



The old Tremont Building, formerly dark and deteriorated, is now full of light and reopened for business. Designed by the principals of The Arkitek Studio, the renovated space offers flexibility for their 11-person firm.

In the Neighborhood

The architects of The Arkitek Studio in Bryan have found their perfect home

by CHARLIE BURRIS, AIA

THE TREMONT BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN BRYAN was originally built in the 1920s by a Sicilian family as a dry goods store. It has been used for various other businesses over the years before becoming our firm's home in 2007. My partners and I wanted a "sense of place" and a neighborhood feel of interconnectedness. I assumed nothing would be available in the historic downtown, but then this property appeared as we looked at options.

It was in poor shape, very dark and deteriorated. We removed the ceiling to expose the steel bow truss structure, stripped the plaster from the brick walls, and added the central skylight. The abundance of natural light that floods the open space is quite pleasant. The variety of rich materials makes it feel comfortable and inviting.

I've designed every office I've worked in since 1976. This one was a team effort. We have just over 4,600 gross square feet. The space layout is very open and reflects our transparent means of working, with the four principals' spaces along one side and opening out onto the studio workstations at the center. On the other side are enclosed support spaces.

We salvaged some of the original pressed-metal ceiling panels to fabricate two large ceiling clouds over the reception area and for acoustical privacy in the conference rooms. We display artwork by Dick Davison, who teaches at the A&M College of Architecture. He switches out the pieces from time to time for Art Step (a gallery crawl that takes place several times a year) and the monthly First Fridays where strollers drop in to visit downtown businesses, including ours. There is a communal and festive spirit that has become part of our firm's identity. Everyone who comes by seems to like how the space has been transformed.

We still have work to do, like the front awning and courtyard at the rear along the alley, but overall this space has worked out perfectly. Every evening when I leave work and step out to the street, I look down Main Street toward the other wonderful old properties, including the Astin Building and the LaSalle Hotel. It's times like this when I think about how much I love being part of the neighborhood in historic downtown Bryan.

The writer invites all *TA* readers to visit 308 N. Bryan Ave.