

Rice Fergus Miller turns old Sears into new HQ

Rice Fergus Miller Architecture & Planning celebrates the opening of its new headquarters with an open house on Friday from 3 to 6 p.m. and a party at 7:30.

The firm spent 10 months renovating the long vacant 39,000-square-foot former Sears Auto Center building at 275 Fifth St. in Bremerton. It designed the \$5 million renovation and Tim Ryan Construction built it. Other team members are Ecotope, Gerber Engineering, PCS Structural Solutions and Westsound Engineering.

RFM has 37 employees. It is occupying 85 percent of the space and renting out the rest.

Sears built the structure in 1943 as an underground appliance maintenance facility with parking on top near its main store. In the late 1940s, it added two floors and a mezzanine for the auto center. When the department store moved to Kitsap Mall in nearby Silverdale in the early 1980s, the building was left vacant.

RFM's three partners, Steve Rice, Mike Miller and Dave Fergus, and their wives bought the building in 2009 for \$787,500.

The renovation added new energy-efficient windows, a balcony, conference rooms, library, kitchen, studios, and a glass and aluminum window wall system. An open staircase was installed in the center of the building.

The project is targeting LEED platinum. Three-quarters of the shell and interior structure were reused. A rooftop rainwater harvesting system is used for toilets and to irrigate the green roof and landscaping. Rooftop solar panels provide 7 percent of building's energy.

Other green elements include a super-insulated envelope, highly reflective roofing, no- or low-toxic finishes, heat recovery ventilation, bicycle storage with showers, and efficient lighting with daylighting controls.



A white flywall can be raised and lowered to separate spaces. The open stairs use reclaimed floor joists, and a Big Ass Fan helps keep the space cool.

Photos by William P. Wright