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The Burnside Rocket Building

The Burnside Rocket is a new mixed-use building located at the corner of East Burnside and NE 11th Avenue in Portland, Oregon. The site is a 3,800sf (350m²) former vacant lot, adjacent to an indoor rock climbing gym. The building includes 16,500sf (1533m²) of indoor area on four floors, plus outdoor terraces at each level. Construction was completed in April 2007, and the building is fully leased. The project team is projecting LEED Platinum certification.

An "edible roof" garden supplies fresh produce for top floor restaurant. Climb a ladder behind the kitchen of Leather Storrs' Rocket restaurant, and you step out of the roof hatch onto dirt. The view of downtown is great up here, but keep one eye on the ground to avoid crushing the peppers and tomatoes growing in raised beds & planters. During the past several weeks, master gardener Marc Boucher-Colbert has used several innovative techniques to help plants thrive in this hot, windy environment. Having a garden this close to the kitchen allows staff to pick ingredients at peak ripeness, and brings a whole new meaning to the idea of "Eating Local".

Window Shades as Art: Operable windows with artistic shutters allow sun control and natural ventilation for office tenants, and a head-turning display for passers by. Twenty sliding panels flank each window on the 2nd & 3rd floor office spaces. Four fixed panels are located on the ground floor. These panels provided a blank canvas for 24 emerging artists that live, work, or show art in Portland's Central Eastside Arts District. The installation was curated by Ruth Ann Brown, owner of the New American Art Union located nearby at 922 SE Ankeny St. The panels were installed last week, and will remain in place for five years before being auctioned to raise money for a new round of artwork.

Project team is projecting LEED Platinum Certification. After paperwork is reviewed by the US Green Building Council, the Burnside Rocket should join the ranks of LEED Platinum certified buildings. So far there are just two in Portland (The Armory & OHSU Center for Health & Healing) and just 40 nationwide. The Burnside Rocket is designed to use just 50% of the energy of a typical commercial building. An innovative Geo-Exchange system uses water from an on-site well to heat or cool air that is distributed through voids in the concrete floor slabs. Many of the features that won LEED points also make the building a great place to work: roof gardens, operable windows, excellent air quality, and daylit spaces.

Tenant Details

Rocket. This top floor restaurant pairs expansive city views with high-tech American cuisine for a memorable dining experience. Co-owner Leather Storrs of Noble Rot (named "Restaurant of the Year" in 2003 by Willamette Week) has added to the building's environmental credentials by installing a 1,000sf garden on the roof to supply fresh produce for the menu.

TENpod is a creative service co-op comprised of independently owned and operated firms, including architects, writers, engineers and designers. Members have exclusive use of a large furnished workstation and shared use of conference room, balcony, kitchen, and other office amenities. This new location represents a doubling of capacity for TENpod, which opened its first location in 2003 at NE 45th Ave & Fremont St.

Pacific Rim Winemakers is a Northwest winery obsessed with Riesling. This location serves as the head office for Pacific Rim while the winery itself is located in Eastern Washington. Pacific Rim focus on sustainable farming and winemaking is a natural match with the vision of the Rocket building.

Nervo.tv is a design and animation studio specializing in high-end advertising and creative short films. The company is led by director Nando Costa who has worked with brands such as Nike, Microsoft, Diesel, Napster and Absolut amongst others.

The Chesterfield is a comfortable neighborhood lounge open every day from 4pm to 2am. Skateboard art and handcrafted cocktails pair with an inventive menu to tempt even the most discriminating pallet. The soundtrack is provided by some of Portland's finest DJ's. Tuesday is open turntable night offering emerging artists a chance to shine.

A wet and fortuitous find ... Three hundred feet below ground, an ice-age aquifer helps keep the building cool. Excess capacity from this artesian well provides an income stream, with up to 17,000 liters per day available for off-site bottling by Yoshida Foods International (sparkling water) and Cedar Canyon (still water). 100% of profits will be donated to public schools. The product is scheduled to hit the shelves in August.

Project Team

Architect of Record	Francis Dardis, FBD Architecture
Lead Designer	Kevin Cavanaugh, some knucklehead
Structural Engineer	Wade Younie, DCI Engineers
General Contractor	Bob Schommer, A.C. Schommer & Sons
Energy Consultant	Brian Thornton, Thornton Consulting
LEED Consultant	Ralph DiNola, Green Building Services
LEED Consultant	Steffen Brocks, BEA Consulting
Mechanical Engineer	Dan Wehage, Wehage Engineering
Plumbing Engineer	Don Parrish, MEP Consulting
Electrical Engineer	Greg Kohn, Kohn Engineering
Civil Engineer	In-Tae Lee, OTAK
Traffic Engineer	Scott Mansur, DKS Associates
Landscape Architect	Pat Lando, Lando and Associates
Art Panel Curator	Ruth Ann Brown, New American Art Union
Detailer	Joshua Cohen, Fat Pencil Studio
Sage	Gary Kobielski, Pro Weld Mobile Welding

Financing

This project was funded by a combination of equity, debt, and grants. Partners include:

- Cavanaugh + Cavanaugh, LLC (equity investor) specializes in building mixed-use projects on small urban sites.
- Pacific Continental Bank (primary lender), a community bank with over \$180 million in assets.
- METRO Regional Government: Transit Oriented Development (TOD) grant program helps offset costs of increasing density and transit ridership.
- City of Portland: Green Investment Fund
- Regional Arts Council: Public Art Mural Program

Nuts and Bolts and a bit of a Soapbox

Community Impact

Outdoor terraces allow people visiting the café, offices, and restaurant to be seen from the street. The kinetic sense of the building is heightened by movable window shades, each painted by a different local artist. The building brings 50+ employees and hundreds of visitors to the site each week to participate an urban renaissance under way in Portland's Central Eastside District.

Parking and Transit

Efficient use of land is required to combat urban sprawl. The Burnside Rocket is a high density project with no parking on site. If needed, shared space with existing nearby lots can help meet vehicle parking needs. Ten different bus, rail, and bicycle routes provide convenient alternatives to driving. Our partners at METRO expect the project to generate 19,500 additional transit trips per year.

Efficient Design

The energy efficient design for the Rocket has been modeled at 350 million BTU/yr energy savings, or 50% lower than conventional practice. Metal ductwork is eliminated by using hollow-core concrete slabs to distribute conditioned air. The building structure can be a finished surface, reducing the need for additional floor and ceiling systems. Small floor plates limit the need for interior walls.

Green Buildings and "NNN" Leases

Showcasing green design helps attract quality, long-term tenants. This value is easily recognized by America's "green developers". However, the primary interest of most real-estate professionals is achieving a high yield on capital investments. The Burnside Rocket business model combines a full service lease with extremely low expenses to realize greater operating income. This allows higher profits than the triple-net (NNN) lease model, which passes operating costs to tenants, and provides no incentive to invest in durability and energy efficiency.

A Paradigm Shift in Urban Design

North American cities are filled with low, sprawling office parks and mega-malls. They are separated by long commutes on crowded roads. They are used nine hours a day, but consume energy around the clock. They are built with cheap materials on vast tracts of land. Consider an alternative: The Burnside Rocket is a vertical, mixed-use building on a small site close to existing neighborhoods and transit infrastructure. A mix of uses doubles the hours of activity, while efficient building systems cut energy use in half. The durable structure is designed to last 300 years. It took 18 months to convince a lender to finance a project so outside the norm. But in a world of rising energy costs and freeway congestion, this project looks more like a prototype of what will become the norm.



Street level view looking northeast from E Burnside St & 11th Ave



View of downtown looking west from 4th floor restaurant balcony