

## Design inspired by New York City

By: [Inka Bajandas](#) in [Architecture and Engineering](#) December 3, 2014



A steel panel featuring an image of the Statue of Liberty will occupy one of the lobbies at the New York building in Northwest Portland. (Sam Tenney/DJC)

The story behind the name of the **New York industrial building** in Northwest Portland is simple. The six-story structure is being built on Northwest York Street. But the spirit of New York City extends beyond the name, according to the building's lead designer, Brian Melton of Portland-based **DiLoreto Architecture**. "The building is called 'the New York' and we just kind of ran with it," he said. Iconic New York City structures inspired Melton's design for one of the first ground-up vertical industrial buildings constructed in Portland in years. The theme is most apparent in a series of six laser-cut steel wall panels on each floor's lobby he designed to represent New York City scenes. These include views of the **Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, Brooklyn Bridge, Rockefeller Center** and **Chrysler Building**.

"I just tried to do abstractions of these iconic images of New York to give each lobby a theme," Melton said. "I think anybody who knows New York, not even intimately, will be able to recognize these images."

**Andersen Construction** crews started work on the \$12 million project in fall 2013 and are currently applying finishing touches, said Jeff Slinger, an Andersen senior

project manager. Tenant improvements will be completed over the next year until the building is fully occupied, he said.

New York industrial buildings and traditional working buildings found in cities throughout the country served as a jumping-off point for design of the 110,000-square-foot New York building, but the project represents a more modern approach, Melton said.

"It's an industrial building, but I wouldn't say the building itself is a New York industrial building," he said.

Instead, the design is geared toward light industrial users; spaces are catered to creative office tenants and Portland's maker culture.

"There are a lot of smaller entrepreneurs out there," Melton said. "The nature of the building lends itself to those uses ... It lends itself well to what's happening in Portland."

Each floor can become more than a dozen smaller work spaces for tenants that could include software startups, industrial designers, bicycle makers, furniture restorers or breweries, Melton said.

"It's super easy to change and accommodate for each tenant use," he said. "In that way, it's a successful building because you're going to get so many different tenants."

The New York building caters to creative businesses with features similar to those found in older industrial buildings, Melton said. The large windows, concrete floors and a large freight elevator will be ideal for tenants seeking work spaces for manufacturing or building products, he said.

"Getting the right window proportions was important to getting that industrial feel we all know and love," he said. "There is a lot of glass in each unit." Like other industrial buildings, the New York is unapologetic about its use, Melton said. The building's steel and concrete structure, ductwork and seismic braces on the facade are left uncovered.

"We very much tried to keep it industrial by exposing the structure, keeping this raw," he said. "It's not a refined building. It's a building to make things." That's part of the beauty of the New York building, Slinger said.

"It's like a building that has an old soul and that's what we're trying to do," he said.

The New York's raw look inspired the laser-cut steel artwork Melton designed to adorn the lobbies and add a theme to each floor. The backlit, carved panels – each measuring about 6.5 feet by 12 feet – fit in with steelwork found throughout the building, he said.

“That just naturally lends itself to making these art pieces out of raw steel,” he said. “I took that material and played with it.”

Melton came up with dozens of potential designs before settling on six images that he thought would most strike visitors.

“It was really hard to figure out how to capture this image to get it to read in a two-dimensional way – just understanding how the light is going to play off it,” he said.

A lot of experimentation was required to determine the best way to light the panels, and Andersen crews had to create a special structure to support their weight, Slinger said. In the end, he's pleased how they enhance the building's overall look.

“The whole construction team (is) really proud with how it turned out,” he said. “I think it's interesting and unique.”

### **The New York building**

**Location:** 2104 N.W. York St., Portland

**Cost:** \$12 million

**Construction start date:** fall 2013

**Construction completion date:** fall 2014

**Owner:** Rosan Inc.

**Architect:** DiLoreto Architecture

**Engineer:** WDY Inc.

**General contractor:** Andersen Construction