History of Drury Plaza Hotel Pittsburgh
Downtown

The Federal Reserve Bank of Pittsburgh is one of two Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland offices, with the other calling Cincinnati home. The Pittsburgh location served as a repository of currency for regional banks and as a trading and auction center for treasury securities and bonds until 2012. It contained storage vaults for paper currency and coinage, and it was a center for disposing of paper currency that had to be disposed of and recycled.

Cleveland architecture firm Walker and Weeks designed the original Art Deco seven-story building, which opened in 1931 and features a Georgia marble building cover. A Pittsburgh architect, William York Cocken, added a 10-story addition in 1956, which is clad in limestone. In 1971, a below-grade coin vault and parking deck were added. Drury Hotels bought the building in 2013 and began its restoration in 2014.

The ground floor Grant Street entrance features steel security grates over the windows, custom designed and installed to illustrate the Fourth District (“4D”) designation for this particular Federal Reserve building. The original 1931 building entrance and elevator lobby contain many original Art Deco castings, marble and stainless steel trim. The adjacent Gulf Building and Koppers Building, together with the Federal Reserve Building, serve as three primary examples of the Art Deco style in the downtown Pittsburgh area.

Many of the original finishes, rooms and architectural features remain in the building; among them are the “main banking room” (also known as the “bond trading room”), complete with its marble wall cladding and stainless steel trim and castings. This area today houses a portion of the hotel’s public space off the lobby and dining area. A painted mural of downtown Pittsburgh (circa 1960) has been restored and hangs prominently on a wall of the now dining area. On the lower level of the building, two vaults have been maintained and converted to meeting rooms for public use. The massiveness and complexity of the vault doors give an image of the level of security maintained by the Reserve, together with a display adjacent to one of the meeting rooms where the steel reinforcing for one of the vault walls has been exposed to illustrate the construction of the vaults themselves.
At the building parking deck, where guests enter the building, a guard booth has been converted to a valet station, and on the William Penn Street side of the building, the main security guard checkpoint and gun turrets on the outside of the structure can be seen. The eighth floor of the building originally served as a practice firing range for security teams, and this area has been repurposed to house an indoor swimming pool, fitness center and an outdoor plaza deck for observation of the downtown Pittsburgh skyline.

Many modifications have occurred to the building interior over the years, mostly to coincide with the change in banking and security. Security bollards were added to the exterior perimeter of the building, front and rear, and the front entry to the building off Grant Street was modified to restrict public access. Many of these features were removed to enhance access to the building in its new life as a hotel, but several of them still remain to give the general public an idea of the amount of security that was required at the time.

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