

News Release

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Former Cigar Box Manufacturing Facility Now Home to Contemporary Urban Loft Homes

*Award-winning Box Factory Lofts leads trend toward redevelopment
of industrial section near downtown Tampa, historic Ybor City*

*Design of adaptive reuse project maintains character-defining features of historic building,
enhances character of existing space and materials*

TAMPA, Fla. April 20, 2007 – In 1915, a mammoth, hand-made block structure was built here to house the Tampa Box Factory, already the world's largest cigar box manufacturer. Today, the 68,000-square-foot building is a recently completed, award-winning adaptive re-use project comprised of 53 two-story, contemporary urban loft homes.

Designed by the architecture firm Lord, Aeck & Sargent for developer Miles Development Partners, both of Atlanta, the \$7.4 million Box Factory Lofts is leading a trend toward redevelopment of an industrial section of historic Ybor City next to downtown Tampa and the Channelside area. While Ybor City, a National Historic Landmark District, is a tourist destination for shopping, dining and entertainment, this is one of the first new residential

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housing developments in the area. The project's success is spurring more residential growth in the area, and that has brought in an IKEA store to serve the burgeoning residential market.

Earlier this month, the Box Factory Lofts won the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission's annual community design Award of Excellence in the category of historic preservation/restoration for the project's "outstanding contribution to the community."

A Sensitive Adaptive Reuse

"We're thrilled with how sensitively the Lord, Aeck & Sargent team went in to adaptively reuse the building while staying as true as possible to its history," said Bruce Wise, AIA, Miles Development Partners director of design. "The project has been very well received in the community, and there's a lot of respect for what's been done."

"Our strategy in designing all of our adaptive reuse projects is to maintain sensitivity to the character-defining features of the historic building while simultaneously enhancing the character of the existing space and materials," said Eric Brock, AIA, a Lord, Aeck & Sargent principal and director of the firm's Housing and Mixed-Use Studio. "In the case of the Box Factory, we specified careful restoration of the exterior and interior masonry walls and original wood rafters. Layers of paint were scraped away from the exterior in order to identify and match the original building color. However, rather than restore the deteriorating 9-foot-tall single-hung windows, we had them replaced with long-lasting, insulated windows similar in appearance to the originals. This enabled us to maintain the appearance of the original building while preserving the natural light and allowing it to flow into the loft homes through modern, energy-efficient windows."

In another example, Brock pointed to the original concrete floors, which were in poor condition. “We had the floors demolished, and that allowed us to run underground plumbing and electrical wiring and cabling before pouring new acid-stained concrete floors.”

Architectural Design Challenges

According to Brock, who was the project’s designer, the biggest architectural challenge was determining where to place parking for a project that had no surplus land and therefore no room for either surface parking or a parking deck. Furthermore, he didn’t want to demolish part of a historic building to make room for a parking deck.

“We noticed that one portion of the building was just wide enough to accommodate a standard parking bay, so we used that area to provide secure, covered parking, a huge advantage in such a hot, rainy climate.

“But our high-quality covered parking solution created a new challenge,” Brock continued. “Now we needed to recapture square footage lost to parking spaces. Our solution was to raise an inner tier of roof by about 5½ feet, allowing us to add a second level mezzanine to the units and turn them into interesting and dramatic lofts. We retained the historic look on the interior and minimized the impact of any new construction on the historic building facades.”

Other Features

In the days when the building was known as the Tampa Box Factory, some 200 factory workers headed to the facility’s hidden courtyard during lunch and break times. Today the secluded central courtyard is one of the Box Factory Loft’s key amenities, with a new swimming pool and landscaping punctuated by Foxtail Palms.

The loft units have nearly sold out. Ranging from 950 to 1,700 square feet, they feature exposed ductwork, conduit, restored wood roof structure, original concrete block walls and new 20-foot-high ceilings.

Project Team

- Miles Development Partners (Atlanta), owner/developer
- Lord, Aeck & Sargent (Atlanta), architect
- Paul J. Sierra Construction (Tampa), general contractor
- Covalent Consulting (Atlanta), MEP engineer
- Palmer Engineering Company (Tucker, Georgia), structural engineer
- Kisinger Campo & Associates (Tampa), civil engineer
- Jon Benson + Associates (currently known as jB+a) (Atlanta), landscape design

About Lord, Aeck & Sargent

Lord, Aeck & Sargent is an award-winning architectural firm serving clients in scientific, academic, historic preservation, arts and cultural, and multi-family housing and mixed-use markets. The firm's core values are responsive design, technological expertise and exceptional service. Lord, Aeck & Sargent has offices in Ann Arbor, Michigan; Atlanta; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina. For more information, visit the firm at www.lordaecksargent.com.

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