

Historic Filene's building pitched as 200,000-sq.-ft. headquarters office

The Beaux-Arts style Burnham Building opened in 1912, the same year as Fenway Park.

Grant Welker



The Filene's flagship in Downtown Crossing was a landmark for decades. Macy's later bought Filene's and closed all Filene's locations by 2006.

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Story Highlights



- MP Boston is marketing the 114-year-old Burnham Building's 200,000 square feet as headquarters office space.
- The developer plans tenant amenities including a cafe, bar, fitness center, and outdoor terrace.
- Roughly 100,000 people pass through the neighborhood daily, offering significant branding visibility for tenants.

Boston's [most in-demand](#), [best-amenitized](#) office buildings are in new gems like [South Station Tower](#), [One Congress](#) or [Winthrop Center](#). But the newest one? It's in the 114-year-old former Filene's department store.

The Downtown Crossing building where Filene's once had its flagship department store is now being marketed as a potential headquarters office building spanning 200,000 square feet. The owner, MP Boston, is the same developer who's nearly filled the nearby Winthrop Center and has invested \$4.5 billion in the neighborhood since building the [Ritz-Carlton](#) hotel and condominiums in 2001.

The space has been mostly vacant since public relations firms [Arnold Worldwide](#) and Havas Media [moved out](#) roughly two years ago. The building was renovated into offices in 2014 as part of a project that also included the opening of the [attached 60-story Millennium Boston](#) condo tower.

MP Boston, the local arm of Millennium Partners, is taking advantage of the empty office floors to pitch the space to what it hopes will be a high-profile headquarters tenant.

It is planning tenant amenities that include a cafe, bar, lounge, fitness center and outdoor terrace – the same features that have helped fill new or newly-renovated office towers downtown at a time when vacancies [are roughly 25%](#). It is sharing the Millennium Tower's culinary team for office tenants. And it's playing up one aspect that makes it far different than its competitors: the building's history.

The Beaux-Arts style Burnham Building opened in 1912, the same year as Fenway Park. It is named for celebrated architect Daniel Burnham, better known for designing New York's Flatiron Building and a master planner for Chicago in the late 1800s and early 1900s. MP Boston has renamed it simply "The Burnham."

The Filene's flagship store closed in 2006. A different firm, [Vornado Realty Trust](#), initially won approval two years later to redevelop the site but – in a twist no one in the neighborhood forgets – was unable to get the project advanced beyond a partial demolition that [resulted in a giant crater](#). MP Boston bought out [Vornado](#) and [began construction in 2013](#).

The building's reopening included upper-floor offices and a [Primark store](#) below, along with a [Caffe Nero](#) and a [Roche Bros. grocery store](#) that replaced the Filene's Basement store. The Millennium Boston tower [brought high-end residences](#) to the neighborhood [at a time](#) when it was enjoying new investments that also included the 2016 opening of the [Godfrey Hotel](#) two blocks away.

The Burnham's office space emptied at a difficult time for filling new offices. But Rich Baumert, MP Boston's managing partner, said the site has all of the amenities and an easily accessible location that any tenant could want. The building's age helps it stand apart, he said, with exposed original brick and terra cotta and ceiling heights of 13.5 feet.

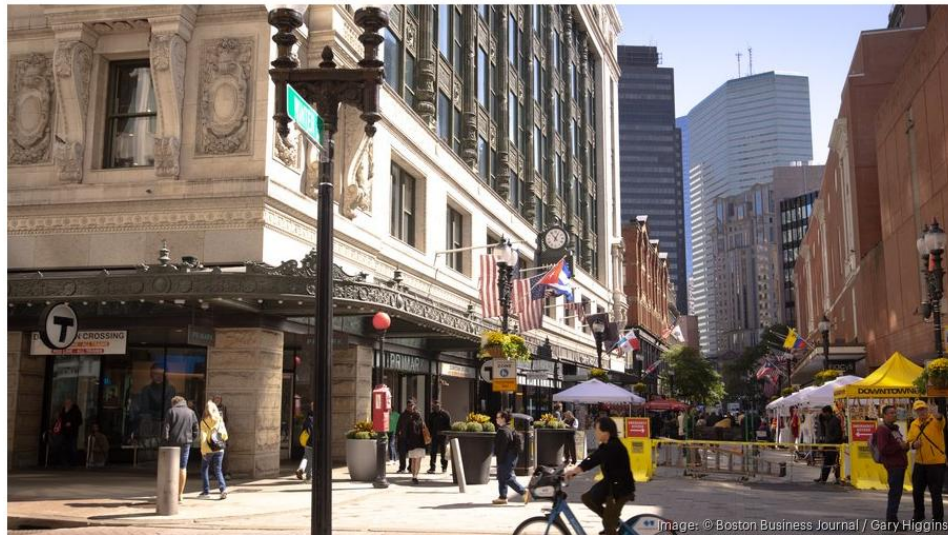
Baumert expects lots of interest. An event last week for real estate brokers attracted 45 agents.

Michael Nichols, the president of the [Downtown Boston Alliance](#), touted the site's importance to the neighborhood if it's able to become full again.

"It will have as big of an impact on the neighborhood as any other," Nichols said. "It is the building most synonymous with the neighborhood."

The building was once pitched [as a headquarters option for Hasbro](#) when the Rhode Island toymaker was scouting Boston sites. It lost out to 400 Summer St. in the Seaport but MP Boston still sees the potential for a headquarters as significant. That includes potential branding in front for the roughly 100,000 people who pass through the neighborhood on an average day.

“This is sort of Boston’s Times Square,” Nichols said. “If it’s a single-tenant here, it’ll stand out.”



The Burnham Building, now rebranded as The Burnham, stands in the middle of Downtown Crossing. An estimated 100,000 people pass through on an average day.

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The Burnham Building "created a progressive and innovative model for American retail through a design that embraced rich materials and Beaux Arts architectural detail," according to the Boston Preservation Alliance.

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The Burnham is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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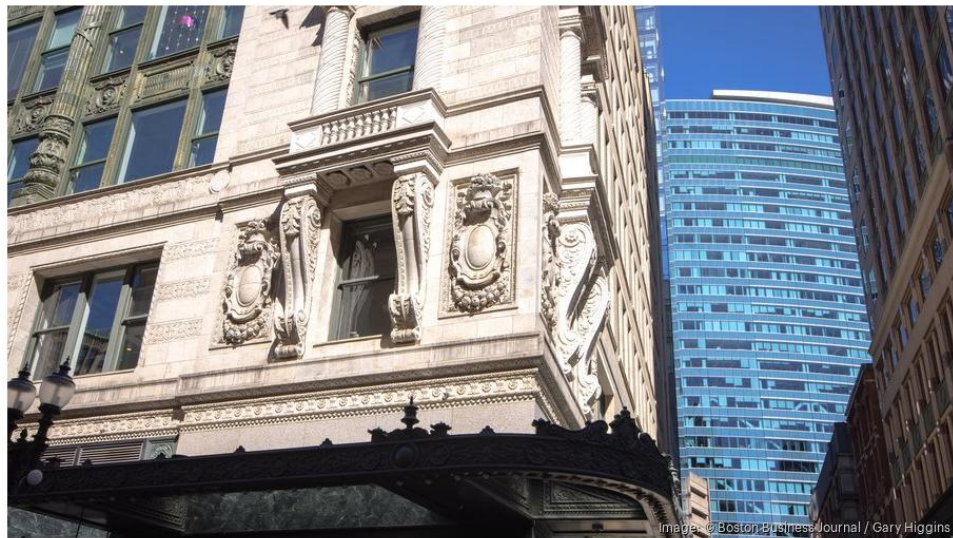


Image: © Boston Business Journal / Gary Higgins

The 1912 building, with its intricate architectural details, is the only Boston project by late celebrated architect Daniel Burnham, who's better known for New York's Flatiron Building.

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A terrace overlooks Washington Street in a view looking north.

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The Filene's building at 10 Summer St. has been rebranded The Burnham.

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Rich Baumert, the managing partner of MP Boston, thinks The Burnham is an ideal downtown headquarters office building.

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A showroom area for The Burnham.

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Image: © Boston Business Journal / Gary Higgins

A wall display is an ode to the building's architect, Daniel Burnham. He died in 1912, the year the Filene's building opened.

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Image: © Boston Business Journal / Gary Higgins

Baumert shows an interactive display of the building.

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Millennium Partners, better known for Winthrop Center and the Millennium tower, has made major office space renovations at the old Filene's building. It totals 200,000 square feet. The Burnam Building, named for its architect, is only about 10 years into its post-Filene's life, so any updates could be that much more notable.

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Image: © Boston Business Journal / Gary Higgins

The residents' terrace at the Millennium Tower stands next door.

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Image: © Boston Business Journal / Gary Higgins

The Burnham has 13.5-foot ceilings and exposed brick and terra cotta.

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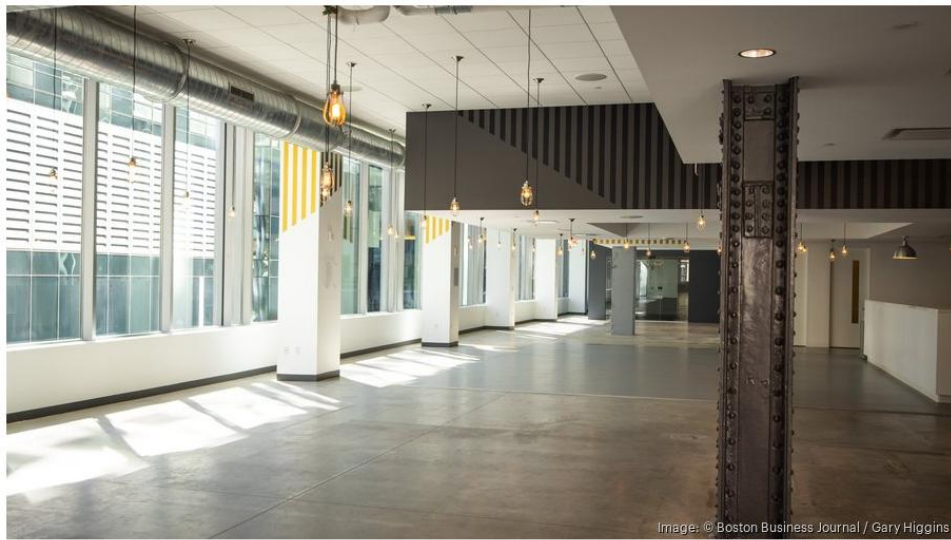


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The building's 200,000 square feet await a new tenant. The city's office market has lots of empty space, but not as much in spaces with better amenities and desirable locations.

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Image: © Boston Business Journal / Gary Higgins

The building's Summer Street facade is concave, as evident by midday shadows.

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MP Boston hosted an event for real estate brokers and attracted 45 people, Baumert said, in a sign of high interest in the building.

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A view looking south down Washington Street toward the Ritz-Carlton, an MP Boston development that opened in 2001.

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A look west along Summer Street, where Roche Bros. and Caffe Nero are located.

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MP Boston, an arm of the national developer Millennium Partners, has invested \$4.5 billion in the neighborhood, including the Ritz-Carlton, Millennium Place, Millennium Tower and Winthrop Center.

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Michael Nichols, the president of the Downtown Boston Alliance, touted the site's importance to the neighborhood if it's able to become full again. "It will have as big of an impact on the neighborhood as any other," Nichols said. "It is the building most synonymous with the neighborhood."

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The office lobby at The Burnham.

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The adjoining 60-story Millennium Tower stands over the former Filene's building.

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The skylight brings natural light flooded into the building's top floor.

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Old Filene's logos adorn the office space.

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Architectural quirks, including this window, abound in a building that dates to 1912.

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The Burnham Building has been rebranded simply The Burnham. It includes six floors of office space in Downtown Crossing.

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