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## Rethinking Office Space: A Different Way to Work

By Abby Mendelson



The first thing you notice at the former bus garage at Penn Avenue and 29th Street in Pittsburgh's Strip District are metal panels outside, drawings of buildings, streetscapes, jazz artists. And there, right there in the windows, folks are working—a real human presence on the gritty post-industrial street.

"First floor activity in cities rarely showcases offices," Dan Rothschild says. A partner in his Rothschild Doyno Collaborative, he's an architect with a strong eye for the urban environment. "Here, we're as friendly as any dress shop or any place that sells goods."

Indeed, the Rothschild Doyno artwork, a presentation of their projects—schools and offices, synagogues and neighborhoods—continues in their entry. Using the former garage doors, disassembled

and sanded into Rorschach-style art panels, as gallery walls they showcase the firm's successes on black foam-core.

"We brought the doors inside," Rothschild says, "and made them warm. It's a way to acknowledge who was here before us."

It's that kind of whimsy, eye for detail, and feel for a green environment that informs the 14-person office, which Rothschild calls "an industrial building re-used as an environmentally-inspired, collaborative workplace." Putting the group areas around the perimeter, each nook—appearing as familiar and comfortable as a dining room table—is all window, all

flooded with natural light.

What's more, built on an east-west axis, the building itself acts as a kind of sundial, the sun rising through the eastern wall and setting through the west. With translucent fiberglass panels separating key areas, light glows through them like a lantern. "We treat natural light as a resource," Rothschild says.

The office design is meant to enhance collaboration, he says. With wireless Internet, mobile phones, and sketches tacked on movable boards, "at a moment's notice people are able to collaborate. Flexibility is key." He pauses. "It's our little play house."