

Marshall Field and Company Building

Historic Preservation Meets Modern Performance

VISION

Transform a landmark retail building into premier office space while preserving historic character and ensuring acoustic performance.

PARTNERSHIP

Collaborate with developer, architect, and construction manager to integrate acoustic strategies within a complex historic retrofit.

VALUE-ADD

Acoustic strategies that balance preservation requirements with modern workplace performance standards and amenity integration.

DEVELOPER

Brookfield Properties

ARCHITECT

Lamar Johnson Collaborative

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER

Clayco

ACOUSTICS

Trinity Consultants

One of Chicago's most celebrated landmarks, the Marshall Field and Company Building on State Street, is being reimagined as a modern workplace. Brookfield Properties acquired the upper six floors of the 14-story National Historic Landmark from Macy's and undertook a multi-million dollar conversion to create 650,000 square feet of premier office space, including a 40,000-square-foot fitness center, a rooftop deck with sweeping views of Lake Michigan, and some of the largest leasable floor plates in the Chicago central business district. Trinity Consultants provided acoustic design services for the project, navigating the particular demands of adaptive reuse within a structure originally completed in 1893 and designed by D.H. Burnham & Company.

The building's historic fabric presented both an opportunity and a constraint. Its signature features, including 15- to 28-foot coffered ceilings, oversized windows, and the iconic Tiffany mosaic ceiling at the atrium, set the tone for the renovation's ambition. For acoustic design, those same features required careful consideration: hard, ornate surfaces, grand volumes, and the constraints of landmark designation all shaped what interventions were possible and where. Trinity Consultants, a leading global consulting firm, worked within those parameters to develop acoustic strategies that could support contemporary workplace performance without compromising the building's historic character.

VISION

The Marshall Field and Company Building stands as one of the great retail landmarks of American architectural history. Completed in phases between 1892 and 1907 and designed by D.H. Burnham & Company, the structure at 24 East Washington Street occupies a full block in Chicago's Loop and is listed as a National Historic Landmark. Its upper floors, long inaccessible to the public and historically used by Marshall Field's for manufacturing and storage, became the subject of a significant repositioning effort by Brookfield Properties, which acquired them from Macy's in 2018. The conversion creates 650,000 square feet of office space across floors eight through fourteen, with some of the largest contiguous floor plates available anywhere in downtown Chicago, ranging from 110,000 to 130,000 square feet per level.

The program reflects Brookfield's intent to attract modern office tenants while honoring what makes the building singular. Ceiling heights ranging from 15 to 28 feet, the presence of the Tiffany mosaic ceiling at the central atrium, and the ornate architectural details of a 19th-century commercial masterwork all inform the design approach. A new dedicated entrance off Washington Street, 14 new elevators, a 40,000-square-foot fitness center, and a 10,000-square-foot rooftop deck with views of Lake Michigan complete the tenant offering. The acoustic program had to support this vision, ensuring that contemporary workplace standards for speech privacy, sound isolation, and mechanical background noise could be achieved without disrupting the building's historic character or landmark obligations.

PARTNERSHIP

Trinity Consultants joined a project team led by developer Brookfield Properties, with Lamar Johnson Collaborative serving as architect and Clayco as construction manager. The combination of a landmark designation, an active retail tenant below, and a complex new-amenity program above created a coordination environment where acoustic decisions intersected constantly with preservation requirements, structural constraints, and construction sequencing. Trinity's role required close engagement with each party to ensure that acoustic performance criteria were established early and reflected in the design documents that governed the retrofit.

Landmark status introduced a layer of review and approval that shaped which acoustic interventions were viable. Materials, attachment methods, and visible finishes all required consideration of how they interacted with the historic fabric of the building. The team worked iteratively to align acoustic recommendations with what preservation requirements would permit, identifying solutions that could be implemented within the existing structure without altering the defining features that give the building its significance. That coordination process, running in parallel with the construction schedule, required ongoing communication between Trinity, Lamar Johnson Collaborative, and Clayco to keep acoustic performance integrated with the broader design and delivery process.

VALUE-ADD

A central acoustic consideration for the project was the integration of a 40,000-square-foot fitness center within a 130-year-old masonry building. Fitness facilities generate impact noise from foot traffic, equipment vibration, and mechanical systems, and in a structure with the mass and rigidity of the Marshall Field Building, those impacts required deliberate isolation strategies to prevent transmission to adjacent and below-grade office floors. The team specified isolated flooring systems and coordinated programming adjacencies to reduce the paths along which impact energy could travel through the building structure, supporting a refined acoustic environment in the surrounding office spaces.

For the upper office floors, the scale and grandeur of the existing spaces, with their soaring ceiling heights and hard-surfaced historic finishes, created reverberation conditions that required thoughtful management. The acoustic design supported the introduction of absorptive treatments calibrated to the specific geometry of each floor while remaining compatible with the visual character Brookfield and Lamar Johnson Collaborative sought to maintain. The result is an acoustic environment on the upper floors that acknowledges the building's character without sacrificing the performance standards that modern office tenants expect.

The rooftop deck added a further acoustic scope: as an amenity space exposed to the surrounding Loop environment, it required consideration of urban noise intrusion and potential sound transmission back into the building below. Guidance on parapet configurations, surface treatments, and mechanical equipment placement helped position the rooftop as an asset rather than a liability in the overall acoustic scheme. Across all programmatic elements, the acoustic design for this project demonstrates that high-performing workplaces can be delivered within historic structures, provided the design process accounts for the specific constraints and opportunities that landmark buildings present.