

News Release

U.S. General Services Administration

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GSA breathes new life into historic Civic Center Plaza landmark

Modernized federal building to reopen as GSA regional headquarters

SAN FRANCISCO – Today, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Mayor Edwin Lee and local leaders gathered to celebrate the completion of a major renovation to one of the Civic Center's cornerstone facilities, the 50 United Nations Plaza Federal Building (50 UNP). A ribbon cutting ceremony was held in the building's central courtyard to celebrate the reopening of the historic landmark as the home of GSA's Pacific Rim Regional headquarters.

Funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, this project provided much needed repairs and seismic upgrades to the federal building. It also brought the historic building up to 21st century office space standards and incorporated many sustainable design strategies. The renovation included: environmental remediation; new mechanical, electrical, lighting, and plumbing systems; roof replacement and refurbishment of existing historic wood windows; restoration of the historically significant interiors and central courtyard, as well as redesign of work spaces to create an open, collaborative office environment. The building now includes photovoltaic panels to generate electricity and its living roof is a verdant insulator. Incorporation of these high-performance green building features is expected to result in a LEED® Platinum certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

"In today's environment, sustainability and stewardship are predominant drivers in the design and maintenance of our federal portfolio," said Ruth Cox, GSA Pacific Rim Regional Administrator. "GSA recognizes that we not only have an obligation to increase the sustainability of the federal government by reducing cost of operations and the environmental impact of its buildings, but also to provide workspaces that will reshape the culture of the Federal workforce."

The renovation combined an ambitious agenda for the treatment of historical facilities, a strong expression of sustainability, and modern space planning. It met these critical measures, as well as energy performance goals, while respecting a unique historical asset. For GSA, the building is a proving ground, a demonstration to its employees, consultants and clients of the approaches and technologies that can make any facility more comfortable and reduce its carbon footprint. It answers basic questions about how to approach historic buildings and outfit them to function in the 21st century without losing the essential character that gives them value and connects us to our heritage.

Inside this 1936 building is a new workplace model. While a dynamic mix of open spaces encourages dialogue and collaboration, workstations and other private zones allow employees to perform focused tasks. This combination also uses existing building areas with greater efficiency; by planning for telework and other forms of digital-era mobility, as well.

"GSA is replacing buildings built around hierarchies from an era where people used the telegraph with workspaces more suited to today's world," said GSA Administrator Dan Tangherlini. "The kind of open office environment incorporated here and being adopted in other federal facilities across the nation encourages collaboration and cooperation. It also saves money by reducing space needed by federal agencies."

Located in the heart of the facility is Cliff Garten's *Ribbons*, a GSA Art in Architecture project that has transformed 50 UNP's central courtyard. His artwork, "a sculptural matrix of paving, seating, fountains, and planting" updates the classically symmetrical, Beaux-Arts 1932 Arthur Brown designed courtyard.

The restoration and re-occupancy of this historic gem with its new landscaping will add beauty and synergistic vibrancy to the Civic Center area and will bring an additional influx of employees to the plaza in the upcoming months.

"After nearly six years empty, soon 50 United Nations Plaza will bustle with the labors of 700 federal workers, bringing new energy to the Civic Center and Mid-Market area," said House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi. "The Recovery Act's investments created hundreds of good-paying jobs renovating and modernizing the structure and prepared this historic building for the demands of the 21st century. As the work of recovery remains unfinished, we know that we can continue to breathe new life into our nation-just as we have breathed new life into this building."

"The transformation of the historic federal building into a sustainable, energy efficient landmark is another major milestone in our City's efforts to revitalize and reimagine UN Plaza and the Central Market neighborhood," said Mayor Edwin Lee. "The federal investment from President Obama, Leader Pelosi and the GSA breathes new life into this facility, and we're excited to see an upgraded, seismically safe building reopen and reactivate the area."

Speakers at the ribbon cutting ceremony included: House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi; Mayor Edwin Lee; Dan Tangherlini, GSA Administrator; Ruth Cox, GSA Pacific Rim Regional Administrator; Michele MacCracken, Associate Principal and Senior Vice President, HKS Architects; and Cliff Garten, Cliff Garten Studio.

For additional details about GSA's Federal Building at 50 United Nations and building images see www.gsa.gov/r9news.

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