

POST Houston, Texas
Essay by: GianPaulo Garcia

In 1962, the Barbara Jordan Post Office warehouse was built—it was used by the USPS to serve the people of Houston up until 2015. After the building was abandoned, Lovett Commercial took over and decided to transform the post office warehouse into a hub for commercial and social activity. In addition to that, the building's proximity to downtown makes it a prime location for entertainment and social life [2].

The project's design was led by OMA. Project commissioning started in 2016, and renovation of the building began in 2019. Since it is a building that's already built, most of its structural components are already in place. This meant that they had more time to focus on other important aspects of the building—mechanical systems, lighting, aesthetics, etc.

The 500,000 square foot building has 2 levels plus a skylawn. Each level is dedicated for a specific purpose. The first one will be a space for retail stores, restaurants, and a music hall— to provide a unique shopping experience. The second level will be used for offices for different companies and businesses. And lastly, a skylawn that will house some restaurants, a garden, a stage for outdoor events, and a sustainable urban farm—all designed by Hoerr Schaudt [3]. It will be one of the biggest rooftop parks in the entire world at 210,000 sf (5 acres). All while having unobstructed views of the beautiful Houston skyline.

With each level sprawling to about 200K sf, OMA divided the building into four sections— four unique open atriums that bring in four contrasting elements together into one building. Dezeen labels this the “Four different segments of POST: culture, food, work, and play.” [5] This is used to encourage interaction and collaboration between people, while preserving unity within the entire building. Three of these atriums have staircases that were planned sophisticatedly to “bring people together” [4]. They are strategically located at the main spots where foot traffic is at its peak. OMA pointed out that they designed these staircases to intertwine and meet not only to add an elegant look to the area, but to also create “accidental encounters” for people. All three of these atriums are covered with the ETFE roofing system— a first in Houston. ETFE roofs are fluorine based plastics originally developed in the 1950's by NASA engineers working on space suit design; they are known for their durability, flexibility and fire resistant properties. They are widely used in buildings today because of their long service life, low maintenance and UV transparency [8]. These roofs provide plenty of natural light in a building and can be useful for its thermal design. Lastly, a fourth atrium is assigned to house a music hall. The structural mechanisms of the building allows for a column-free space across the area, while tiered seating is added above for a total of 5,000 seating capacity.

Post opened its doors to the public in late 2021. It is the perfect sustainable building—afterall, the greenest building is the one that already exists. It's more than just your typical mall—it is a space where people can collaborate, do work, and be productive; a diverse building for a city that is constantly reinventing itself.

Sources

[1] <https://www.oma.com/projects/post-houston>

[2]

<https://www.archdaily.com/972289/oma-jason-longs-adaptive-reuse-of-historic-houston-post-office-opens-to-the-public>

[3] <https://www.archdaily.com/920159/oma-reveals-new-design-to-convert-historic-houston-post-office>

[4] <https://www.dezeen.com/2021/11/26/oma-new-york-post-houston-warehouse-renaissance/>

[5] <https://www.dezeen.com/2019/07/02/post-houston-oma-entertainment-complex/>

[6]

<https://worldarchitecture.org/architecture-news/empnp/oma-jason-long-s-adaptive-reuse-of-historic-us-post-office-post-houston-opens-to-the-public.html> → more info and nice pics

[7]

<https://www.designboom.com/architecture/oma-post-houston-mixed-use-development-texas-jason-long-07-01-2019/> → Constr of Stair Pics

[8] <https://www.nowofol.com/en/etfe-architecture/etfe-foil-roof/>

