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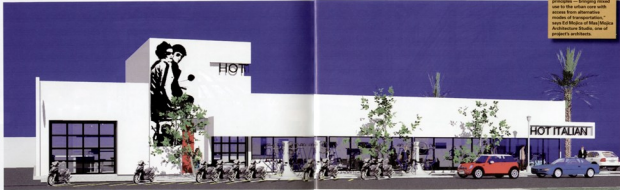
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TECHNO ROMP

ARE YOU READY
FOR BUSINESS IN AN
ELECTRONIC AGE?



The remodeled 1951 building embraces livable communities and new urbanism principles — bringing mixed use to the urban core with access from alternative modes of transportation,” says Ed Medina of Medina Architecture Studio, one of project’s architects.

The Human Touch

MIDTOWN'S INTERPRETATION OF CITY LIVING

by Ashley M. Wilborn

A commercial design morphs through the many —isms of the ages — art deco, modernism, brutalism, post-modernism — Midtown stands firmly amid the experimentation. Glass and steel monoliths sit beside squat brown office buildings, while here and there historic remnants of a city just dot the horizon.

Architects today say structures need to interact with — not just house — the humans in them. For example, PHA Architects had to temporarily inhabit a traditional, partitioned office while its new building at 14th and 5 streets was under construction.

“We went from an open, airy, light and bright office to putting two to three people into rooms with no windows and funky colors,” says John Packowski, principal with PHA. “The place started breaking [work] relationships up; we didn’t see people half the time. You could get lost trying to find someone. We actually have statistics that show productivity dropped 20 to 30 percent,” he adds.

Stories like Packowski’s are why local architects, designers and developers are turning to the influences of modern humanism, first attributed to architects like Alvaro Aalto and Frank Lloyd Wright, who sought to create an interaction with nature, rather than a shelter from it.

“The difference between modernism 30 or 40 years ago and today is that today it’s more humanistic, more layers of styles, more responsive to human experiences with the building,” says Ron Vitukas of Vitukas Architects, who is transforming the 1929 Preston building at 10th and L streets.



One Hot Italian

The \$2 million Hot Italian Project is the culmination of Italian living for developer Andrea Lapore and her partner, chef Fabrizio Carotaro. Though they’re both in Sacramento now, they’ve brought with them a mixture of the good food, necessary transportation choices and cultural influences of living in Italy.

The project at 14th and G streets is expected to wrap up next month with Vespas appearing for sale both inside and outside the building. But Lapore and Carotaro don’t want the emphasis on cycle culture just for the coolness factor.

“If we’re going to truly be a walkable, new urbanist community, you have to make it simple for people,” Lapore says. “Giving them access — front and center — should encourage more people to take this mode of transportation, rather than driving everywhere.” She plans to permit several parking spots for bicycles and have special racks to lock bicycle frames and wheels.

Greenbuilt Construction Inc. and interior designer Susan Prang of Creative Eye Studio are working on the project, which is seeking a certificate from Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design’s retail program, part of a pilot program with the U.S. Green Building Council. Green features include a composting bin for the kitchen, Solatubes — save that direct sunlight inside — and reclaimed wood furniture.

Carotaro is planning a pizza and panini bar, and a gelato station in the 3,500-square-foot restaurant. A 2,600-square-foot boutique would offer Italian motorcycle gear and clothing from Nava Milano, Kappa and a Hot Italian line by Iannotti Sportswear. At press time, the Vespa store was in final negotiations.





Architect Michael Malinowski leans against galvanized metal stairs, etched to mimic bamboo, in his firm's new design.



The entire building — including a dome on the roof and halopand on the patio — is wired with changing LEDs, or light-emitting diodes, which cycle through several colors. Transparent squares on the floor are LED panels; Malinowski plans to change their colors with ambient noise or his mood. Above, leftover galvanized ducts near the pond serve as bamboo planters.

Malinowski's mood ring

Dust bunnies were threatening to attack the architects of Applied Architecture when Mike Malinowski left his traditional office space to build a new, more flexible set of walls for his company.

Malinowski is also the president of the American Institute of Architects Central Valley chapter and a member of the city of Sacramento's Development Oversight Commission. Because of all these hats, Malinowski says he needed a space to facilitate creativity.

As a result, he says, the \$450,000 project is 3,000 square feet that express transparency, transformation and flexibility.

The architect carried out these three themes through fewer walls and by increasing the visibility between spaces. "Conversations can be carried on from one end of the building to the other without resorting to the intercom. It also means there's no place to hide, either as a person or in terms of work." If one of the architects needs to spread out a design, there's plenty of blank floor and wall space for laying out large prints or tacking them to the walls. And each workstation was customized for employees looking to stand or sit at an adjustable height.

Malinowski says the building materials were left in pure states to express their qualities and human uses. Structural wood was warmly varnished, and galvanized

steel has bamboo etchings.

Malinowski also opted for stained concrete using a bleach technique that employs acorn tannins and rust. And to keep those dust bunnies away, he installed a high-powered central vacuum system.

Even the placement of his office, a blue box overhanging the driveway, reflects "the idea of being perched precariously on the edge of conventional design and architectural practice."





"It's a passion for Cordano and I to bring out the features of old [architecture] for adaptive reuse. How do you get it to work for the new uses? It takes some finesse."
 — Ken Fahn, owner, Metro Properties

Rekindling an old flame

A remnant of Sacramento's past is getting a new life in the form of the 1929 Firestone building at 18th and L streets. Developers Mark Cordano of The Cordano Co., Ken Fahn, owner of Metro Properties, and building owners the Wurster family are refurbishing this landmark along the historic Highway 160 corridor.

Cordano says shell improvements that have included removing fuel tanks and asbestos, and reinforcing the second floor may ultimately total \$6 million. Once completed, the Firestone would house DeVere's Irish Pub on the first floor and a second-floor lounge by Mason's Restaurant. Two chains — California Pizza Kitchen and Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar — are also lined up. A developer close to the project estimates tenant improvements range from \$1 million to \$4 million each.

Ron Vrilakas, principal architect for Vrilakas Architects, is handling the architectural transformation of the 26,400-square-foot project. On the exterior, Gladding, McBean has begun restoring its own original tiles lining the building. Architects are enclosing the existing open



corner with frameless transparent glass, reinterpreting the rolling doors on the northeast corner of 18th street with wood and glass panels, and designing the pub entrance on L Street to fit within the existing grand columns.



RENDERING COURTESY OF VRIKAKAS ARCHITECTS; PHOTOS: LARRY SMITH