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Buying Here: Office space Downtown a Colonial find



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From his 16th-floor apartment in the old Alcoa building, Felix G. Fukui enjoys a stellar view of Downtown's Mellon Square Park. The architect can walk to work because his office is on the second floor of the Colonial Building, **205 Ross St.** For 10 years, he had looked for a Downtown building to buy. Last April, with the help of David Auel, vice president of Avison

Young, Mr. Fukui bought the two-story, red-brick building that was designed for a law firm in 1968.

“We pounced on it. The location and the size was really ideal for us,” Mr. Fukui said, noting that the city's Department of Permits, Licenses and Inspections is right across Ross Street in the John P. Robin Civic Building. The Colonial Building's first floor, which is available for lease, has 2,200 square feet of space and the monthly rent is \$2,500. Mr. Fukui's firm will remodel that level with new ceilings, lighting, paint and carpeting after a lease is signed. Tenants would also have access to two spacious remodeled bathrooms with showers on the ground floor that are shared with the architect's office. There also are two bike racks.

Kevin Kirkland

Time to show off your renovation

Mr. Fukui considered building or buying an existing building and gutting it. Small commercial buildings for owners who want to occupy some of the space are hard to find, Mr. Auel said. In March, 205 Ross St. LLC paid \$437,250 for the property, whose county assessment is \$593,400 (www2.county.allegheny.pa.us/RealEstate/Default.aspx).

“Buildings that are owner-occupied turn over rarely,” Mr. Auel said, citing as examples the Hefren-Tillotson Building on Seventh Avenue, Maurice Nernberg & Associates on Smithfield Street and Zamagias Properties, which owns The Times Building on Fourth Avenue.

Mr. Fukui likes the convenience of riding the light rail transit system to the North Shore for weekly meetings to discuss designs for the Southern Tier brewpub project. The First Avenue T stop is a two-block walk from his building. He also treasures the original blueprints for the Colonial Building, which were drawn by hand in 1967 by architect George Simons. The plans envisioned a three-story building for the law firm of Livingston, Miller & Haywood but the attorneys settled for a two-story building with a basement.

Mr. Fukui's firm, which has eight architects, is designing the new eternal flame monument outside the People's Gate of PPG Paints Arena at Fifth Avenue and Washington Place. Fukui Architects' restaurant projects include Red, The Steakhouse, set to open in April in the USX Tower, and Umami, which opened in 2015 above Round Corner Cantina on Butler Street in Lawrenceville.

At first glance, the two-story Colonial Building appears older than the much larger John P. Robin Civic Building across the street. That 13-story

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stone-and-brick structure was built in 1907 as the headquarters of Jones & Laughlin Steel Corp. Sixty years later, the Colonial Building was designed and built in a simple Georgian style that dates to 18th-century England. It was one of the early projects done by Massaro Corp.

The Colonial Building's second floor was gutted and remodeled before Fukui Architects moved its offices there in August. The offices have LED lighting with daylight sensors. Light-sensitive blinds and energy-efficient windows are due to be installed later.

The building has windows only on its front and Second Avenue side so translucent walls were installed "to borrow light for the back of the building," Mr. Fukui said. The 48-year-old structure has its original heating, ventilating and cooling systems but additional fiberglass insulation was later installed.

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An original blueprint of the Colonial Building at 205 Ross Street, Downtown.