



MADGI and Benchmark Builders complete 14,000 s/f at Vornado's LEED Gold 280 Park Avenue

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Manhattan, NY Interior design firm Montroy Andersen DeMarco (MADGI) has completed a new corporate workplace at 280 Park Ave. for one of the world's foremost global insurance and banking groups. The MADGI-designed space is a smart, modern office that fosters collaborative engagement, sophistication and history of a market-leading organization.

The 14,000 s/f, full-floor space on an upper floor of the LEED Gold Certified building's 29-story East Tower – is the new U.S. headquarters for the London-based firm.

The design highlights functionality and flexibility, with meeting spaces the tenant can reduce in size or expand, a pantry convertible from lunch space into workstations or to host social events, and robust audio-visual infrastructure. “The client requested sufficient space for meetings and larger gatherings, as well as cross-company events with headquarters and other offices it operates across six continents,” said Ajay Waghmare, project manager at MADGI.

The project team included Benchmark Builders as general contractor; Robert Derector Associates as MEP engineer; Spectra Audio Design as audio-visual consultant; and Vornado Realty Trust as owner of 280 Park Avenue.

“The client articulated its desire for the design to evoke the dual identity of a storied past and dynamic, forward-looking vision for the firm,” said Steven Andersen, partner at MADGI. “We had clear goals to represent a brand steeped in legacy and tradition, but also to showcase its outlook as a leading-edge, vibrant and innovative company. We chose to break from the classic wood-paneled walls of a traditional banking institution and created a dramatic and invigorating interior. We also broke up the hierarchal partitioned office layout to embrace an open, flexible configuration that empowers teamwork, cooperation, and creativity.”

“The open-office concept was a critical theme that guided many of the design's stand-out features,” said Waghmare. “We designed the entire work area with an airy, spacious feel that takes advantage

of expansive views of Midtown Manhattan. The office features very large, open spaces with high ceilings, flooded by natural light through full-height windows.”

“The clearly outlined client expectations helped ensure the interior design hit the right note,” said Eleanor Boehm, designer at MADGI. “We were bringing together tradition and energetic, innovative culture, so our design challenge was to ensure it was both upscale and contemporary. We did not want the tech loft kind of setting, or an industrial look. We wanted functional as well as a respected brand with a modern, understated identity.”

“The open plan was an effective delivery mechanism for those goals, with the design eschewing the typical corporate corner offices or C-suite citadel in favor of an expansive, collaborative setup” said Waghmare. “With 25 people on the floor, there is a lot of room for everyone and they will still have the ability to work effectively as a team. The design has extra space for entertainment and meeting facilities, a multi-function pantry, and flexible workstations. It has as expansive, energetic feel.”

The open floor plan also allowed MADGI to maximize natural light, but required additional measures to create spaces with privacy. Boehm said, “With floor-to-ceiling windows, we endeavored to offer as much access to daylight for employees and visitors as possible throughout the entire floor by incorporating full-length glazing. To ensure privacy for meetings in an open office plan, we also introduced premium acoustical treatments for the four meeting rooms and a boardroom, with double-glazed, high-grade sound insulation from Tagwall.”

Design and Layout

The mixture of legacy and modernity starts right in the elevator landing lobby finished with dark-colored metal wall panels, which opens into a 630s/f reception area. The lobby space features an elaborate lighting design with low-set fixtures on the walls that cast an upright glow, as well as overhead circular pendant lamps arranged in clusters of three.

“Behind the reception desk, there is an architectural feature wall made of gray handmade pigment and plaster with a three-dimensional texture,” said Waghmare. “It also features the company logo in black metal matching the elevator lobby panels.”

Another circular lighting fixture marks the passage from the reception area into the guest waiting lounge, where a cabinet-like feature wall serves as a space for showcasing artwork and memorabilia, with special lighting for such displays. The lounge features stylish furniture in classic blues and grays, and opens up into the pantry area, which then leads on the south side of the floor plan to the boardroom and meeting spaces, and on the north and east sides to the workstation area.

The multi-functional, 245 s/f pantry features a counter area that can double as lunch tables or temporary workstations. A similar multipurpose theme allows the four meeting rooms to roll back moveable walls to become two larger spaces.

The main work area clusters into pods of five to six workstations, including several dedicated for visiting staff or partners, set under a slotted wood panel acoustical ceiling. The flooring consists of carpet tile in the workstation and meeting room areas, and a fine grit polished concrete in the remainder of the space. Other amenities include a 140 s/f wellness room, restrooms, and employee storage space.

Tying the many interior areas together, the lounge allows the guests to look out through glass walls onto the entire floor, connecting them to the bustle. “The waiting area is positioned to allow visitors to view the entire layout of the office, looking over to the workstations, meeting rooms, and pantry. By letting the guests see how work takes place in the office, it communicates honesty and transparency,” Waghmare said.

Photos by Tom Sibley/Wilk Marketing Communications

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