

HISTORY IN HOLLYWOOD The Bradbury Building serves as contemporary gem

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The Bradbury Building in Los Angeles serves both as a “movie star” in its own right and a piece of the city’s history. Commissioned by mining millionaire Lewis Bradbury, the building bearing his name was built in 1893 and has functioned as an office building throughout its entire history. The property was—and remains today—an architectural gem recognized both locally and nationally as a National Historic Landmark.

The exterior features an Italian Renaissance-style with brown brick, sandstone and terra cotta details. The interior provides the building’s true “wow” factor, however, with its cast iron details and inventive use of light. Upon entering the building, visitors walk beneath low ceilings and dim lighting before the space opens into a magnificent airy center court flooded with natural light.

Through its 126-year history, the property has evolved into a coveted space with contemporary capabilities.

“We are old on the outside and young on the inside,” said Kasha Bali, property manager with Downtown Properties Holdings. “We brought modern technology to the building over the years.”

In 1992, the building underwent a restoration overseen by its former owner, Ira Yellin. Under the direction of Brenda Levin Associates, some of the updates included a full sprinkler system, fire alarm monitoring, upgraded fire escapes, handicap restrooms, restored wood paneling details and a redesigned lighting system that includes custom-designed wall sconces.

Other modern upgrades to the building through the years have included a new cooling

tower installed in 2005 and access system cards for tenants to enter the building after hours. In contrast to its contemporary features, the Bradbury’s historic charms are still on display, with features such as the last remaining manually operated elevators in Los Angeles.

Yellin was dedicated to preserving the building’s history, and its current owner, Downtown Properties Holdings, shares that dedication.

“We share Yellin’s dedication to the Bradbury and renovating downtown,” said Bali. “His wife is a big fan of historic buildings and believes they will always be attractive to certain market segments. Our ownership shares that vision.”

The dedication to preserving the building’s history and maintaining its original grandeur has made the Bradbury a popular location for film and television shoots. The building’s management team gets frequent inquiries from location scouts interested in capturing the building’s essence on screen. In fact, the building gets so many inquiries for filming that, even without actively soliciting production companies, the building still enjoys a steady revenue stream from filming opportunities.

“The Bradbury Building is the perfect setting to show the unique character of a scene,” said Bali. “It is good for both science fiction and historical sets. I believe the character of the building with its atrium full of light and the iron work are major attractions for film production companies.”

While the Bradbury’s most famous role is in *Blade Runner*, the building has also been featured in hit films such as *D.O.A.*, *Double Indemnity* and *Disclosure*; in music videos for Janet Jackson and Genesis; and most recently



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on the television show *Pushing Daisies*. All this time in the spotlight has turned the Bradbury into a tourist attraction as well.

“Twenty-five years ago they filmed *Blade Runner* here, and everyone comes to see where it was filmed,” said John Goldrick, director of property management. “It is visited by people from all over the world. It is truly amazing. We act more as ambassadors of the building than we do as property management people.”

Of course, there is plenty of preparation involved when the Bradbury is transformed into a film set.

“I make sure our tenants are notified of filming,” said Bali. “Also, if needed, we schedule an engineer who can assist with the needs for power or lighting. We make sure that the film production company subcontracts our security guards at the time of filming because they are familiar with the building.”

While functioning as a tourist attraction and famous filming location, the Bradbury Building’s primary role is as an office building. It is the headquarters for the Los Angeles Police Department’s Internal Affairs Office, which occupies two and a half floors. It also houses two architecture firms, the State Treasurer’s Office and Red Line Tours. In addition, the building houses some retail, such as Subway, Sprint and Ross Cutlery. It is currently 93 percent occupied.

“We have always had [tenants show] high interest in the building, especially from architects because of its unique design,” said Bali. “In general, there has been a growing interest in historical buildings recently. The appreciation of past achievements in architecture and design, and being in a different environment than what is offered by contemporary buildings, make historical buildings like the Bradbury attractive. That interest in historical buildings has been continuous, and in today’s economy, occupancy above 90 percent is pretty remarkable.”

Keeping the Bradbury building in the best shape possible is a top priority for the ownership and management.

“The biggest challenge is maintaining the building in its best condition,” said Bali. “We do it not only for the tenants and visitors but for the Los Angeles community and the international community as well. There are people coming to the building from all over the world, so we want to show it at its best.” ■

MANY VIDEOS AND FILMS, SUCH AS *BLADERUNNER*, HAVE BEEN FILMED IN THE 126-YEAR OLD BRADBURY BUILDING.

