

1310 East Union, Miller/Hull's striking steel-framed transparent live/work lofts, sing an ode to Modernism

By Sheri Olson, AIA

Taking a stand against suburban sprawl, environmental activist and former high-tech executive Liz Dunn asked the Miller/Hull Partnership to design a sophisticated loft-style condominium project on a small urban lot. "I wanted to give people a reason to abandon their three-car garage McMansions and live in the city," says Dunn.

These eight live/work units sit on a lot formerly occupied by a sex shop in Seattle's Pike/Pine neighborhood, a gritty-yet-hip district of low-rise concrete and brick buildings within walking distance of downtown. The site's small size—40 by 80 feet—appealed to first-time developer Dunn but put pressure on Miller/Hull to maximize the allowable areas so that the project would be profitable. Equally important to Dunn was creating a design that would distinguish itself in a lackluster local housing market. "The client wanted a unique project that was architecturally strong in a city dominated by cookie-cutter multifamily projects," says David Miller, FAIA, of Miller/Hull.

A nondescript apartment building on the west, a fashionable bakery on the east, and an auto repair garage on the north are built up to the property line on three sides. Since the site was not large enough to fit eight required parking spaces, a lobby, and retail space on the ground floor, European hydraulic parking lifts made the project feasible by stacking two cars in a single space. (Appropriately enough for the eco-sensitive design, SUVs don't fit on the lifts.) Another potential deal breaker was a five-story height limit. Since mezzanines are not considered a floor, Miller/Hull was able to achieve a seven-story building by designing double-height units with mezzanines on the upper levels.

The project's steel frame may have been born out of necessity, but for Miller/Hull it was a golden opportunity to create the project's hallmark transparency. Steel met the noncombustible construction requirements and solved staging problems on the tight site by allowing the contractor, Turner Construction, to fabricate many structural elements off-site. On the south, the exposed steel structure (fire proofed with intumescent paint) is infilled with floor-to-ceiling glass for a light and transparent front facade. By stepping the building back 10 feet from the neighboring garage, Miller/Hull was able to fully glaze the north side, too.

Seismic X-bracing—slender tube steel painted brick red—crisscrosses the central bays outside motorized glass garage doors that

Project: 1310 East Union live/work lofts

Location: Seattle

Owner: Anemone Partners, LLC

Architect: The Miller/Hull Partnership

Electrical engineer: Ed David,

Jomega

Mechanical engineer: Sider & Byers

Consultants: Taylor Engineering Consultants (civil engineers); Atelier (landscape architects)

General contractor: Turner Construction

Sheri Olson, AIA, RECORD's Seattle-based contributing editor, is author of Miller/Hull (2001) and architecture columnist for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.



FIFTH FLOOR MEZZANINE



ROOF TERRACE



FOURTH FLOOR MEZZANINE



FIFTH FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

0 10 FT.
3 M.



SECOND FLOOR

1. Lobby
2. Driveway
3. Retail space
4. Garage
5. Private terrace
6. Deck
7. Public terrace

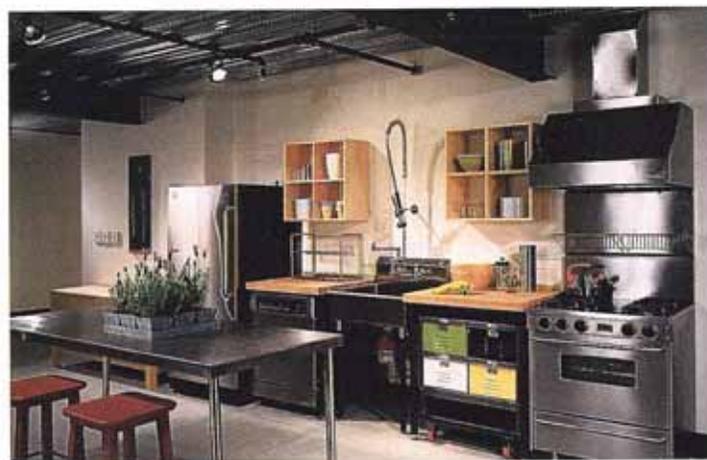


Seismic X-bracing—slender tube steel painted brick red—crisscrosses the central bays outside of motorized glass garage doors that slide up to open entire walls of some units to the outdoors (top left and right). Inside, the loft-style units have a raw industrial quality, with polished concrete floors, steel-plate baseboards, and steel-deck ceilings.

slide up to open entire walls of some units to the outdoors, an appealing feature in the Pacific Northwest's moderate climate. These room-size front porches combine with a scattering of cable-railed balconies to add an extra liveliness and neighborliness to the street. To earn all that glass under the state's stringent energy code required superinsulating the solid sidewalls and the roof. Both architect and client dislike using EIFS, so the sidewalls are clad in hand-stained, ocher-colored cement-board panels. The panels have exposed metal fasteners and metal reveals modulating the large wall surface that suggest the underlying structural grid.

Details add layers of scale and texture within the bold steel frame. "We looked at the design as a kit-of-parts using off-the-shelf materials," says Miller. The cladding is a panelized system of garage doors, cement board, aluminum storefront, and metal siding at the roof. Each floor contains two units that vary in size from 700 square feet to 1,600 square feet and are designed to combine into one unit with relative ease. The fourth and fifth floor units are double height along the window wall with open mezzanines for sleeping. Most are floor-through units for fire department access from the street (there is also a central exit stair), while allowing natural light at both ends as well as cross ventilation.

The two-story penthouse units have private upper and lower outdoor terraces connected by metal spiral staircases that distinguish the project's roofline. In a city where rooftops are underutilized, these offer panoramic views of downtown, Puget Sound, and the Olympics. Inside, the loft-style units have a raw industrial quality, with polished concrete floors, steel-plate baseboards, and steel-deck ceilings. For maximum flex-



Two-story penthouse units have private upper and lower outdoor terraces that offer panoramic views (above). The fourth and

fifth floor units are double height along the window wall, with open mezzanines for sleeping (middle). For maximum flexibility,

the modular steel kitchen units can be wheeled into different configurations (bottom).

ibility, the modular steel kitchen units can be wheeled into different configurations. "As people's needs change over time, the space can be partitioned with movable freestanding furniture or fixed walls to reconfigure their work and/or living space," says Dunn.

The live/work lofts at 1310 East Union have a clarity and rigor unusual for Seattle's speculative housing market. The striking steel-framed glass box is an ode to Modernism, but, as Miller says, "It's not a Mies building; the structure has a certain muscular robustness." The detailing gives the project its fine-grained residential scale. While not intended as a prototype, it is an example of the type of urban-infill project Seattle needs to mend gaps in the urban fabric while addressing the shortage of high-quality in-city housing. ■

Sources

Exterior concrete: *Glacier Northwest*

Exterior cladding: *James Hardie Building Products*

Metal siding: *IMSA Building Products*

Roofing: *American Hydrotech*

Windows: *Pacific Aluminum*

Glazing: *Hartung Glass Industries*

Doors: *Pacific Aluminum; Interstate Door Sales; VT Industries; Overhead Door Corporation*

Paints and stains: *Sherwin Industries*

www For more information on the people and products involved in this project, go to Projects at architecturalrecord.com.



The architect highlighted the exposed structure by infilling it with floor-to-ceiling glazing on the north and south elevations.