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\$1.50 a copy; \$59 a year



Reinventing Spaces

New looks at old buildings add life to metro Detroit

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BIRMINGHAM: Orthodontists cross the tracks for edgy offices in Birmingham

Drs. Scott Tyler and John Dumas, partners, Tyler, Dumas, Reyes, took a leap of faith when they decided to move their busy

orthodontic offices in Beverly Hills to a dilapidated industrial building in Birmingham's railroad district where furnace air filters were once manufactured. Not the first place you might think of for a medical facility.

"We weren't aware of anyone, certainly in our profession, who had done it. It was kind of excit-

ing to consider a sort of industrial, loft-style building," said Tyler. "And it's a very unique space, basically a factory aesthetic, with exposed duct work, 28-foot ceilings and old-fashioned fans."

When they purchased the two-story, 23,000-square-foot, circa-1950 building in late 2004, it came with one tenant on the mezzanine level, Cole Street Salon and Spa, whose owner had already built out "a beautiful space within an absolute dump," Tyler said.

Tyler and Dumas hired Victor Saroki & Associates, Birmingham, to restore the building while making it compatible for their offices and future tenants. The renovation involved cleaning and painting the cement block facade and installing new steel-sash windows to replicate the original ones. Existing truck bays were replaced with glass entry doors under canopies for storefront

entrances. The existing hardwood floor on the mezzanine level, where the doctor's private offices are located, was refinished to maintain a distressed look.

"We left as much as we could—the roof framing, steel columns, the steel trusses and wood deck of the mezzanine—so you get a lot of the fabric of the original building," said Dan Schneider, project architect.

Tyler said patient reaction to the space has been positive.

"We were a little concerned about them having to cross Woodward and go into this kind of unknown district where you certainly don't get the feeling you're about to stumble onto a professional office, but they've been great," said Tyler.

Since purchasing the building, Tyler and Dumas have leased space to two additional tenants: Goldfish Swim School and The Eriksen Group. ■

