

PAPPAGEORGE  
HAYMES



# Infinite Chicago

Office-to-Residential  
Adaptive Reuse Conversion

The Infinite Chicago redevelopment transforms three vintage Chicago Loop buildings into a mixed-use housing and retail complex tailored to the area's college student population. The two high-rise office buildings, Gibbons and Steger, were renovated and connected by a multi-level sky bridge to incorporate 124 co-living apartments. At the back of a narrow alley between the two towers, a small 3-story structure known as the Pickwick Stables was repurposed into a coffee shop on a brick-paved lane for a truly unique urban character.

## Gibbons Building (c.1912)

The red brick Gibbons Building, located at 20 E. Jackson, was built as an office building with street-level retail for W. M. Gibbons. The original design of the building was 19 floors, but was reduced by three stories due to a zoning change in 1911.



*Above: south elevation view of the Gibbons Building after renovation.*

*Left: street view of Infinite Chicago from S. State and E. Jackson Street intersection.*

### **Building Info:**

16 floors + basement  
4,875 sf/floor  
83,750 sf gross  
56 apartments (120 beds)  
4,100 sf retail  
Masonry clad steel frame on rock caissons



## Steger Building (c.1910)

Located at 28 E. Jackson, the classical revival style Steger Building was the headquarters of Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company.

### Building Info:

19 floors + 2 basement levels

6,275 sf/floor

131,250 sf gross

68 apartments (289 beds)

6,300 sf retail

Masonry clad steel frame on rock caissons



*Left: south elevation view of the Steger Building after renovation.*

*Above: historic photo of the E. Jackson and S. Wabash Street intersection c.1910-1916.*



*Left: vaulted sidewalks around the Steger and Gibbons buildings were filled in during renovation and improved with tree-lined pathways.*

Right: view of the southeast corner of the Steger Building at E. Jackson and S. Wabash Street intersection. The building's east side faces the elevated CTA "L" tracks, which became a visual amenity for the fitness center and student lounge on the 2nd floor.



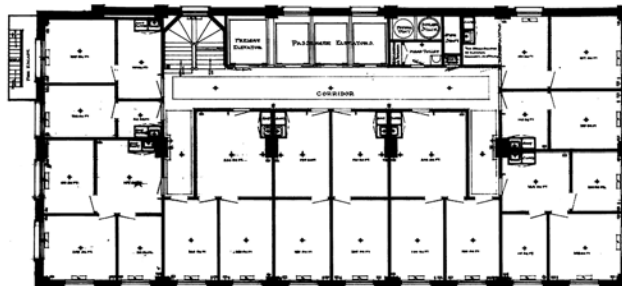
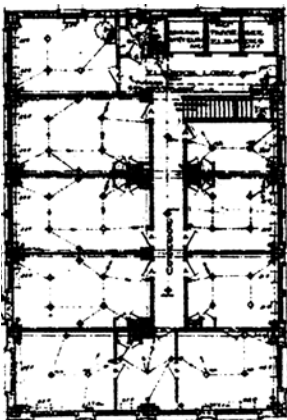
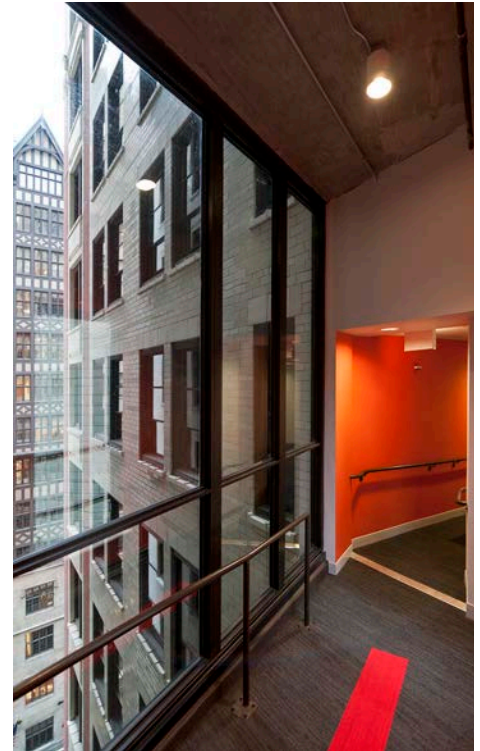
Above: view of the Steger Building before renovation showing the exterior fire escape on the east side of the building.



Left: street view of the Steger Building corner after renovation.

Left: closeup view of the sky bridge between the Gibbons (left) and Steger (right) buildings.

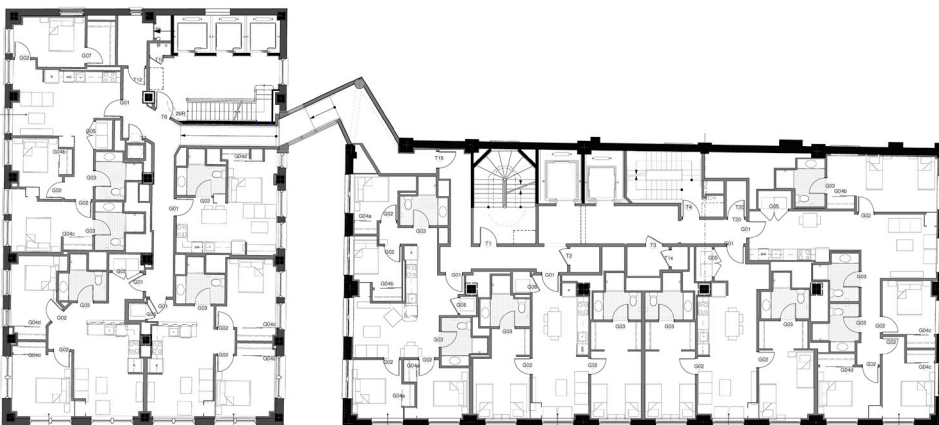
Right: inside the sky bridge showing the view toward E. Jackson street.



Typical Floor Plans of the Gibbons (left) and Steger (right) office buildings before adaptive reuse conversion into apartments.

## Redevelopment

The Gibbons and Steger buildings feature compact footprints of 3900 sf and 5600 sf and only one interior stair and elevator bank each. Connecting the towers via a bridge and adding a third staircase solved deficiencies in accessibility while also offering benefits such as shared utilities, enhanced security control, reuse of existing stairs, and reductions in required compartmentalization. The redevelopment also facilitated a historic facade renovation whose character reinforces an important element of Chicago's history and claim as an architecture capital.



Typical Floor Plan after conversion showing the connecting bridge between the two structures.

## Pickwick Stables (c. unknown)

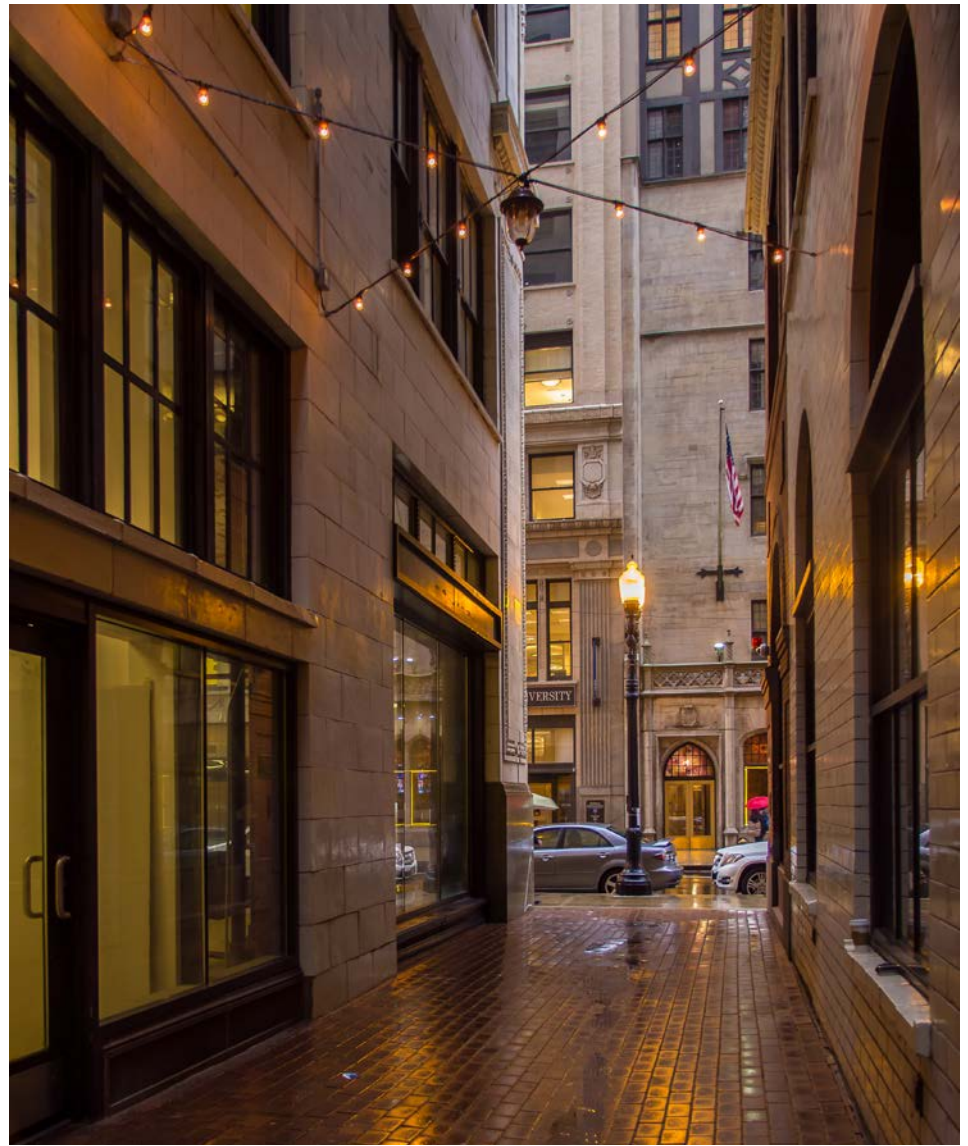
Rumored to be the oldest standing structure in the Chicago Loop, the Pickwick Stables is fixed between the Gibbons and Steger buildings at 22 E. Jackson. The 19 ft x 19 ft footprint structure previously served as Redpath's Saloon and Abson's Chophouse. During the adaptive reuse conversion of Infinite Chicago, Pickwick Stables was de-converted to a 2-story, 200 sf retail space.



*Above: Pickwick Place before redevelopment as a two-story coffee shop.*

*Left: Redeveloped brick-paved alley and Pickwick Place, now serving as a local coffee shop.*

*Below: facing north into Pickwick Alley situated between the Gibbons (left) and Steger (right) buildings.*



*Above: View of Pickwick Alley looking south toward E. Jackson Street.*



*Left: Looking up from the alley at the Pickwick Place Bridge that connects Steger and Gibbons buildings.*

## Pickwick Place Bridge

The connection of the two buildings by bridge fulfills the access and exiting requirements for the building while allowing for the elimination of three exterior fire escapes. A concrete structure was best suited to accommodate the complex form, whose angular footprint derives from the required column location and ramp lengths between structures.



*Above: before photo of the Steger building's east elevation showing the exterior fire escape.*



*Above: Pickwick Alley before renovation showing the exterior fire escapes on the Steger building.*

*Left: looking up at the 12-story sky bridge connecting Steger (right) and Gobbons (left) buildings.*



## Steger Cornice Restoration

The original terracotta cornice and upper story cladding were replaced by a utilitarian brown face brick in the 1980s due to fire damage. By making new parts of glass fiber reinforced concrete (GFRC), a lightweight cornice and facade cladding could be anchored to the brick wall for an encased, durable, and historically appropriate result. The existing parapet was replaced by reinforced concrete to provide a rigid band to hang from. To blend seamlessly with the original aesthetics, the red brick received a coat of elastomeric paint matching the cornice and the original Tiffany brick. Rubber molds were utilized to replicate existing ornaments, and the remaining details were derived from original drawings sourced from the University of Texas A&M archives.

*Right: Steger building west facade after reconstruction of the 5-foot terracotta cornice.*

*Below: the original terracotta cornice and upper story cladding were replaced by a utilitarian brown face brick in the 1980s.*



*Left: Steger building west facade before restoration.*



*Above: the buildings' facades have been fully restored to its original design, referencing historic photos and drawings.*



*Above: details of the new lightweight cornice and painted brick.*

*Below: some parts of the terracotta tiles have cracked or broken off. Rubber molds were used on existing ornaments to aid in making replacement copies.*





Left: Infinite Chicago building main entry after renovation. The revolving door was removed and the vestibule space was meticulously restored.



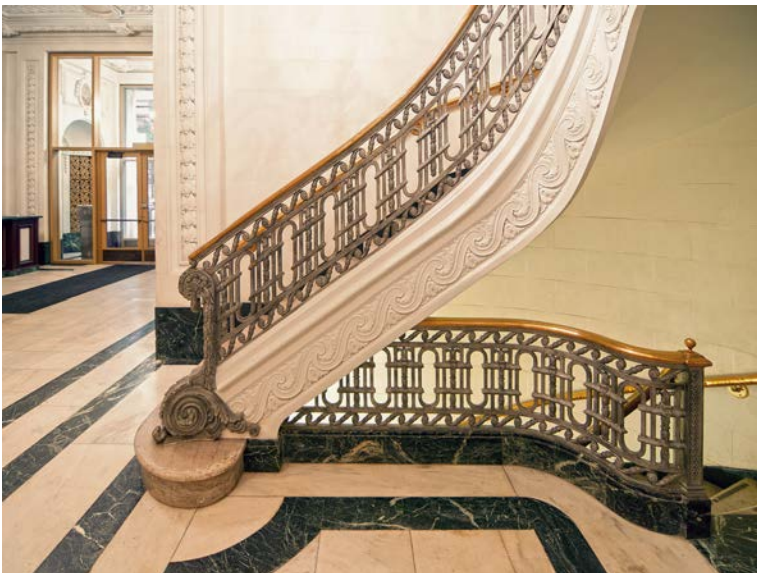
Left: Steger Building entryway before renovation.



Right: the expansive black glass on either sides of the building lobby were once storefront windows that have been sealed off to comply with fire codes.



*Above: view inside the fully restored elevator lobby. Two newly installed elevators are in operation today with one of the original elevator cars preserved to honor its historical significance.*



*Left: original grand staircase detail.*



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