



Versatile structure changes with the times

BY KARL KESSLER

PHOTO BY TOMASZ ADAMSKI

Gloves . . . shoes . . . knitwear . . . Built almost a century ago, the red brick building at 19 Regina St. N. was a late addition to Waterloo's several dozen downtown factories. Most have disappeared. The rest have been converted. But 19 Regina has been reborn.

Twentieth-century factories were designed for versatility. This one made gloves, but at different times shoes and knitwear were also manufactured here. Its heavy construction could accommodate a variety of machinery.

Open floor plans facilitated workflow and equipment reconfigurations. Outer walls were simple, ceilings high, windows large, finishes minimal. The same built-in characteristics that made these factories

so adaptable have suited them to adaptive re-use: offices . . . a Legion hall . . . a re-imagined workplace.

Royal Canadian Legion Branch 530 made its home here from 1952 to 2015; other, shorter-term occupants included an insurance company. The Legion's event halls made the most of the open floors. A side addition provided a new main entrance.

Now, the industrial look has returned to 19 Regina, while another addition has replaced the older one.

Combining heritage buildings with new construction is tricky – and trendy. Several high-profile local projects are about to take on the challenge. Here, MartinSimmons Architects' Jason Martin worked with developer Lexington Park Real Estate Capital Inc. to enhance the original street

facades, reopening the many windows that had been bricked in, and cladding the lowest level in stone.

Inside, high-ceilinged, open offices show off their original steel and wood framing, and plentiful, large windows fill the spaces with natural light.

The understated new addition comprises a main entrance, stairs and an elevator, plus a set-back partial fourth floor. The harmonious scale, simple forms, thoughtful massing and contrasting materials of the new set off the beauty of the old.

Space constraints on the small site may have fostered this sensitive approach, but it is inspired design that has risen to the challenge.

Karl Kessler is co-ordinator of Doors Open Waterloo Region.

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