC, [www.hirschmpg.com](http://www.hirschmpg.com)

**Owner:** Beacon Funding, [www.beaconfunding.com](http://www.beaconfunding.com)

**General Contractor:** Maris Construction, [www.marisconstruction.net](http://www.marisconstruction.net)

**Structural and MEP/FP Engineer:** WSP, [www.wsp.com](http://www.wsp.com)

**Civil Engineer:** Eriksson Engineering Associates Ltd., [eea-ltd.com](http://eea-ltd.com)

**Landscape Architect:** Daniel Weinbach & Partners Ltd., [www.dwpltd.com](http://www.dwpltd.com)

**Permit Consultant:** Cornerstone Permit Company, [www.cornerstonepermit.com](http://www.cornerstonepermit.com)

**Construction Manager:** Clausen Management Services Inc., (312) 660-5338

**Owner's Representative:** Burt Richmond

#### Materials

**Face Brick 1 (Field):** Yankee Hill Light Red Smooth Modular

**Face Brick 2 (Accent):** Sioux City Cranberry Velour Modular

**Windows and Glass:** Oldcastle BuildingEnvelope, [obe.com](http://obe.com)

**Folding Storefront and Doors:** Chicago Bifold, [www.chicagobifold.com](http://www.chicagobifold.com)

**Elevator:** Otis, [www.otis.com](http://www.otis.com)

**Glass and Aluminum Railings:** Greco, [greco railings.com](http://greco railings.com)

**Exterior Sunshade:** AGS Inc., [agsshade.com](http://agsshade.com)

**Fire Shutters:** Cornell, [www.cornelliron.com](http://www.cornelliron.com)

**Space Divider (Penthouse):** Xorel Meridian from Carnegie, [carnegiefabrics.com](http://carnegiefabrics.com)

**Porcelain Floor Tile:** Ambassador in Jett-Setter Dusk from Daltile, [www.daltile.com](http://www.daltile.com)

**Roof:** ULTRAPLY TPO from Elevate, [www.holcimelevate.com](http://www.holcimelevate.com)

**Penthouse Enclosure:** fibreC, [rieder.cc](http://rieder.cc)