A Century-Old Philadelphia Bank Becomes a Tech Hub

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The Neoclassical bank now fits in with its "nerdy" neighborhood.

Philadelphia's Neoclassical Corn Exchange National Bank & Trust Co., built in 1907, long stood out among the "nerdy" businesses in the N3rd Street tech corridor. But after a $9.3 million restoration and renovation partially funded by federal historic tax credits, it fits right in as cloud hosting company Linode's [Link: https://www.linode.com/] headquarters.

First built as a bank, the structure has a history of adaptive reuse: Notably, it served as the house for the 2004 season of MTV's *The Real World.* It's also been an art gallery and offices for the

Seamen's Church Institute. One challenge for Ballinger [Link: http://www.ballinger.com/] , the architecture and engineering firm that handled the project, was how to strip away decades of paint and contemporary materials covering the building's original finishes. The company tapped Philadelphia-based Materials Conservation Collaborative [Link: https://www.mccollab.com/] to restore fine details to their 1907 glory.

Many of the bank's historic features were perfect for the fast-moving tech company: The unenclosed staircase and empty space around it helped create an open office with collaborative, flexible space. For employees who prefer closed-off areas for getting things done, the cavernous basement now holds focus rooms.

"I love the idea of the building having a new life with a completely different group of people … who work so differently than what the building was originally built for," says Fon Wang, Ballinger's director of historic preservation.

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