

## Moving into a green office space New Wattenbarger Associates office a showcase for green building



Randy Rissman installs cabinets recycled from redwood shelving salvaged from Petaluma's old silk mill at the new office of Wattenbarger Associates. Terry Hankins

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Bend close to the new wooden stairsteps inside the Wattenbarger Associates office at 260 Petaluma Blvd. North. Take a whiff. There's the faint but unmistakable smell of the wine vats that are the source of the solid wooden treads, purchased from Heritage Salvage in Petaluma.

Recently bought by Wattenbarger Architects for a new California office, the 1930s-era building is in the midst of a remodel that incorporates the principles of sustainable building. These principles encourage working with available resources rather than new ones.

In that spirit, Wattenbarger chose to remodel an existing building rather than build anew. The architects have kept the structure and floor plan of the old building, including the newly exposed original fir floorboards and brick walls.

"We tried to work with what's here," said Carl Servais, job captain and soon-to-be architect at the new office.

The building on Petaluma Boulevard North was built around 1937, according to president and CEO Ross Jones. The first reported user was the Adams Box Factory, followed by Petaluma Pump and Well until 1957.

"Drop-in visitors have told us that the building used to be the home of Schluckebier Hardware

Company," said Jones. Recent tenants include a teen club, a yarn and knitting shop and a Buddhist meditation center.

A number of recycled components will grace the interior, such as shelving units made from planks recovered from the old Petaluma Silk Mill. Other materials are sustainably and, whenever possible, locally produced.

Lincoln Street Builders in San Rafael constructed the formaldehyde-free bamboo reception center and other desks. Luedecke Woodworks, also at 260 Petaluma Blvd. North, is constructing the shelving unit from the silk mill planks. The Energy Star dishwasher is from Tresch Galeria, next door.

The refinished floorboards are sealed with a low-VOC sealer. VOC stands for volatile organic compounds — like those in solvents and formaldehyde. Low-VOC materials are better for health and the environment. Green Fusion Design Center in San Anselmo provided the low-VOC wall paint.

Solar tubes will brighten the interior, so that less lighting is needed.

The new office will be equipped with showers, so that employees — including Servais and Ross Jones — can shower after bicycling to work.

The project is registered for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification, a points-based rating system that measures sustainable construction and operation of new or existing buildings.

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, LEED is "the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings."

"Our interest in sustainability has been growing over the past years," explained Servais. "Part of what we're doing is to encourage our clients to be more amenable, too. It's something that we believe in enough to spend the money to do it for our own office."

Servais hopes that prospective clients will be impressed enough with the beauty, health benefits and energy efficiency of the new office to want to incorporate the same principles in their own projects.

Wattenbarger & Associates is the California branch of Wattenbarger Architects, a Bellevue, Wash., firm founded in 1987 that specializes in building projects for older adults.

Wattenbarger Architects specializes in continuing care retirement communities, which allow seniors to transition as needed from self-care to nursing care within the same facility.

The company decided to open an office in Petaluma because much of its newer business is in California. Jones and Servais chose Petaluma because both were attracted to the Bay Area. They expect the office to expand beyond the current four employees.

A new project in the design review stage is Creekside Village in Santa Rosa. Servais said that the firm hopes to add green elements to the design.

Locally, the firm has done some initial studies for the Hotel Petaluma and silk mill projects.