

Upholding tradition

In a contemporary take on Glasgow's monumental vernacular, Ryder Architects' newbuild office and retail block in the city centre both fits in and stands out

Words: Isabelle Priest Photographs: Neale Smith

IN NUMBERS

18,175m²

Building total area

2000

person office capacity

360°

views

2.8m

clear floor to ceiling height

40

garaged car parking spaces

54

bicycle racks

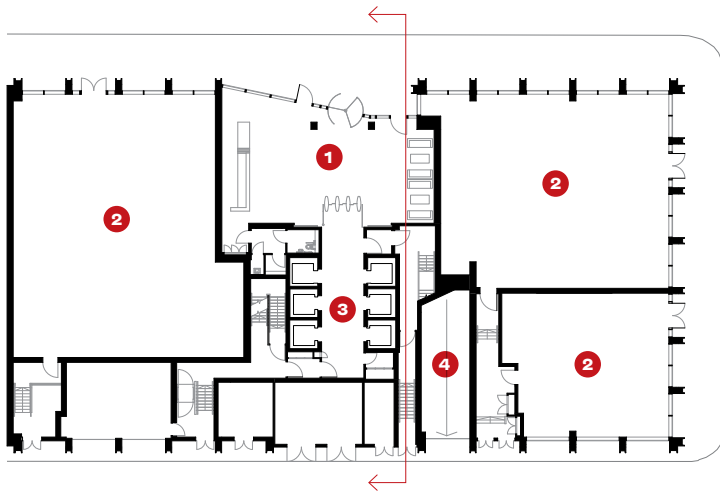
Below The new building is several storeys taller than the average.

Right View of One West Regent Street from West Nile Street.

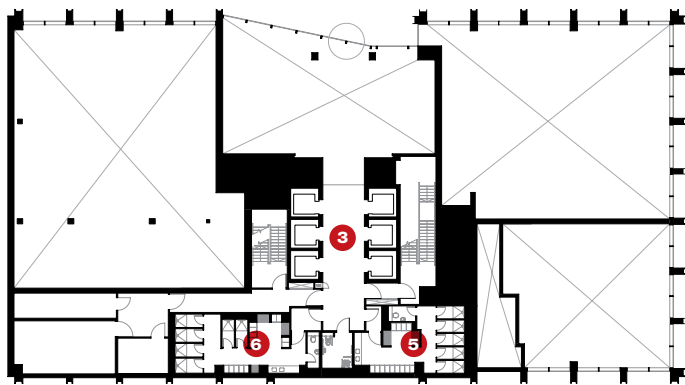




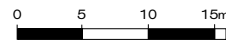
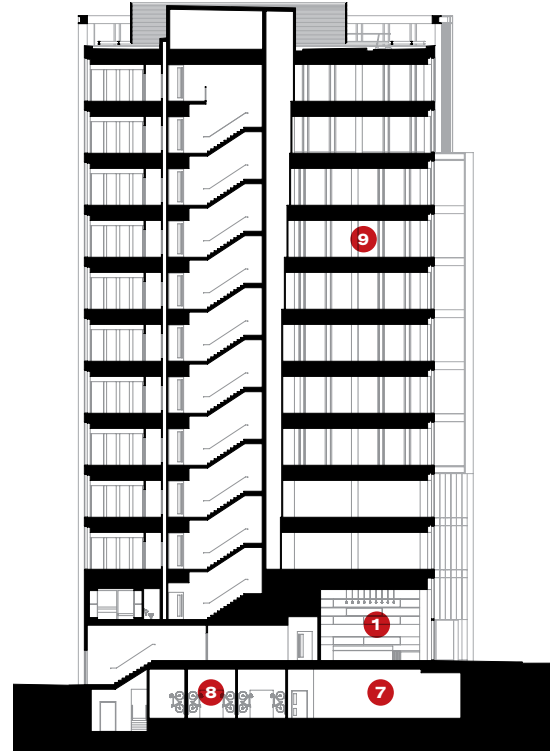
Ground floor plan



Mezzanine floor plan



Section



- 1 Entrance
- 2 Retail units
- 3 Lift lobby
- 4 Ramp to basement car park
- 5 Female changing rooms
- 6 Male changing rooms
- 7 Car park
- 8 Bicycle storage
- 9 Office

There is always a slight sense of remorse at the loss of a building, particularly a 1930s cinema, and especially when you are told that it closed in 2006 because of increased competition from a new Cineworld multiplex up the road. Yet it's worth risking more disappointment to go back and see the site, as in many cases – including Ryder Architecture's One West Regent Street development in Glasgow – the visit can put you at ease.

One West Regent Street is a smart 10-storey speculative office and retail development, lying just off Glasgow's main shopping street. Gordon Murray Architects, which merged with Ryder Architecture in 2011, started working on the project in 2006 when the whole city block was owned by develop-

er Duddingston House Properties. After a lot of urban analysis, visual impact studies and several proposals, including one in Portland stone, the owner decided to split the legal title to retain the architecturally interesting art deco cinema entrance and foyer, and sell the less desirable mammoth red brick back containing the screens.

During the sale, Ryder was approached by one prospective buyer – a joint venture between London companies Mountgrange Real Estate Opportunity Fund (MoREOF) and M&G Real Estate (formerly Prupim) interested in investing outside the capital for the first time. The developer asked the practice to design a speculative application within three weeks to help the firm decide

whether it would buy the land. The result was successful, pushing the limits in terms of capacity. The purchase went ahead and construction started on site in June 2013. But while it completed last June, the neighbouring art deco foyer building remains derelict and continues to deteriorate.

The risk of investing in Glasgow has paid off for the developer as all three of its retail units on the ground floor and most of the 135,000 square feet of offices above are now let, accommodating companies from lawyers and engineers to radio stations and construction contractors. Its success is partly a result of its expansive 29m by 52m open floor plates, which are flexible enough to be divided into two and four units, as well as the shortage of



Above Typical office floorplate.

grade A office space in the centre of Glasgow.

From the outside, One West Regent Street is a typical Glaswegian building – large in scale, solid and monumental. Yet at the same time, its architecture, like that of its neighbours, is controlled, acutely detailed and compelling. Ryder architectural director Stacey Phillips explains that the building took many of its architectural ideas from the exterior of the Frank Verity and Samuel Beverley-designed cinema foyer next door, the James Miller-designed building on its opposite corner and RMJM's glass and steel 2009 speculative office over the road. The latter, which was developed at the peak of the financial crisis and suffered some under-occupation in its early years, helped set the height of One West Regent Street, which is several sto-

reys taller than the average Glasgow block.

These close examinations of its surroundings allow the final design to be read in the round, from up close and afar, ensuring that the new building is rooted within its context while being aesthetically contrasting and complimentary. First and foremost the facade has been divided into two vertical sections and stepped back at the top to reduce its scale. Subsequently, it is also divided horizontally on the third floor by continuing the upper line of the cinema foyer around the urban block; a functional transition from retail and shared areas to private leased offices marked out in the spacing of the fins from 4m to 2m. Elsewhere the fins reference those of the art deco building in their regularity and width, yet in their new incarnation with full-height glaz-

ing infill, are more Mies van der Rohe. The bronze anodised cladding also fits comfortably between the blonde sandstone across the street and adjacent white buildings.

Inside, nevertheless, the developer wanted to bring a little of its London background into the design – incorporating a bike store, changing rooms, showers and lockers which are much rarer in this city. The building is entered via a two-storey atrium set slightly back from the street with an upper mezzanine containing the shared changing facilities. In plan the services, toilets, storage cupboards, lifts and two stairwells are set out within the building's single core, which has been centralised to free up the perimeter for 360° views and pushed to the south wall to minimise solar glare and allow for indul-



Above Upper storeys are stepped back from the street line to reduce massing.



Above The toilets are pushed to the south elevation, giving incredible views at upper levels.

Credits

Client MoREOF and M&G Real Estate joint venture
Contractor Sir Robert McAlpine
Architect Ryder Architecture
Project manager, CDMC and cost consultant Doig and Smith
Structural and civil engineer Woolgar Hunter
Mechanical and electrical engineer AtelierTen
Fire engineering and Breeam consultant Atelier Ten

gent views from the upper floor full-height windows in the toilets at the rear. The offices themselves are spacious and light at typically 13,000 square feet per floor. Only two columns interrupt the space as structure is focused within the core and external fins. From the core the floorplates extend between 12m and 14m in three directions.

Materially, the interior palette retains the neutrality of its exterior. Toilets on every floor, as well as all the internal doors, are finished with a walnut veneer that flows tonally with the bronze anodized external fins just visible from inside. Tiling has been kept to only two shades of a grey throughout and black Corian used for surfaces in the toilets. Bespoke staircase balustrades have also been

designed to echo the verticality of the facade in the same bronze anodised coating.

One West Regent Street is a refreshing and appropriate building. Ryder Architecture has taken its role as an urban designer seriously, creating a harmonious but much needed addition to the city on a site which was starting to linger in stagnation. It is a credit to the confidence of Glasgow's planners, who recognised the new directions needed in the city centre, and one that has become a precedent for three more schemes since.

Meanwhile, the old theatre is not forgotten, with Ryder commissioned by its new owner Carrick Properties to come up with a proposal for its development. A rooftop terrace is mooted, so the story promises a happy final act. ●

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