

Walkin' the Walk

Recently renovated 1956 building in Salt Lake's historic warehouse district is spacious new HQ for NWL Architects.

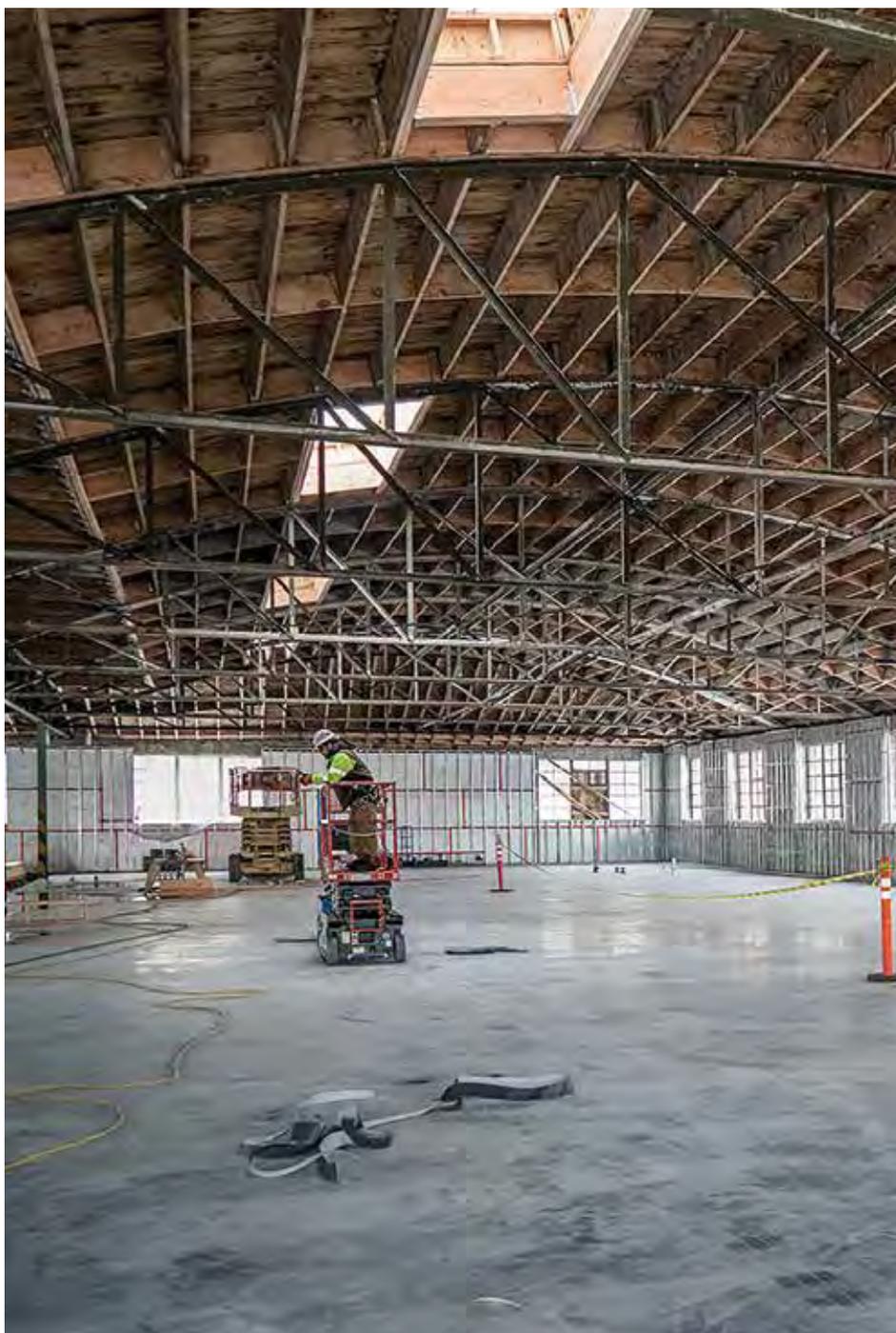
Long-time Salt Lake-based architectural firm NWL Architects celebrated moving into its new 11,000 SF headquarters in SLC's historic warehouse district on Pacific Ave. with an open house celebration June 28.

The newly renovated 22,000 SF building (NWL occupies the south half) was built in 1956 for the U.S. Postal Service before being abandoned. Jeff Beck, Owner of Beck Partners of Salt Lake, purchased the building in May 2016 and shortly thereafter met NWL President Chris Lund, as the firm was actively looking for new digs to accommodate its growing staff of 45 people (plus 3 in NWL's St. George office). Beck and NWL were able to work out a partnership agreement, and design began in earnest last August. The firm had previously been at an office in a historic building on 400 West, just west of Pioneer Park.

"It's nice to save an old building," said Principal Ross Wentworth, a 25-year veteran of the 65-year-old firm that has been in continuous practice since 1952. "There is something about the raw character of a building like this, from the original skin to the original structure. It's a very unique structure as you compare it to today's buildings. There is something very inviting about bringing an old building back to life."

The space is open and airy – a classic double-barrel vaulted building with original steel trusses and a single demising wall, which required structural upgrades including new wood stitched to the roof and all new roof sheeting. All original windows remained intact but were re-glazed with insulated glass.

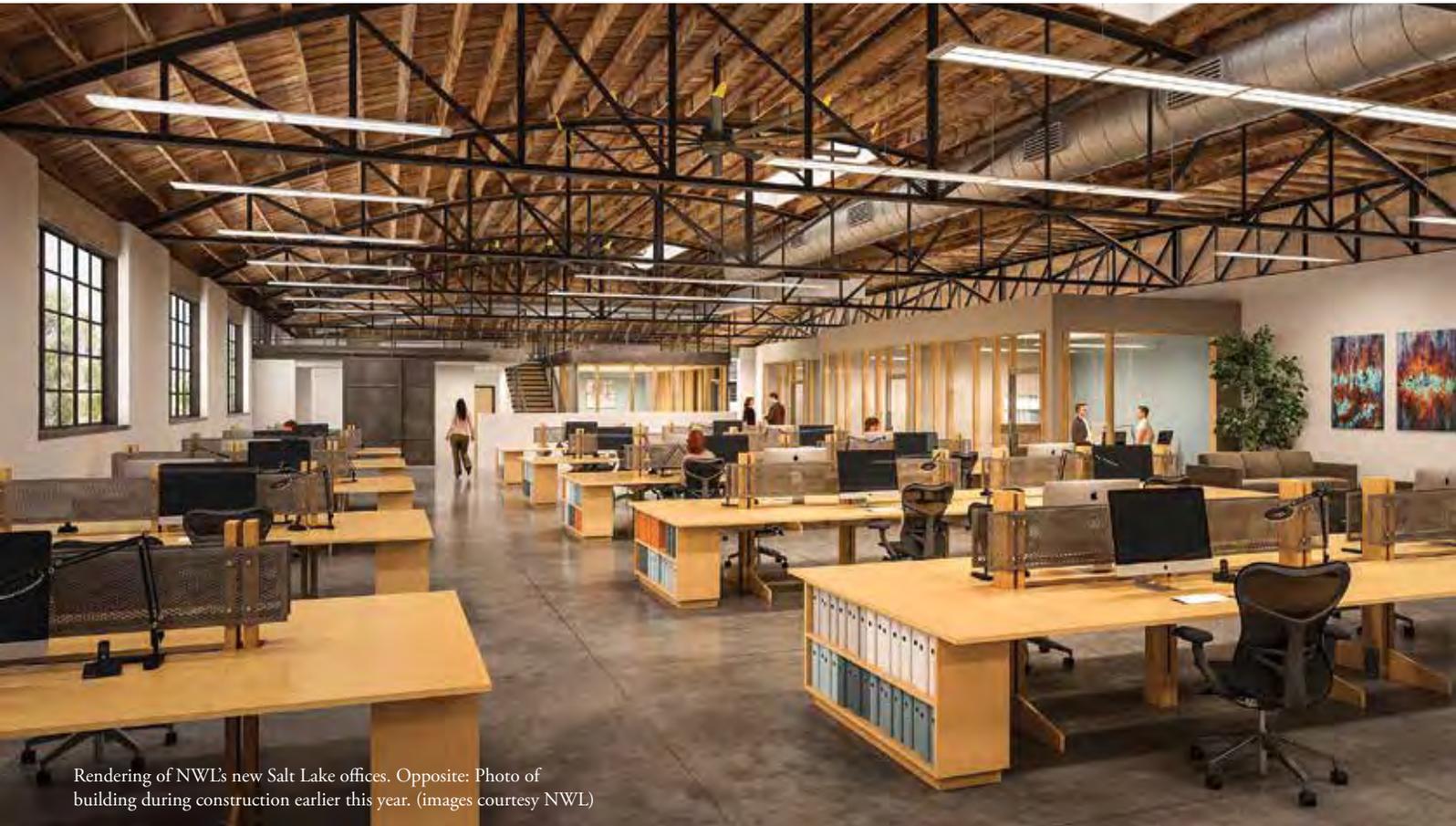
"It was a challenge to maintain what is so great about this building while trying >> to juggle things like seismic upgrades," said



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Rendering of NWL's new Salt Lake offices. Opposite: Photo of building during construction earlier this year. (images courtesy NWL)

Beck. “We were lucky to snatch it before a lot of eyes got on it.”

Parallel strand (PSL) beams and columns highlight the interior and provide structural support for two mezzanine areas that can be used as conference space or even future offices. High-efficient mechanical and electrical systems, a complete LED lighting system, and two 14-foot diameter ‘Big-Ass’ fans that help circulate air around the barrel vault all contribute to the building’s sustainability, as it pursues LEED Silver certification.

The firm will submit the building to the National Historic Registry, and expects the registration to be approved.

Principal Philip Wentworth said there is always a careful balance to consider between keeping the historic aspects of a

building intact while simultaneously making it compliant with modern building codes.

“You have to make certain upgrades all the while keeping it historic and on the registry,” said Philip. “Things like keeping the old windows the way they were. Certainly you could rip out the old windows and meet the energy code without sweating about it, but then you lose the historic aspect. We had to carefully decide where to cut doors in for code reasons and not offend the historic side.”

“Code compliance is challenging because you’re finding your way through today’s codes and trying to make an old structure comply,” added Ross. “It’s a little trickier to get an old envelope to meet energy standards.”

The cost of the project came in at \$4

million, which Beck said was arguably more expensive than building a brand new facility from scratch.

“Construction costs are such that there is an argument that it could have been less expensive to tear this down and build a new structure, rather than do what we did,” said Beck. “We’re happy how it turned out.” ■

NWL Headquarters

Owner: 723 Pacific Avenue, LLC (Beck Partners, NWL Architects)

Architect: NWL Architects

GC: Hughes General Contractors

Civil: Ensign Engineering

Electrical: BNA Consulting Engineers

Structural: BHB Structural Engineers