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# Community Chest

ISSUE #35.41 • CULTURE • CULTURE FEATURE

How a century-old building near the Broadway Bridge is changing the way Portland works.

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BY AARON MENDELSON | AMENDELSON AT WWEEK DOT COM

[August 19th, 2009]



TRADING SPACES: The Leftbank Project's entrance on North Wheeler Avenue (top); the Leftbank space that once housed jazz club the Dude Ranch (bottom). PHOTOS/COLLAGES BY MIKE PERRAULT

If you stop by the Leftbank Project tomorrow morning, you could easily run into Alex Ganum of Upright Brewing, walking the building's labyrinthine brick halls in his galoshes, leaving a yeasty aroma as he passes. At noon you could stop by the onsite cafe to watch it fill up with bike commuters and tenants. And at the end of the day you could peek in on Suite 202, where the guys from Solidcore, JHL Design and Orangewallstudios work, to crack a beer and play foosball on a table that has a picture of Jesus taped to one of the goalies.

It's not a typical office building—in fact, at one point or another since it was built in 1923, the irregularly shaped structure at 240 N Broadway has played home to the Dude Ranch—PDX's most beloved black jazz club—a wholesale drug company, a plastics company, and avant-garde art installations. But odd is exactly what developer Daniel Deutsch is going for.

Deutsch, who has developed a handful of single-family residential properties in town and a mixed-use building on Northeast Killingsworth Street, wants to challenge the traditional idea of what an office space should be. He sees the Leftbank as part of a movement "to break the industrial model down" and replace it with a workspace that encourages good living and personal interaction. "There's a lack of community for those of us who grew up in the '80s, and we're all looking for community," he explains.

Working with architect Andy Powell, Deutsch crafted the Leftbank Project, which includes the original 1923 "Hazelwood" building and two large additions

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built over the years, into a place that in many ways replaces the prototypical cube farm with Portland's favorite things. A cafe offers good food with local ingredients, there's a locker room and indoor bike hooks available for commuters, and common areas allow tenants to hang out and relax when they need breaks. Although not LEED certified, Leftbank has been mindful of its ecological footprint by using recycled material, and efficient heat and lighting systems. And there are regular happy hours when tenants can hang out and get to know each other.

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It seems the design philosophy has worked, attracting "mission-oriented" businesses like the GreenVille Project and Upstream Health that want to improve the status quo. (OK, and brewers whose only mission is to create good beer.) The one thing the tenants all seem to share is the desire to be part of a community. Here's a short walking tour of Portland's newest office space.

**BASEMENT**

**Upright Brewing Company**

Alex Ganum's Upright Brewing Company, which started producing its rustic French- and Belgian-style farmhouse ales in March, seems to be one of the more popular tenants. Maybe it's the free samples of dark rye beer and yarrow-and-calendula saison the company hands out.

**FIRST FLOOR**

**The Hive**

Too small an operation to fill a whole office by yourself but get lonely working at home? Leftbank boasts rentable office space in its "hive." For \$350 a month, renters get their own salvaged hardwood desk along with access to a kitchenette, two conference rooms and other amenities available at Leftbank.

Story continues below



**Leftbank Cafe**

This panini-and-pizza hub is actually run by Bon Appétit Management Company, which has 400 locations and clients ranging from Reed College to Yahoo!. Despite being part of a corporate leviathan, the cafe does a good job of masquerading as a small operation thanks to good local food and Stumptown coffee.

**MEZZANINE**

**The GreenVille Project**

"We know we're not going to change American culture," says Jae Larsen, CEO of the GreenVille Project, "but we're going to fight this battle one neighborhood at a time." Started by two college friends, Larsen and Butch Klein, with Eva Longoria Parker (yes, *that*, Eva Longoria Parker), GreenVille is all about creating sustainable, eco-friendly retail spaces.

**Portland Farmers Market**

Leftbank acts as the headquarters for Portland's network of farmers markets, which has been connecting city-dwellers with farm-grown food since 1992. The market now serves 22,000 shoppers a week at five locations. Why'd it relocate to Leftbank? Executive director Ann Forsthoefel says she enjoys working in an environment where everyone is "committed to sustainability and community."

**FMYI**

Leftbank holds the headquarters of "For My Innovation," which is basically Facebook for businesses —except instead of using it to post embarrassing drunk pictures or check your ex's wall, users can form virtual work groups and share files.

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## SECOND FLOOR

### Gallopowell Studio

This Portland-Tucson design and architecture firm was formed in 2003 by school friends Jason Gallo and Andy Powell. In fact, Powell played an instrumental role in designing the Leftbank (and is unofficially known as the "soul captain" around the building). Before that, the pair designed and built the Someday Lounge in Old Town. "In the sense of being independent filmmakers, we're independent designers," explains Powell.

### Solidcore and Intelligent Design, Orangewallstudios, JHL Design

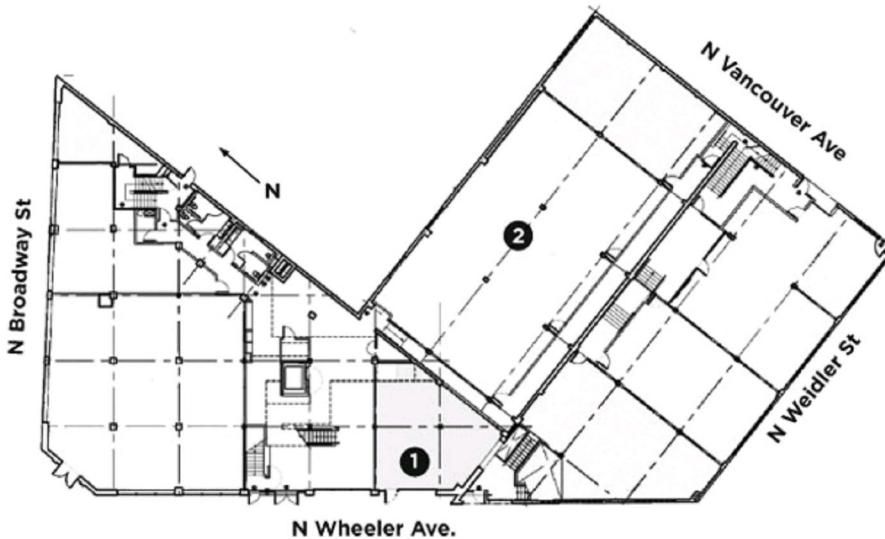
Solidcore specializes in building sustainable furniture, and Intelligent Design is a furniture dealership, both owned by Bill Fritts. He shares his office space with design firm Orangewallstudios and JHL Design, a commercial and residential design firm that specializes in sustainable design. With spaces at Leftbank renting for \$12 to \$18 a square foot, the three tenants lacked the means to rent individually, so they decided to pool their resources and share an office. That works well, Fritts says, because the three businesses "have a lot of creativity and cross functionality."

### Upstream Public Health

"Our health is most directly impacted by choices we make every day in our lives," says Upstream Public Health project director Mel Rader. With that in mind, Upstream advocates for small changes, like removing junk food from public schools.

### Blue Tree Strategies

Sustainability consultant Blue Tree is currently working with the City of Portland on its Climate Action Plan, which seeks to reduce carbon emissions 80 percent by 2050. The Leftbank building attracted Blue Tree with its bike-friendly amenities and use of recycled material.



BUSY BEES: Leftbank's first floor includes a cafe (1) and a "hive" of workspaces (2).

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[Britt](#), Aug 20th, 2009 11:51am