

## DOWNTOWN BUILDING RESTORED TO VINTAGE ELEGANCE

### CONTRACTOR CONVERTS OLD FLORAL SHOP INTO OFFICES

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Leaded-beveled glass entry doors trimmed in mahogany and brass open to reveal William E. Leer's vision. While others saw an abandoned old floral shop in **downtown** Modesto, the 59-year-old general contractor envisioned elegant executive offices.

"I had a feeling for it," said Leer about first inspecting the old Loomis Modesto Floral **building** at 1111 J St. "And it's **turned** out even better."

Leer, 59, is president of William E. Leer Construction of Modesto. He purchased the **building** for \$400,000 in October 2002 and immediately began work.

"We closed escrow in 30 days, and we had our plans ready," he said.

Leer said Loomis Floral occupied the **building**, built in 1920, for approximately 42 years before closing in 2000. The floral shop only used a portion of the available space, which included a basement and a rear section with three levels.

Leer utilized all of the **vintage building's** 9,955 square feet to carve out 22 individual offices ranging in size from 150 to 400 square feet.

"Each office is individually alarmed and has DSL, it's wired for everything," said Leer's son, David, vice president of the family corporation.

Besides the purchase price, David Leer, 24, said the firm spent \$640,000 renovating the **building**.

Highlights of the Leer-Carver Executive Office Suites include:

- \* Two skylights.

- \* Two open stairwells to lower levels.

- \* 11-foot-tall streaming water feature.

- \* A private kitchen on each of the three floors.

- \* Two bathrooms on each floor.

- \* An elevator at entry and restored 1957 freight elevator at the rear section of the **building**.

- \* Third floor suite includes a shower.

- \* Colonial columns and crown mouldings throughout.

- \* Reserved parking for 30 at the nearby city parking garage around the corner on 11th Street.

"It has sort of an old hotel look and feel," William Leer said. "The exterior is kind of a traditional French colonial style."

The senior Leer said the floorplan is ideal for a large law office, a realty firm or insurance company.

Each of the offices also could be individually leased. The flexible layout is designed for adding a central reception desk to assist each office.

David Leer said the monthly gross lease for the **building** is \$1.55 a square foot.

The **building** also is for sale for \$1.9 million. Brekke Real Estate in Modesto is handling the lease or purchase.

The Leers recently sold three 1,800-square-foot townhouses it built in the 1400 block of Scenic Drive in Modesto. The two-story, 1,800-square-foot homes were constructed over what originally was a single-home site. The homes were listed at \$264,000 each.

The Leer family last year renovated a 70-year-old Modesto **building** at Seventh and I streets into executive offices and has a desire to improve the **downtown** area.

William Leer said renovations also make financial sense.

"They're better buys. Normally they're distressed **buildings**," he said. "New construction has more construction fees. It's a lot less to remodel."

A remodel project, William Leer said, is exempt from paying school fees of \$3 per square foot.

"That would have been \$30,000," he said. "Overall, we saved about \$100,000 by remodeling."

David Leer said they are looking at other **downtown** properties, but are not limiting themselves to Modesto.

"We really want to have a Leer **building** in every county in the state," he said. "I think we can do it in five years."

David Leer said the presence of a Leer **building** makes a statement of the firm's quality design and construction and would lead to business and construction opportunities.

"That's our advertisement," he said.

For more information on Leer-Carver Executive Office Suites, call 548-0794.

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**Caption:** (BART AH YOU / THE BEE)

Krystal and David Leer, vice president of William Leer Construction, survey the remodeled interior of the former Loo-mis Modesto Floral **building** at 1111 J St.