

Block x Block 2/24/09

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BY TYLER GRAF

After its construction in 1969, the 15-story Union Bank of California tower reigned as one of Portland's tallest buildings in the 1970s.

But the tower has been eclipsed by taller, more modern buildings – the Wells Fargo Center, Standard Insurance Center and Portland Plaza, to name a few.

However, the Union Bank of California tower still retains some singular qualities, said Maria Duncan, who, along with Scott Andrews, brokers the building for Melvin Mark Companies.

Designed by Anshen + Allen, a San Francisco-based architecture firm, the tower is one of Portland's few "international style" buildings. The exterior of the building incorporates more than 600 white pre-cast concrete panels, solar glass windows and imported slate said to have been quarried from the same area as the Stonehenge slabs, according to building Web site Emporis.

The building, which houses the Union Bank of California on the ground floor, is actually better distinguished for being an integral part of what's known as the city's "telecommunications hub," Duncan said.

Overall, the building has 197,000 square feet of space. Presently, more than 7,200 square feet of space – 5,200 feet of office space about 2,000 square feet dedicated to telecommunication equipment storage – is available to lease, Duncan said.

"We have two types of tenants: straight office users and users that are 24/7," Duncan said.

The building is considered a telecommunications hotel, housing 20 telecom companies that must stay operational every second of every day. To ensure this, a generator in the building's basement is available to feed electricity in case of a blackout.

The building also features a meet-me room for the telecommunication providers. The companies use the room for their machines and cables to connect to one another and exchange data without incurring fees.

"It's very valuable to have these resources in one spot," Duncan said.

Due to the building's technical nature, and its status as a telecommunications hotel, Melvin Mark has a technology consultant on retainer to help explain the building's amenities to potential tenants.

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The Daily Journal of Commerce Inc.
921 S.W. Washington St.
Suite 210
P.O. Box 10127
Portland, Oregon 97296

Phone 503-226-1311 | Web: www.djcoregon.com