

The Millwright's centerpiece is a tiered, hickory-floored lobby that steps down to the lower level, with informal seating for presentations, meeting with a coworker, or just taking a break.



Above: Brick from the exterior carries into the lobby. Opposite, bottom: Main-floor workstations enjoy light from broad, tall windows and library lamps made of rebar, and a meeting space is clad in yellow-painted metal in the manner of a construction-site toolbox.



The reception area in the Ryan Companies headquarters charts the firm's 79-year history.

MILLWRIGHT BUILDING

The newest "old" building in town

MINNEAPOLIS' EAST TOWN COMMONS, the new two-block park that stretches out in front of U.S. Bank Stadium, was developed by Ryan Companies. And several of the new buildings surrounding the green space—including two Wells Fargo towers, a Radisson RED hotel, and a parking garage—are Ryan projects. So it's not surprising that the firm wanted to move into the neighborhood.

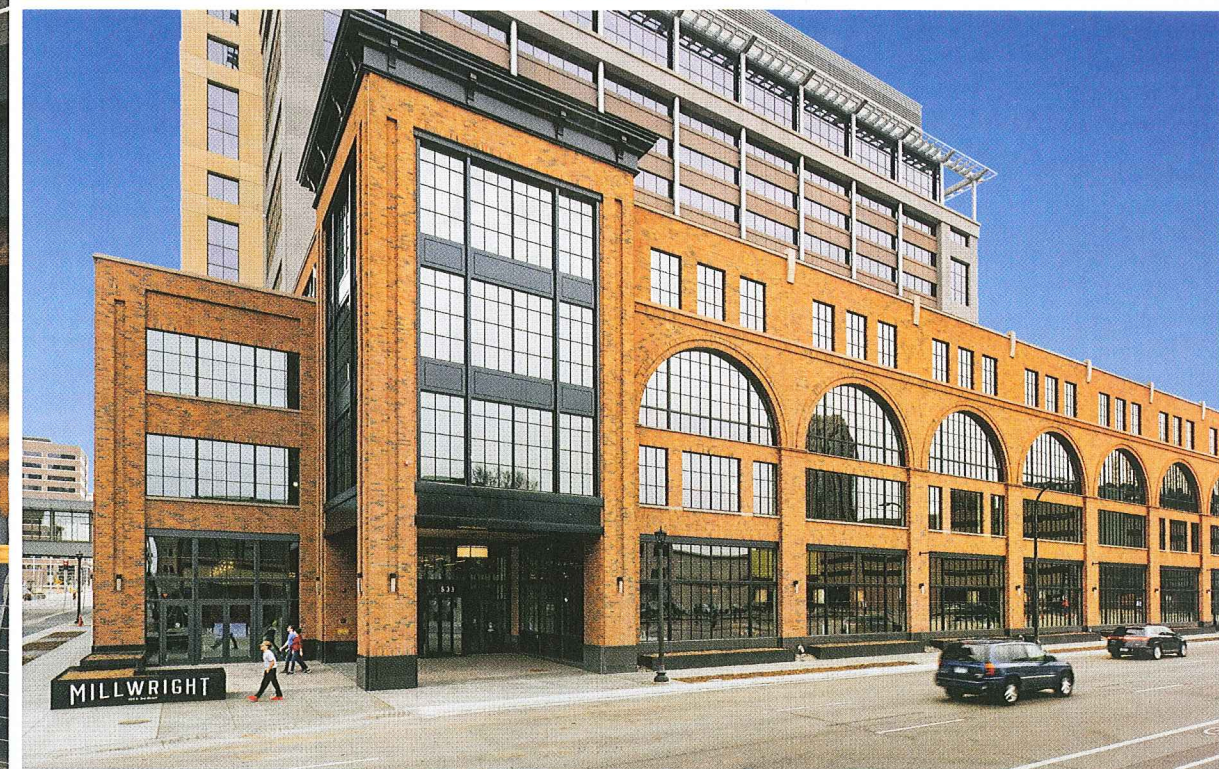
Ryan relocated from its central downtown location this past spring, setting up shop in the new Millwright Building, a 172,000-square-foot facility that the company designed, built, manages, and now inhabits. "It's great for telling our story," says Mike Ryan, AIA, president of Ryan A+E. "We can walk out our front door with customers and point to projects we've worked on."

The four-story Millwright fills half of a city block, standing adjacent to one of the two 17-story Wells Fargo buildings. It's clad in thin-brick precast panels and accented with steel, exposed fasteners, and divided-light windows; a series of broad arches along the Third Street facade completes the building's turn-of-the-century look. "It's new construction, but we had a lot of contractors come into the space and say, 'We're so glad you were able to rehab this building and keep it from being demolished,'" says Josh Ekstrand, AIA, Ryan's director of design.

The historic-looking exterior also serves to link the building visually with the Mill District to the north, says Mike Ryan. The entry tower at the northeast corner of the building overlooks a cobble plaza and a bike path that connects the Commons and the iconic Stone Arch Bridge. Portland Avenue, technically a county highway, became a cycling route as the area transformed.



The Northwoods-themed lounge on the lower level is anything but dark and cramped. Right: The four-story building helps transition the neighborhood from the taller Wells Fargo towers to the south to the historic Mill District structures to the north.



Ryan Companies is the building's primary tenant, occupying the main level, mezzanine, and lower level. (The latter has a much smaller footprint.) But all tenants have access to the Millwright's centerpiece: a tiered, hickory-floored lobby that steps down to the lower level, with informal seating for presentations, meeting with a coworker, or just taking a break. A bike storage area and the hall to an underground passage to the neighboring Wells Fargo tower are easily seen from the entry.

Polished concrete floors, 18-foot-high ceilings, and exposed ventilation create an airy industrial atmosphere on the main level. Eye-catching, construction-themed features include oversize library lamps made of rebar, a wall festooned with shovels and helmets, and a small group space housed in what resembles a giant yellow gang box (a large toolbox typically found on commercial construction sites). Conference rooms are named after notable Ryan projects, and a vintage Ryan Companies pickup truck is parked in the reception area.

"All of that is part of our culture," says Mike Ryan. "But we never put it on display before. The soul of the place is measurably different than that of our old space."

An open lounge area on the lower level, as well as booths and other small-group workspaces throughout the office, encourage staff interaction. "You can look up and see someone across the floor plate and know they're at their desk," says Ashley Wurster, Ryan's director of interior design. "Before we had so many physical barriers. Here we have no excuse not to be collaborating."

"We wanted quality you can feel," adds Mike Ryan. "It couldn't look ostentatious, stately, or overspent. At the same time, we wanted the space to feel sophisticated and thoughtful. We wanted to demonstrate the value we deliver. This space speaks to what we do." ●

MILLWRIGHT BUILDING

Client: Ryan Companies US, Inc.
Architect: Ryan A+E, Inc.

Energy modeling:
Michaud Cooley Erickson
General contractor:
Ryan Companies US, Inc.
Size: 172,000 square feet

Cost: \$27 million
Completion: April 2017
Photographer: Paul Crosby