

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING

San Francisco, California



The Federal Office Building located at 50 United Nations Plaza in San Francisco, California, was realized through the U.S. General Services Administration's Design Excellence Program, an initiative to create and preserve outstanding public buildings for generations of use and enjoyment.

September 2020

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING

San Francisco, California

- 6** Introduction: Rethinking Historic Buildings' Potential
- 8** The San Francisco Civic Center
- 12** The Original Design of the Federal Office Building
- 16** The Loma Prieta Earthquake
- 20** Leading by Example
- 22** Modernizing the Federal Office Building
- 34** Wide-Ranging Impacts
- 38** The Design and Construction Team
- 43** U.S. General Services Administration
and the Design Excellence Program





**This project is a template for
GSA's preservation efforts and a
beacon for our customer agencies.**

David Insing, FAIA
Chief Architect, GSA





INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING HISTORIC BUILDINGS' POTENTIAL

The Federal Office Building located at 50 United Nations Plaza in San Francisco is a stately example of neoclassicism designed by Arthur Brown, Jr., a Bay Area architect regarded as one of California's key proponents of Beaux-Arts style. Moreover, construction of the 350,000-square-foot building in 1936 effectively completed the San Francisco Civic Center, and the neighborhood has since borne witness to events that shaped the city and our nation. The historic preservation movement was founded to conserve and sustain places of such visual beauty and historical significance.

Yet the Federal Office Building also represents a prime test for preservationists, which is to help landmarks compete with new construction in their local markets. It is difficult to convince customers that venerated office buildings are just as functional and efficient as column-free, nonhierarchical workplaces. And, to be sure, many such buildings cease functioning as workplaces and instead undergo redevelopment into hotels, apartments, and other property types whose circulation fits with the double-loaded corridors that thread through vintage office plans.

The U.S. General Services Administration's (GSA's) modernization of the Federal Office Building popularly known as 50 United Nations Plaza proves that, in the words of the agency's Chief Architect David Insinga, FAIA, "You can make a historic building function for how people work today." The \$121 million renovation designed by HKS Architects and completed in July 2013 preserved the defining spatial features and decorative finishes that contribute most strongly to the building's character. And by removing material selectively and completely updating building systems, the project achieved the standards of workplace mobility, occupant comfort, and ecological performance that are associated with best-in-class contemporary workspace. "This project is a template for GSA's preservation efforts and a beacon for our customer agencies," Insinga says.

This publication traces the Federal Office Building to its origins, to fully demonstrate how the building mirrors and participates in the history of San Francisco. The narrative also surveys the modernization and its impacts.



THE SAN FRANCISCO CIVIC CENTER

An hour before sunrise on April 18, 1906, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake devastated San Francisco. In less than a minute, the shock destroyed City Hall, which had been completed only eight years earlier. It also immediately severed municipal water mains, and fires raged through San Francisco unabated for the next three days. Combined, the earthquake and blazes claimed 28,000 buildings and 3,000 lives.

Some observers regarded the reconstruction of San Francisco as an opportunity to reinvent the city as a modern-day Florence. San Francisco had grown haphazardly since the Gold Rush of 1849 and prior to the 1906 earthquake, local mayor James Phelan had been campaigning to impose order on the urban plan. In 1899, for example, Phelan invited British architect Bernard Cahill to devise an all-new neighborhood of public buildings known as the Civic Center. Just one day before the earthquake, a Phelan-founded government agency printed a master plan for all of San Francisco that it had commissioned from Daniel Burnham, the American architect best known for planning the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 held in Chicago.

Both the Cahill and Burnham master plans were deeply influenced by the 1893 world's fair, which popularized a set of urban planning principles known as the City Beautiful movement. The philosophy organized skyscraper-scale cities into harmonious and efficient systems by way of monumental boulevards, grand civic centers, and expansive parks. Although implementing City Beautiful ideas could require tremendous investments in property and infrastructure, advocates argued that such sweeping changes were necessary to reform urban poverty and improve citizenship. San Francisco's embarking on either master plan would count as the largest-ever application of the City Beautiful.

After the 1906 earthquake, San Francisco politicians feared that reshaping local streets and parkland via any new plan would slow recovery or even compel residents and businesses to move to rival Los Angeles. Yet they were also intrigued by the Panama-Pacific International Exposition Company's 1910 offer to stage a world's fair of San Francisco's own in 1915: The exposition company would hold events

in an Exposition Auditorium that it would bequeath to the city, on the condition that the auditorium anchor a district of public buildings.

In response to these contrasting forces, city officials allowed San Francisco's private property to be rebuilt according to historical urban patterns while, in 1912, they approved the formation of a Civic Center as laid out in a revision of Bernard Cahill's scheme. The district would rise in the vicinity of the felled City Hall and comprise seven buildings arranged in an east-west axis around a central plaza. The approved Civic Center plan originally included a new City Hall located to the west of the plaza, a State Building to the north, a Public Library to the east, and the Exposition Auditorium to the south, as well as three more buildings whose functions were not yet determined. The auditorium was erected in time for the Exposition, City Hall was dedicated in 1916, and the Civic Center's remaining buildings arose over the next two decades.

Cahill's vision for a Civic Center reached full completion in 1936, with the opening

of the Federal Office Building atop his master plan's seventh site, and today the San Francisco Civic Center stands as one of the most thorough manifestations of the City Beautiful movement. Thanks in part to its elegance, this downtown district also has served as the setting for historic gatherings and other occasions, most notably the meeting of the United Nations Conference on International Organization in 1945 and the 1951 signing of the peace treaty that granted sovereignty back to Japan after World War II. In recognition of the San Francisco Civic Center's artistic importance and social significance, the district joined the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 and it was designated a National Historic Landmark District in 1987.





THE ORIGINAL DESIGN OF THE FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING

The Federal Office Building was designed by Arthur Brown, Jr., the Beaux-Arts architect who was also responsible for designing the City Hall, War Memorial Opera House, and Veterans Building within the San Francisco Civic Center. In the early 20th century, the Beaux Arts style of grandly scaled and elaborately decorated neoclassical building had risen to global popularity in parallel with the City Beautiful, and Brown integrated these two movements in the commissions he conceived for the Civic Center.

Brown was born in Oakland, California, in 1874. After excelling as an architecture student at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, in 1905 he returned to San Francisco to establish an architecture firm with longtime classmate John Bakewell, Jr. Thanks in large part to rebuilding from the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, the partners found outlets for their training at an enormity that young architects rarely experience. In particular, in 1912 Bakewell & Brown won the competition to design the new San Francisco City Hall which, according to the 1978 National Register Nomination Form for the Civic

Center, “is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of Beaux Arts Classical architecture in the United States.” The City Hall commission initiated a string of high-profile projects across America, which ranged from the Palace of Horticulture at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition and Coit Tower in San Francisco to Pasadena City Hall and the United States Department of Labor and Interstate Commerce Commission Building in Washington, DC.

Throughout his career, Brown, working with Bakewell or independently, continually participated in the realization of the San Francisco Civic Center, to ensure that City Hall remained its central attraction. In 1925, he was selected to design the Opera House and Veterans Building, which would serve together as a World War I memorial. The two virtually identical facilities were erected behind City Hall and expanded the Civic Center to the west. The National Register nomination declares the War Memorial to be “aesthetically inseparable” from the original Civic Center, based on how the pair of Beaux Arts–style buildings frames City Hall.

For the Federal Office Building, Brown again integrated an iconic structure into the Civic Center's larger ensemble of buildings. The building occupies the northeast corner of Bernard Cahill's master plan for the Civic Center; the 2-acre parcel was not assigned a function originally, and San Francisco donated the land to the federal government in 1930. To make the Federal Office Building feel like a longtime companion to the existing buildings, Brown sited it so the primary, south face would be visible from Civic Center Plaza. The architect then pressed in the east and west corners of the south elevation, which appear inverse and rounded in plan, to prevent the facade from overwhelming the Civic Center's east-west axis. The south elevation also features a colonnade of Doric columns that leads the eye from Market Street—the essential southwest-northwest artery that runs along the eastern edge of the San Francisco Civic Center—to the City Hall dome.

Brown designed the Federal Office Building under the auspices of Supervising Architect of the Treasury Louis A. Simon. Excepting its two inverse rounded

corners, the six-story, 350,000-square-foot building's footprint is rectangular. The building also features an interior courtyard so that overall, it appears D-shaped in plan. The underlying structural frame is steel with concrete floor slabs and walls comprised of unreinforced masonry and hollow clay tiles. Brown clad the exterior in granite and terracotta depending on the prominence of the elevation; on the Federal Office Building's most pronounced south elevation, the architect used granite solely. The facade's signature colonnade stands atop a rusticated two-story base whose center features three arched openings that identify the main entrance. Secondary entrances are located in the building's curving southeast and southwest corners. The exterior exemplifies the Second Renaissance Revival, an essential style within the wider Beaux Arts lexicon.

Inside the Federal Office Building, Brown employed materials and ornament to dazzling effect in the main entrance vestibule and first-floor lobby. These terrazzo-and-marble spaces are crowned in a barrel-vaulted ceiling that features decorative coffers in multiple shapes and



accented by pedimented doorways. Farther within the building, administrative spaces are connected by a double-loaded corridor whose hexagonal tile flooring is edged in 1.34 miles of marble trim. Rooms that have largely remained intact since 1936 evidence the building's occupancy by multiple federal agencies, such as the former offices of the General Inspector, Supply Corps, and Collector of Internal Revenue. Reflecting the Federal Building's requisition by the military during World War II, another highlight of the historic interior is the Nimitz Suite: The office is named for its former occupant Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Sr., who served as Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet during World War II, and its centerpiece is a 20-foot-diameter circular ceremonial room finished in oak parquet embedded with a U.S. Navy seal. After wartime, the Federal Building returned to multi-agency service, and in 1949 it was transferred from the U.S. Department of the Treasury to the newly founded U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), which today manages more than 9,600 federal civilian workplaces.

As part of the excavation of Market Street to create a subway, construction of a United Nations Plaza began in 1975. The 1-acre pedestrian area located in front of the Federal Office Building extended the Civic Center Plaza to the west, in an avant-garde design by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. The public space was completed later that year and dedicated in honor of the establishment of the United Nations, and the Federal Office Building's address was changed to 50 United Nations Plaza, in turn. Not unlike the wider Civic Center, it has been the site of historic events since then. In 1985, for example, signs taped to the building during a candlelight vigil inspired the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. In recognition of the Federal Office Building's architectural and social importance, the building was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places on June 5, 2017.

THE LOMA PRIETA EARTHQUAKE

On October 17, 1989, as the Oakland Athletics and San Francisco Giants were getting ready for Game 3 of the World Series inside Candlestick Park, San Francisco suffered its worst earthquake since 1906 at 5:04 in the afternoon. Millions of Americans watched the 6.9 Loma Prieta Earthquake startle baseball fans, and they followed along as television cameras captured the destruction of \$6 billion in total property damage outside of the ballpark.

Recovery from the Loma Prieta earthquake spawned another wave of inventive redevelopment in San Francisco, such as the replacement of the elevated Embarcadero Freeway with a pedestrian-friendly waterfront. Cleanup also prompted citizens to reexamine the historic assets they may have taken for granted, leading to \$1 billion in historically sympathetic modernizations in the Civic Center alone. Highlights of Civic Center reinvestment included the 10-year restoration of City Hall, whose dome moved four inches from the earthquake. Adjacent to City Hall, restoration was conducted on the War Memorial Opera House, and the original San Francisco

Public Library main branch was adapted into the Asian Art Museum.

GSA is responsible for several properties located in the greater Civic Center, and the agency responded to the Loma Prieta earthquake in site-specific ways. For the U.S. Courthouse and Post Office located across Market Street from Bernard Cahill's master plan, GSA commenced an extensive seismic retrofitting that lifted all of that building's columns onto isolation bearings; GSA reopened the facility in 1996 as the James R. Browning U.S. Court of Appeals. Meanwhile, the agency took a longer-range approach to the Federal Office Building at 50 United Nations Plaza. Here, GSA repaired damage from the Loma Prieta earthquake between 1990 and 1991, and it deferred a more complete seismic retrofit until it could move all tenants into a new, environmentally sustainable federal building adjacent to the Browning courthouse. Because the Federal Office Building's seismic overhaul required construction of new shear walls, GSA decided it would use that large-scale project to also retrofit the building's systems and modernize its workplace interiors.





We wanted the east corridor of the ground floor to be an exact expression of the original intention.

Michele McCampbell MacCracken
Architect



LEADING BY EXAMPLE

GSA owns or leases more than 375 million square feet of real estate, or approximately 9,600 buildings housing 1.1 million federal civilian employees. To service this extensive portfolio, the agency employs staff across the country in a system of 11 geographic regions. GSA's Pacific Rim Region manages federal buildings in California. In the early 2000s, when GSA was finalizing plans for the new San Francisco Federal Building, the regional headquarters operated out of the Phillip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in San Francisco. The Burton building is located just north of the historic Civic Center area.

Montserrat Agleham, today a supervisory architect for GSA's Pacific Rim Region, was assigned to manage the modernization of the Federal Office Building at 50 United Nations Plaza in 2003. As GSA prepared to move its federal tenants into the new San Francisco Federal Building and upgrade the 50 United Nations Plaza facility, it had trouble getting other federal agencies to consider backfilling the historic office building after its renovation. These prospective tenants preferred to seek space in San Francisco's Financial District

neighborhood, which at the time offered affordable space in modern structures that appeared more responsive to the design and infrastructure needs of the federal workforce. They particularly could not imagine the Federal Office Building meeting their security and thermal-comfort criteria. "It just wasn't considered Class A," Agleham recalls.

GSA would not modernize—or even retain—the Federal Office Building at 50 United Nations Plaza without securing tenant commitments. While researching multiple options for reusing or outleasing the Federal Office Building, mounting space demands within the Philip Burton Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse presented a compelling alternative: that GSA's Pacific Rim Region relieve crowding among its Burton neighbors by moving headquarters to 50 United Nations Plaza. A 2008 test fit study demonstrated the building's suitability for reuse as the new base for the Pacific Rim Region. A year later, passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act made \$121 million available to turn the building into GSA's new home for almost 600 employees.



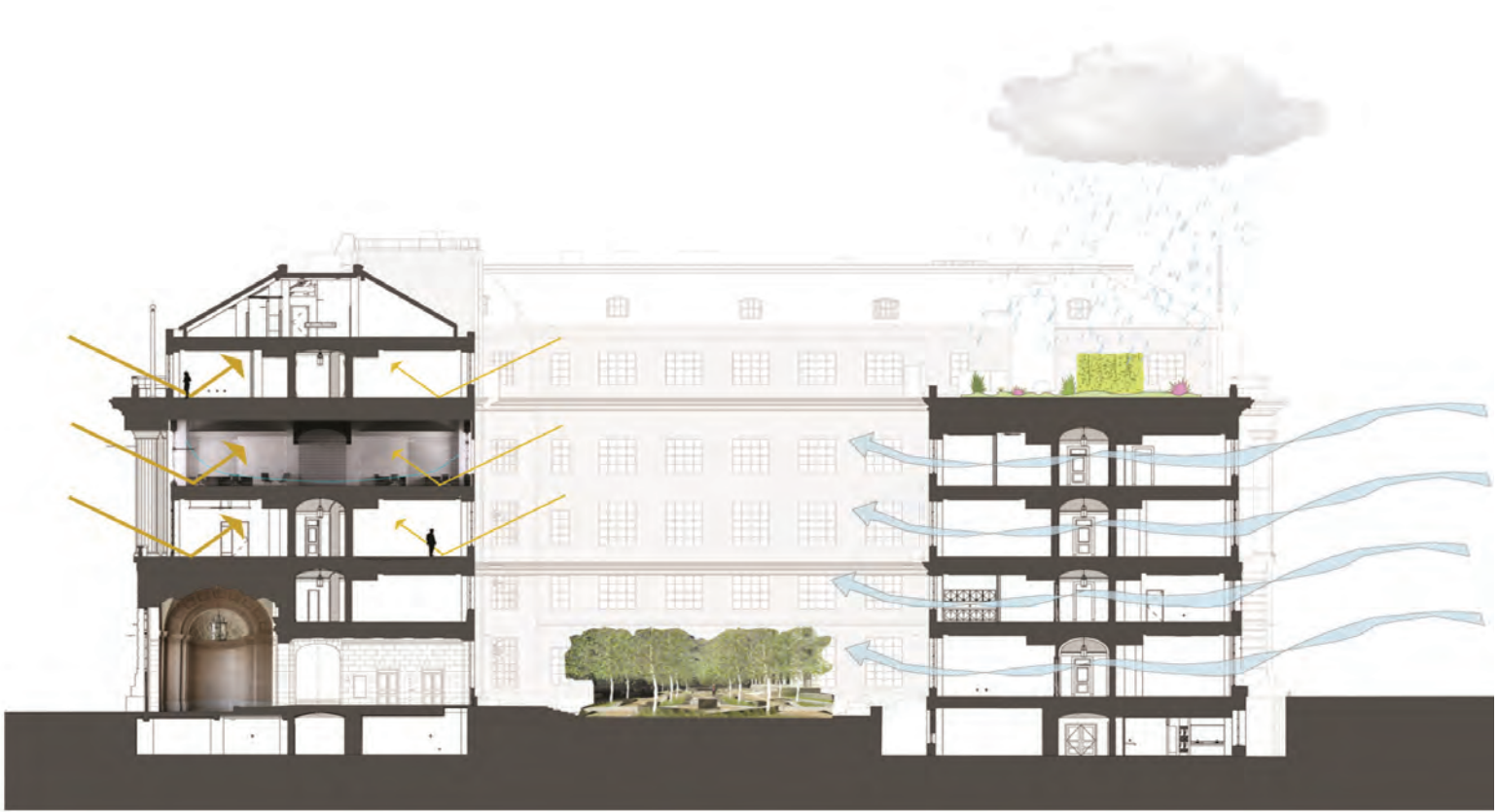
MODERNIZING THE FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING

Air-conditioning had existed for more than three decades when architect Arthur Brown, Jr. began designing the Federal Office Building located at 50 United Nations Plaza. Yet instead of using technology, Brown relied on ventilating the building by way of San Francisco's temperate climate. By placing a courtyard in the middle of the office building and inserting corridors down the centers of its interiors, Brown ensured that no occupant would be located more than 20 feet from the building envelope. Users simply opened or closed a large sash window to improve their comfort, with steam radiators mounted under the windows providing heat in wintertime.

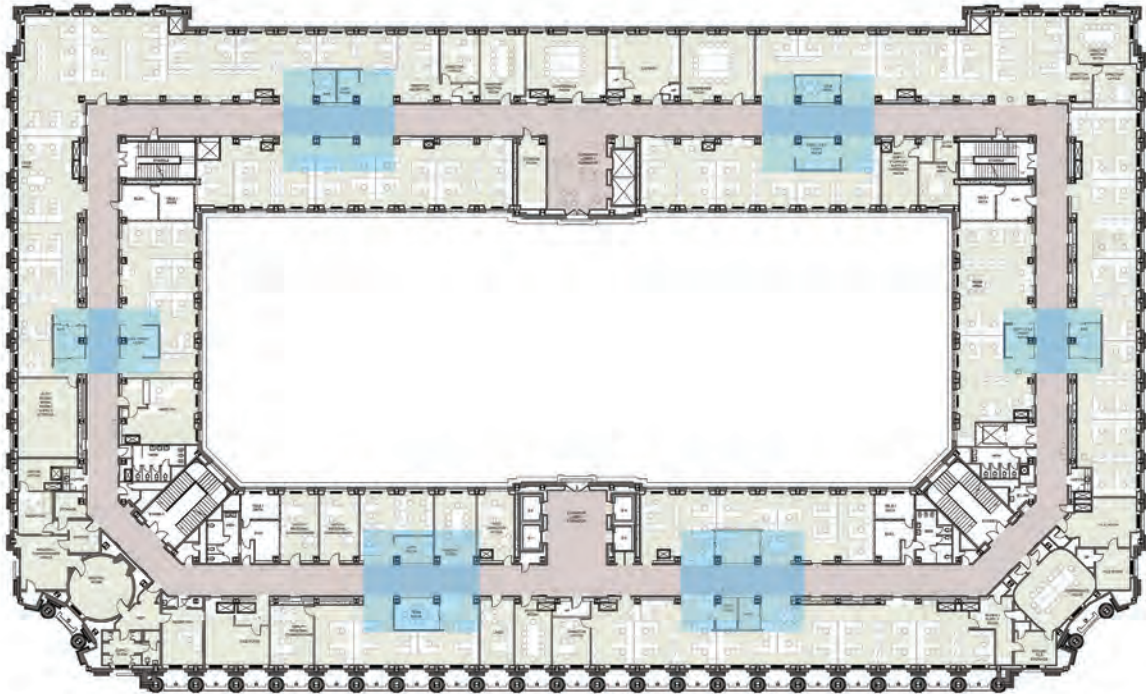
In the United States, buildings are responsible for 40 percent of all energy use, and mechanical air-conditioning is responsible for 15 percent of that consumption. As part of its longstanding leadership in environmental building performance, GSA determined that the modernization of the Federal Office Building should follow Arthur Brown, Jr.'s lead and rely on mechanical systems minimally. The agency asked the project's

designer, HKS Architects, to rehabilitate the historic windows and amplify their natural ventilation to meet contemporary interior climate standards. Doing so would also help achieve ambitious energy-efficiency goals and contribute to Gold certification or better under the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system.

Slight revisions to Brown's floor plan were essential to this natural ventilation solution, as removing the historic corridor in certain places on each floor would allow an increase in the volume of air moving through the building. These character-defining corridor walls were very selectively removed in consultation with the historic preservation community. "There's a hierarchy of the design," explains Michele McCampbell MacCracken, who served as project manager for HKS. "We wanted the east corridor of the ground floor to be an exact expression of the original intention, but then as you move through and up the building, you see these nodes inserted into corridors." Wherever historic fabric remained, HKS and its collaborators relied



Sectional Illustration of Federal Office Building showing daylighting, ventilation, and rainwater capture



Typical Floor Plan

on corridor doors and transoms as passages for ventilation.

The architectural handling of outdoor airflow is one element within a building-wide ventilation system combining natural and mechanical strategies. In natural ventilation mode, the system introduces tempered outside air to the space via air handlers; air movement lowers the perceived interior temperature for occupants. For mechanical ventilation, air handlers work in tandem with the original radiators, which were refitted with individual temperature controls and connected to an updated steam heating plant. Collective spaces like conference rooms are outfitted with conventional cooling and overall, system installation did not adversely impact historically significant building elements.

GSA's decision to install its Pacific Rim Region headquarters in the Federal Office Building not only accommodated the federal workforce with existing real estate, but it also preserves an important cultural asset for future generations. Indeed, the concept of corridor nodes

unlocked the building's transformation into a desirable workspace. At each node, glass panels enclose small team rooms that can be used by employees for impromptu phone calls and collaboration sessions. "We thought of these nodes as special places for interaction," says McCampbell MacCracken. Eliminating some corridor walls visually unites employees, as well, and inbound interior partitions were almost entirely eliminated to create open-plan workspaces that enjoy exceptional access to daylight and views. "The result brings the Federal Office Building into the 21st century as an office interior," Agleham says of the sum effect.

Beyond corridor nodes, Agleham notes that the interior design comprises a series of repeated modules in which each module includes a glazed team room, a collaboration space, and an open office that can be reconfigured as workforce organizations evolve over time. Layouts' emphasis on open floor plans and low furniture also prevented interference with natural ventilation. Enclosed offices were set aside only for GSA's human-resources and legal divisions.

Although the Federal Office Building's new nodes appear as spot interventions, executing them in fact required extensive demolition. "Employing the node openings throughout the historic corridors allowed GSA to convert closed configurations to open offices," explains Sohail Shaikh, senior project manager for construction manager Jacobs. "However, that created some challenges in maintaining the integrity of the structure, because the corridor was built with hollow clay tile. We had to go behind these walls on the non-corridor side and provide a strong support without altering historic fabric."

Because hollow clay tiles perform poorly under the lateral forces of an earthquake, the Federal Office Building renovation team devised a seismic retrofit that simultaneously reinforces the historic corridors. Insertion of new concrete shear walls improved the strength and stiffness of the steel frame and the corridors' unreinforced masonry alike, without requiring much disruption to historic fabric. The solution was not as costly as other approaches, and it was suited to the building's significant weight and stout proportions.

Inboard wall reconstruction also served as the location for new electrical distribution and fire protection systems, as well as the ducting required of the ventilation system's air handlers. These upgrades were conducted jointly with the replacement of original plumbing with low-flow fixtures, retrofitting and replacement of light fixtures with automatically controlled LEDs, and a roof replacement that included rooftop photovoltaics that supply 1 percent of the building's electricity. The project team calculated that the suite of high-performing systems would allow the Federal Office Building to use 37 million fewer kBtus per year and save \$400,000 over a baseline building, in addition to cutting water usage by 80 percent.

All of this was completed in July 2013 with seemingly little visual impact on the historic Brown design. Approximately 98 percent of existing walls, floors, and roof structure were reused, more than 600 original oak doors were restored, and the corridors' historic pendant lamps were rewired. The building's granite exterior, as well as significant interior spaces like the entry lobby, main stairways, and the



Nimitz Suite, seem almost unchanged. “If you put something in there, make sure you put it back like it had never been altered,” Agleham says of the project team’s ethos for meticulously documenting, numbering, and reassembling components. “A historic preservation project encourages creative solutions, within parameters. That creativity blossoms when all the disciplines are working together.”

Principles of respecting and delicately reinterpreting history were even applied to the modernization of outdoor spaces, such as the courtyard that Arthur Brown, Jr. had conceived as a Beaux Arts–style garden. Historical plans of the Federal Office Building portray the 24,000-square-foot courtyard as a symmetrical arrangement of paths and shrubs, anchored by tiered fountains to the east and west. Yet Brown’s ideas were never realized: When GSA moved tenants out of 50 United Nations Plaza to prepare for the office building’s modernization in 2007, its courtyard was populated by invasive plants. In response, the agency commissioned a sympathetic rethinking of the interior courtyard from Venice, California–based artist Cliff Garten

and San Francisco landscape architecture studio Cliff Lowe Associates (CLA).

GSA retained CLA as landscape designer of the courtyard and tapped Garten as collaborator as part of its Art in Architecture Program, which since 1963 has allocated a small percentage of the estimated cost of every significant construction project for public artwork. Art in Architecture also oversees the artist selection process, to ensure the most suitable pairing of artists and projects. “By inviting Cliff Garten to work directly with CLA, we made the most of both landscape and art budgets and, more important, transformed the courtyard into a singular, immersive experience,” says GSA Chief Architect David Insinga.

The Art in Architecture designation applies to the entire courtyard and is entitled *Ribbons*. The name refers to the textured bands of concrete set within decomposed granite, which run in a largely east–west axis across the courtyard. The bands arc toward stairs located in the centers of the courtyard’s north and south elevations, where they overlap one another in a braided

pattern. They also gradually rise from the granite ground plane in a twisting gesture to form seating, then descend again. Between the bands, planting beds feature a lush understory of shade-tolerant coral bells and deer ferns, as well as 32 Himalayan white birch trees arranged in a grid pattern. Two cube-like granite fountains occupy the sites of Brown's unrealized fountains to anchor the courtyard's long axis.

Garten explains that *Ribbons* is sympathetic to the historical design of the courtyard, pointing to the fountains and the overall symmetry as direct acknowledgments of Brown's plans. On the other hand, Brown never could have envisioned the mobile and collaborative work for which this courtyard's gathering spaces are designed. "I had to respond to the elegance of the setting not by mimicking that architecture, but in a contemporary way which would allow people to view it as a social space, or as a space to focus, or as a space to circulate across the building," Garten says. "There is a personal artistic vocabulary here. But it really is conditioned by the quality of the space and the activities that the [new installation] accommodates."

The artist adds that *Ribbons* had to abide standards of physical access and environmental performance that also have little historical precedent. Ramps were appended to the courtyard's granite stairs, to universalize entry to the courtyard. The decomposed granite ground plane abates stormwater runoff, water-efficient drip irrigation nourishes the vegetation, and the bands of seating were cast from recycled concrete in reusable fiberglass molds.

Additionally, GSA converted 14,000 square feet of the Federal Office Building's rooftop into a garden surrounding the facility's new photovoltaic array. A diverse plant palette that includes native grassland plants encourages pollinators and supports bird habitat. Casey Lyons, founder of Pacific Grove, California-based landscape company Habitat Gardens, adds that the taller vegetation lends a more "topographical" appearance to the roofscape, and that the green roof overall allows the photovoltaic panels to operate more efficiently, "because it tempers dramatic temperature swings." The project predated a 2016 municipal law mandating solar panels or green roofs on certain kinds of new construction.

The challenge behind this landscape sculpture was to wed an innovative renovation to valuable historic fabric.

Cliff Garten
Artist









WIDE-RANGING IMPACTS

Since reopening in November 2013, the Federal Office Building has consistently exceeded expectations. Commissioning of building systems by AECOM found that the facility performs between 5 and 15 percent better than predicted outcomes for energy and water efficiency. The project confirmed GSA's 2010 mandate of LEED Gold certification for all new construction and major modernization projects, while 50 United Nations Plaza itself achieved the LEED program's highest Platinum rating.

In addition, the reinvented facility is outperforming as a work environment. While the Pacific Rim Region headquarters occupied four floors of the building immediately after its reopening, the open-office interior—in conjunction with technology improvements that allowed for greater reliance on working from home—supported employee productivity so effectively that GSA was able to consolidate operations to three floors of the Federal Office Building. The move fulfilled GSA's 2014 requirement that its office utilization rate total 130 square feet per person. It also made space available for occupancy by the U.S. Department of

Transportation and U.S. Department of Education as additional tenants. In a 2016 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, 83 percent of respondents viewed their office experiences favorably.

Maria Ciprazo, who directs design and construction for GSA's Pacific Rim Region, says the recent history of cutting-edge workplace design can be traced through the agency's capital projects in the San Francisco Civic Center. "The 1990s-era James R. Browning U.S. Court of Appeals Building project refined a historic concept for today's use and the San Francisco Federal Building redefined the potential of sustainability in the workplace," she says. "The modernization of the Federal Office Building at 50 United Nations Plaza furthers the evolution of adaptive reuse and of sustainable development, in one."

Observers also note that the modernization of the Federal Office Building has had profound impacts on the San Francisco Civic Center, especially if the project is considered in tandem with GSA's other investments in the neighborhood. "One of the great things that GSA does is to invest

in areas that may have been marginalized,” says architect Craig Hartman, who led the Browning modernization. “The rehabilitation of that building, the creation of the federal office building next door, and the investment that GSA has made at 50 United Nations Plaza—without these, I don’t think the city would have begun the renaissance that we’re now seeing.”

The immediate Civic Center area has undergone significant improvement since the renovation of the Federal Office Building was finished in 2013. The following year, for example, San Franciscans celebrated the completion of the Passage of Remembrance war memorial, located between the War Memorial Opera House and Veterans Building. Other, more recent additions to the historic district include a pair of playgrounds and a cafe kiosk, while the Asian Art Museum has launched a \$90 million expansion. Building on this momentum, in 2019 San Francisco’s Planning Department unveiled a sweeping redesign of the Civic Center that includes permanent block closures that reduce vehicular traffic and support pedestrian use.

Ramifications of the changes are tangible well beyond the boundaries of Bernard Cahill’s historic master plan for the San Francisco Civic Center. The wider area has witnessed the development of housing numbering in the thousands of units, as well as the remaking of the historic Strand movie palace as a performance space for the American Conservatory Theater. “The group of federal buildings around 50 United Nations Plaza has become the gateway of the Civic Center, and our investment in these buildings has catalyzed investment in the neighborhood,” Ciprazo says. “GSA’s work according to an overarching, multiple-facility vision has been a long journey. But we kept at it, because it is the most cost-effective approach to the federal portfolio, and because we are dedicated to using taxpayer money with that highest level of accountability.”





2018 soft meeting
agenda

THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION TEAM

Owner

U.S. General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service
Pacific Rim Region

Maria Ciprazo, Regional Chief Architect

Ken Wong, Project Executive

Monsy Agleham, Project Manager/Construction
Engineer/Contracting Officer's Representative

Shelita Harper, Contracting Officer

Wesley Lau, Contract Specialist

Jane Lehman, Regional Historic
Preservation Officer

David Bischof, Christopher Cabato,
Jason Cawthorne, Jason Crowell, Don Douglass,
Regina Douglass, Vince Fabris, Stacy Fong,
Betsy Frederick-Rothwell, Andy Harris,
Justine Jensen, Gary Kaplowitz, Ana Lau,
Bob Levenson, Sam Lotta, Sara Lu, Jim
McDonald, Melanie Norton, Bela Palfalvi,
Jed Sampson, Victor Tablante, Bernard Tong

Lead Design Architect

HKS Architects
Dallas, Texas, and Los Angeles
and San Francisco, California

Dan Jeakins, Principal

Mark Donahue, Lead Designer

Michele McCampbell MacCracken,
Senior Vice President/Project Manager

Shea Bond, Greg LaGrega, Ellen Mitchell,
Jim Montemayor, Shirley Overlay

MEP Engineer

WSP Flack + Kurtz
San Francisco, California

Debbie Grieves, Andrew Harrington,
Lindsay Marion, Patric Thomas

Structural Engineer

Nabih Youssef Associates
San Francisco, California

Artist

Cliff Garten
Venice, California

Jim Mogannam, Project Manager

Landscape Architecture

Cliff Lowe Associates
San Francisco, California

Cliffton Lowe

Construction Manager

Jacobs
San Francisco, California

David Roberts, Project Executive

Sohail Shaikh, Senior Project
Manager

Roy Duran, Construction Manager

Roberto Lemus, MEP Inspector

Kevin McCauley, Ken Wolz,
Project Engineers

Construction Contractor

Hathaway Dinwiddie
San Francisco, California

Greg Cosko, President/CEO

Garry O'Reilly, Senior Manager

Jim O'Callaghan, Aurelio Ochoa,
Carolyn Wolf, Senior Project
Managers

Civil Engineer

BKF Engineers
Redwood City, California

Tom Morse

Historic Preservation

Knapp & VerPlanck Preservation
Architects
San Francisco, California

Frederick Knapp

Lighting Design

Horton Lees Brogden Lighting
San Francisco, California

Acoustics

Charles M. Salter
San Francisco, California

Cristina Miyar

**Telecommunications
Infrastructure**

TEECOM
Oakland, California

Mark Latz

Cost Consultant

TBD Consultants
San Francisco, California

Space Planning

CRA Architecture
Houston, Texas

Sharon Farrar, Joel Rovinsky

Blast Consultant

Himman Consulting Engineers
San Francisco, California

Signage

Kate Keating
San Francisco, California

Commissioning Agent

AECOM
San Francisco, California

Alastair MacGregor, Vice President

Donald Tran,
Commissioning Manager

**Historic Construction
Management**

Page and Turnbull
San Francisco, California

Peter Birkholz

Archaeology Consultant

ICF International
San Francisco, California

Edward Yarbrough

Environmental Testing

IHI Environmental
Emeryville, California

Marco di Piramo

Structural Consultant

Coffman Engineers
Oakland, California

Doug Silver

Electrical Contractor

Rosendin Electric
San Jose, California

Mechanical Contractor

ACCO Engineered Systems
San Leandro, California

Restoration

Luis Norori Antique
Restoration
San Francisco, California

**Design Excellence
National Peers**

Heriberto Brito
Brito Design Studio
Coral Gables, Florida

Tom Paladino
Paladino and Company
Seattle, Washington

Christine Theodoropoulos
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon

James Timberlake
Kieran Timberlake
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Art in Architecture/Fine Arts
National Peers**

Bruce Guenther
Portland Museum of Art
Portland, Oregon

Bruce Judd
Architectural Resources Group
San Francisco, California

Susan Pontious
San Francisco Arts Commission
San Francisco, California

**Construction Excellence
National Peers**

William Calhoun
Clark Construction Group
Bethesda, Maryland

Deryl McKissack
McKissack & McKissack
Washington, DC





U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION AND THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Public buildings are part of a nation's legacy. They are symbolic of what government is about, not just places where public business is conducted.

Since its establishment in 1949, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has been responsible for creating federal workplaces, and for providing all the products and services necessary to make these environments healthy and productive for federal employees and cost-effective for American taxpayers. As builder for the federal civilian government and steward of many of our nation's most valued architectural treasures, GSA is committed to preserving and adding to America's architectural and artistic legacy.

GSA established the Design Excellence Program in 1994 to better achieve the mandates of public architecture. Under this program, administered by the Office of the Chief Architect, GSA has engaged many of the finest architects, designers, engineers, and artists working in America today to design the future landmarks of our nation. Through collaborative partnerships, GSA is implementing the goals of

the 1962 Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture: producing facilities that reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the federal government, emphasizing designs that embody the finest contemporary architectural thought; avoiding an official style; and incorporating the work of living American artists in public buildings. In this effort, each building is to be both an individual expression of design excellence and part of a larger body of work representing the best that America's designers and artists can leave to later generations.

To find the best, most creative talent, the Design Excellence Program has simplified the way GSA selects architects and engineers for new construction and major renovation projects and opened up opportunities for emerging talent, small, disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses. The program recognizes and celebrates the creativity and diversity of the American people.

The Design Excellence Program is the recipient of a 2003 National Design Award from the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, and of the 2004 Keystone Award from the American Architectural Foundation.

