

## Bright ideas drive cab company's building design

Signature yellow paint, potential solar system signal a new turn for Northeast industrial area

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The view from the built-in staircase bench at Broadway Cab's new Northeast Portland headquarters is prime. On one side, the Broadway Cab logo pops against a bright yellow elevator shaft. On the other, a wall of windows looks out on a heady transportation mix of train, car and plane traffic.

"Their business is about transit. Here you are in a cab company building, and there's all this," architect Liz Williams said, sweeping her arm across the scene of planes, trains, and automobiles.

Broadway Cab's 200 vehicles and 300 drivers used to be tucked beneath the Fremont Bridge in Northwest Portland, in a spot that functioned fine without high design. But Pearl District development and a growing company made the move financially and logistically smart.

Cab companies don't, as a rule, develop buildings. And design, Williams said, was tricky for a couple of reasons. Industrial zoning is ideal for a transportation company, but it limits office space to 3,000 square feet. The actual space also had to consider the needs of three groups – drivers, dispatch and an administrative team – that work in dramatically different shifts and settings.

Outside, the building nods to industry with the use of corrugated metal. But the metal is paired with warm wood, which borders windows and entry points, and the building shape curves and jets in ways that traditional industrial buildings don't.

"It's mean to fit in the I-zone, in terms of its massing," Williams said, "but I also wanted it to be playful and comfortable for workers and drivers."

Inside, an elevator lobby and central staircase divide the building. Downstairs, the space separates the light-filled quiet of the dispatch office from the driver's room, which offers a place to play pool, watch TV, snack or pull up the roll-up door to access an adjacent courtyard. Upstairs, the central stairs emerge onto a second-floor lobby space that's bordered by administrative offices on one side and rooms for training – or "cabbie college" – and meetings on the other.

Creating an inexpensive office space, said contractor Carrington Barrs, was a big goal.

"Normally we would have built just a straight boxy building," he



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*Broadway Cab's new Northeast Portland headquarters pulls together design ideas of usability and sustainability on a tight budget.*

said, "but we were able to make it more interesting for not that much more cost."

And because Barrs & Genauer Construction exclusively builds sustainable projects, green elements were a must. Most of the wood was Forest Stewardship Council certified, with much of the interior wood coming from the deconstruction of an existing building onsite. Low-flow features, efficient lighting, low-VOC finishes and stormwater swales also were used.

The building, Barrs said, is also ready for photovoltaics, an addition that owners are considering.

"We literally moved the building 90 degrees so we could take advantage of the solar orientation," he said.

Pushing the building right to the traffic-crossed edge of the property took advantage of another site feature. Drivers barreling down Northeast Killingsworth and Columbia streets have a prime view of the bright elevator shaft, which is lit at night. And Williams almost made a bigger splash with the signature color, she said, but in the end, the sunny stairway slice was it.

"At one time, the building was going to be yellow," she said. "Corrugated metal, painted yellow."