



◀ **HALF DOOR BREWING**

*Offering unobstructed views of Petco Park in Downtown San Diego, this East Village brewpub serves up beers and bites in a transformed 1900s-era building with a wrap-around porch.*

**RETAIL GETS CREATIVE IN**

# COOL BUILDINGS



**BRAD WILLIAMS**  
SR. VICE PRESIDENT

**NOVEMBER 2018**

On a recent visit to Portland, OR, I was walking down NW 23<sup>rd</sup> Street with a colleague and we kept asking one another, **“How cool are these buildings?”**

Those “cool buildings” have tenants like Marine Layer, Blue Star Donuts, and Salt & Straw (*some of my favorites!*). Pottery Barn and Williams Sonoma also have freestanding locations along this same corridor, and even Restoration Hardware just built a brand-new four-story building that opened earlier this year! NW 23<sup>rd</sup> Street is likely able to set itself apart from the nearby successful Pearl District with some of the unique nature of its structures nestled into a neighborhood.

Another example of charming architecture is Rainey Street in Austin, one of my favorite streets in the entire country. If you haven’t visited Rainey Street, it is a few-block stretch on the southeastern edge of Downtown Austin.

Over time, the street has undergone a metamorphosis from dilapidated and abandoned homes to one of the most vibrant and authentic stretch of bars and restaurants nationwide. Imagine a dozen 2,000 square foot converted homes into

bars with sprawling patios with lights strung overhead...a far cry from the dark and dingy bars on “Dirty Sixth”. This unique cluster of bars and restaurants in “cool buildings” has sparked significant residential growth in that node, as well as a brand new Kimpton Hotel.

What makes both NW 23<sup>rd</sup> and Rainey Street so great? Perhaps the biggest reason to me is the architecture and how authentically cool the buildings are!

LYUDMILA ZOTOVA

San Diego is known for many things, and San Diegans often use the “America’s Finest City” moniker. Our climate is second to none, and Southern California continues to show high demand for residency, tourism, commerce, and has correspondingly high barriers to entry for retail tenants. However, much of San Diego’s growth and constructed buildings came during the 1960’s and 1970’s, which was not the most stellar era in American architecture (politely stated, of course). In short, San Diego does not have the sheer amount of old “cool buildings” that older cities have that are ripe for repurposing.

In an era where retailers and food and beverage operators need to compete at the highest level with their product and service, there is also stiff competition to identify and locate “cool buildings” with unique and inviting architectural elements. When hosting out of town visitors, I am far more likely to take them to places that offer both strong offerings *and* have a unique architectural style that lends itself to a cool setting. Examples Downtown (alone) would be Basic, Ironside, the Mission, and Half Door Brewing Company, that have repurposed old buildings and

created a special environment to enhance their food and beverage offerings...and set themselves apart from more run-of-the-mill ground floor retail storefronts in shopping centers or new mixed-use residential buildings. The Arts District in LA is another current example of both retail tenants and consumers craving more authentic and unique experiences in repurposed buildings with Bestia, Church & State, Stumptown, and others leading the way.

Along the same lines, we are experiencing a trend of ornate and expensive interior buildouts, where tenants continuously try to leapfrog one another for something the public hasn’t quite seen or experienced before.

In a time where most property e-blasts are immediately deleted, a subject line caught my attention a few days ago: “Architecturally Stunning Retail Space”. The subject space had a nice brick interior that stood out. I think this is an example that there will be greater importance and a hastened race by owners and operators to

**MARINE LAYER ▼**

*The San Francisco-based clothier’s Portland shop is home to the inaugural Marine Layer Loft, nestled above the store and available for rent through Airbnb.*



find buildings and spaces that stand out architecturally and help enhance their authenticity and ultimate customer experience. This is especially the case in areas like San Diego, where older “cool buildings” with character are more challenging to find than in older cities. ■

**BANGER’S ▶**

*The Austin eatery serving up sausages and beers on Rainey Street recently expanded their rustic-chic cottage and leafy beer garden.*

