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HORNBERGER + WORSTELL CELEBRATES OPENING OF FAIRMONT HERITAGE PLACE AT GHIRARDELLI SQUARE

In June of 2008, architecture and planning firm Hornberger + Worstell will celebrate the opening of its most recent historic design project: The Fairmont Heritage Place at Ghirardelli Square.

Adapting what was retail and office space, this landmark adaptive re-use project involves the conversion of the Chocolate, Cocoa, and Mustard Buildings, as well as portions of the Clock Tower and Woolen Buildings, into a fractional ownership hotel.

The rehabilitation of Ghirardelli Square not only represents an exercise in place-making, but also a prime example of America's growing interest in revaluing and revamping its urban core. As American cities reinvent themselves, and as many Americans increasingly seek second homes in urban settings, properties like the Fairmont Heritage Place are becoming highly-sought after.



Converting industrial spaces into apartments was originally a 1950's trend among artists in New York's SoHo neighborhood. These artists' lofts, further popularized by artists like Andy Warhol in the 1970's, offered open plan living for those who wanted to both live and work at home.

Furthermore, early initiators of the trend found that industrial spaces were beautiful shells of existing architectural grandeur. With wide plank wood floors, large expanses of raw brick, and oversized windows and entrances, industrial spaces paired choice materials with unparalleled scale. As Project Designer Paul Adamson explains about Ghirardelli, "It was incredible to witness the clearing out of the insides of these buildings back to their raw industrial state, and to imagine what it was like when the factory was still there - floors thick enough to hold heavy machinery, or possibly wagons. We tried to harness this industrial feeling through an open planning strategy, revealing original materials, and taking advantage of the high ceiling height. Combined with interior finishes, The Fairmont Heritage will be a one-of-a-kind mixture of refinement and industrial grandeur."

Today, the conversion of industrial buildings into residences has become a worldwide phenomenon and former factories, in particular, now make up some of the most elegant and desired urban addresses. Especially given that industrial buildings were often located along bodies of water to facilitate the arrival of large amounts of raw materials, today's converted residences enjoy some

of the best waterfront views. At Ghirardelli, Hornberger + Worstell was able to take advantage of its waterfront location in the creation of the new Mustard Deck overlooking the well-known Fountain Plaza. This exclusive hangout space for hotel residents and their guests will be similar to an oversized outdoor living room with a decorative fireplace and views of the bay.



The design challenge, however, is to make these spaces livable without compromising their original character. Because industrial buildings were never designed for human habitation, today's architects and planners must take particular care in installing creature comforts like heating, plumbing, and elevator systems.

In the case of Ghirardelli, these challenges were multiplied by the fact that the site had already been converted for different uses more than once. The most significant conversion took place in the early 1960's when William Wurster, the well-known local architect, adapted the fully operational factory into a public commercial space. While his design of a European-style plaza framed by retail spaces drew crowds for many years, the retail tenants located on the upper levels were easy to overlook and therefore converted into office space in the 1980's.

The Ghirardelli story is in fact an excellent lesson in the history of the American city and our evolving ideas about urban re-use. From a 19th century wool mill, to a fully-operational chocolate factory, to a mixed-use marketplace and office complex, to finally, a mixed-use marketplace and hotel, Ghirardelli Square reflects several significant economic and social changes of the last 150 years.



The opening of The Fairmont Heritage Place represents a significant new chapter in the story of this intrinsically San Franciscan landmark and Hornberger + Worstell is honored to have contributed through the combined effort of developer JMA Ventures, SFA Interior Design, Swinerton Builders, and Fairmont Hotels & Resorts.