

CASE STUDY:

**ROJO ARCHITECTURE**  
TAMPA, FL (USA)

THE  
PORTLAND

300

CLEARANCE 8'-2"





## CREATING WELCOMING SPACES FOR EVERYONE

For designers at ROJO Architecture, working in a space that's suited for play provides just the right mental break to spark their next great idea. Their office sits inside of what was once a busy shopping mall until a recession forced commercial building owners to rethink the space. Cofounder and Principal Rob Glisson enthuses that while the spacious, 25-foot hallways are perfect for throwing footballs, the real benefit of the structure's openness is how it facilitates collaboration. "Anytime you have something to offer to make a project better, you're expected, and able, to do so," he says.

It's this drive to work cohesively that allows Glisson, along with Cofounder and Principal John Saldana and a team of seven other architects, to respond to the medical, religious, commercial, hospitality, and private-sector clients they serve. "We're really working for our clients' clients and responding to their needs and desires," notes Saldana.

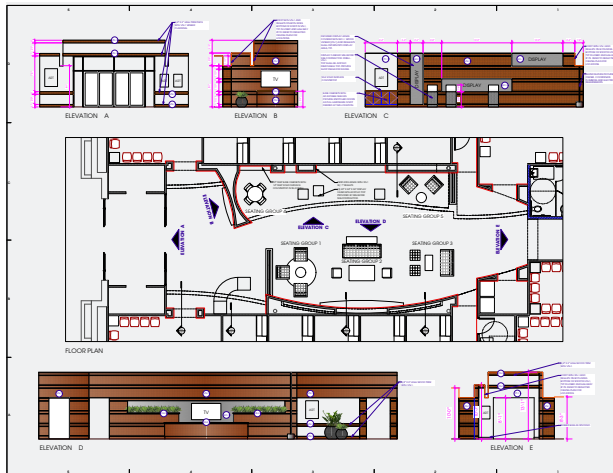
“ We don't necessarily bring a style to the job as much as we let the job bring a style to us, and then we focus on doing that correctly. ”

## FROM RETAIL TO HEALING: A SPACE TRANSFORMED

One example of ROJO's focus on end users is its conversion of a 27,550-square-foot bookstore into a space conducive to orthopedic care, education, and research for the Florida Orthopaedic Institute. Because the site was once a large, open space with little privacy and no natural light, ROJO was challenged to meet the functional needs of the medical facility, as well as transform the entryway into a welcoming destination.

The result of their efforts is a space that patients and employees are happy to enter because it replicates the vibe of an upscale hotel lobby. The experience begins with a glass wall, featuring a cascading waterfall behind the facility's nameplate. This striking focal point wasn't meant to be an interactive water feature, but people touch this playful design element every day, creating a memorable, if unintended, experience. From there, a winding path cuts through the space, using sophisticated gray and gold carpet that complements wood-lined walls with recessed shelving featuring artwork, as well as plush upholstered furniture with modern industrial lighting.





As an early embracer of technology, ROJO has employed Vectorworks® Architect software as a Building Information Modeling (BIM) authoring tool for several of its projects, including the Florida Orthopaedic Institute. The firm modeled the design right in the software from the start, often adding far more detail than necessary for initial client signoff. This approach proved to be beneficial. “The better we can show our designs, the better we can sell them,” says Glisson. “And it works.” With fully developed presentations, he adds that their client meetings are 95 percent successful.

Saldana remarks that operating in a BIM workflow also reduces the firm’s backend work significantly, saving hundreds of hours. “Even though clients often look at 2D drawings, we have everything backed up in a 3D model. We know a lot more about their space than it appears.” ROJO also encourages its contractors to use BIM. “Precise quantities can save 10 percent on wasted materials,” says Glisson. “Passing these savings along to clients clinches more bids. It’s a win-win for all.”



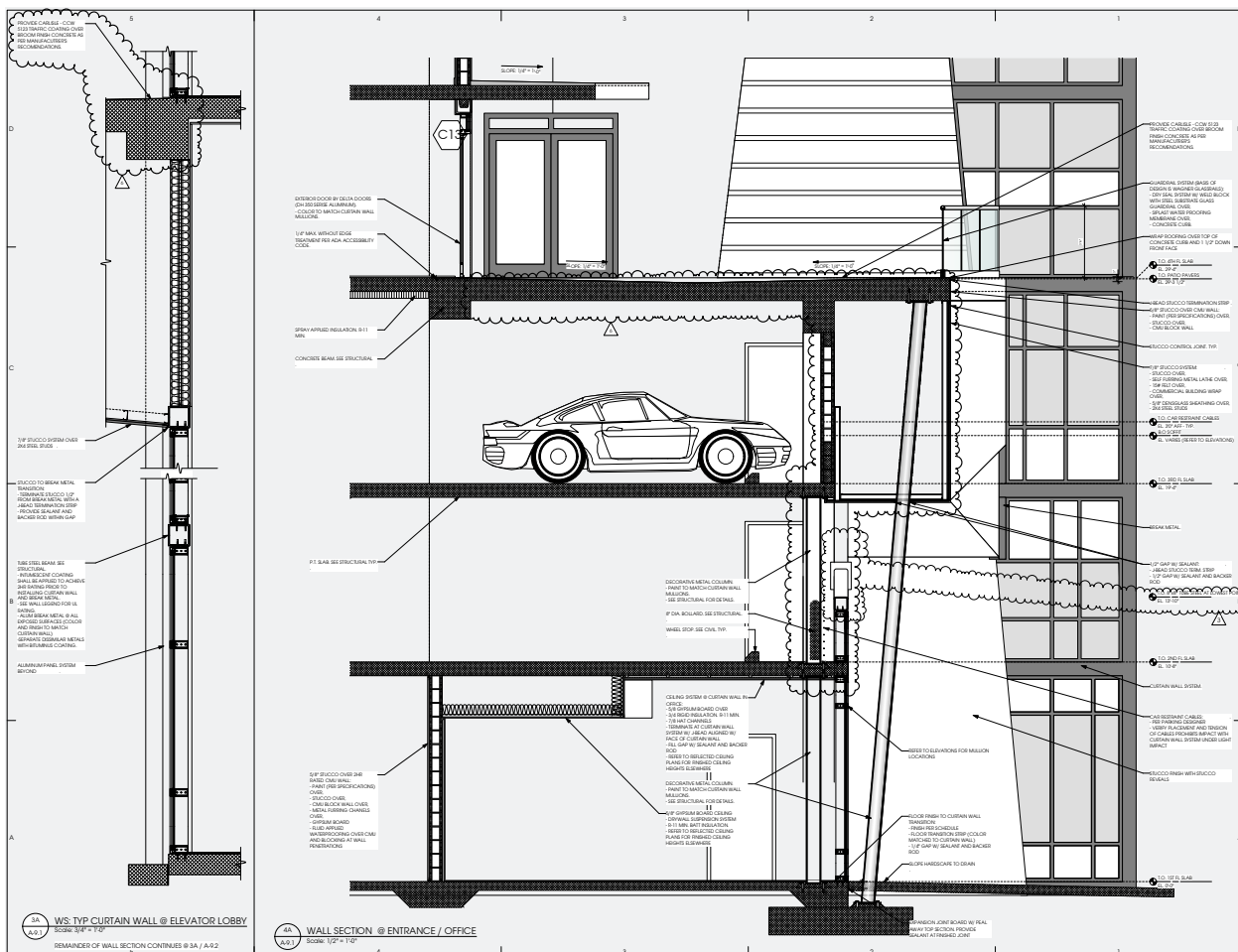
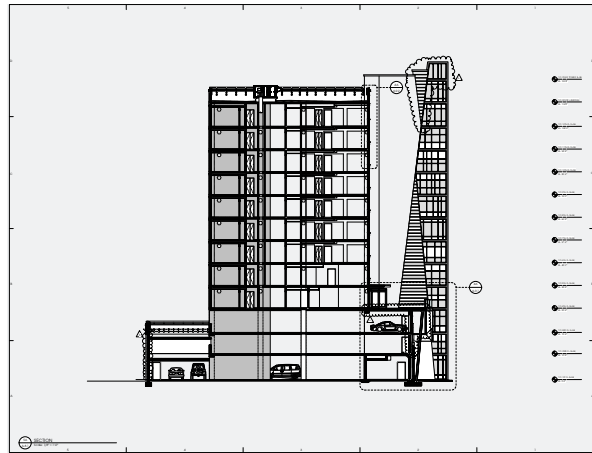
## AFFORDABLE HOUSING MEETS HIP DESIGN

ROJO recently oversaw another transformation with The Portland building, which represents a departure from the typical affordable housing block. This government-funded, 78,000-square-foot project features 12 stories with 68 units, all on a small lot in St. Petersburg, Florida. ROJO's interpretation of Portland, Oregon's seaside cliffs are displayed on the face of the building and its elevator tower, with striations and a peeling of the exterior to reveal rich blues and greens in the glass and metalwork. The tower draws the eye upward with diagonal lines that change the shape of the windows as they ascend. Inside, reclaimed barn wood laid horizontally on the walls, modern black and white leather furniture, and magenta and black spotted carpet set an upscale, modern tone. And in a nod to Portland's claim to being the "City of Roses," larger-than-life sculptural rose cutouts appear to climb the outer walls of the building, showing expansive ocean views. "We really concentrated on what every person's experience was going to be. Most people are generally very surprised that it's affordable housing," Saldana says.

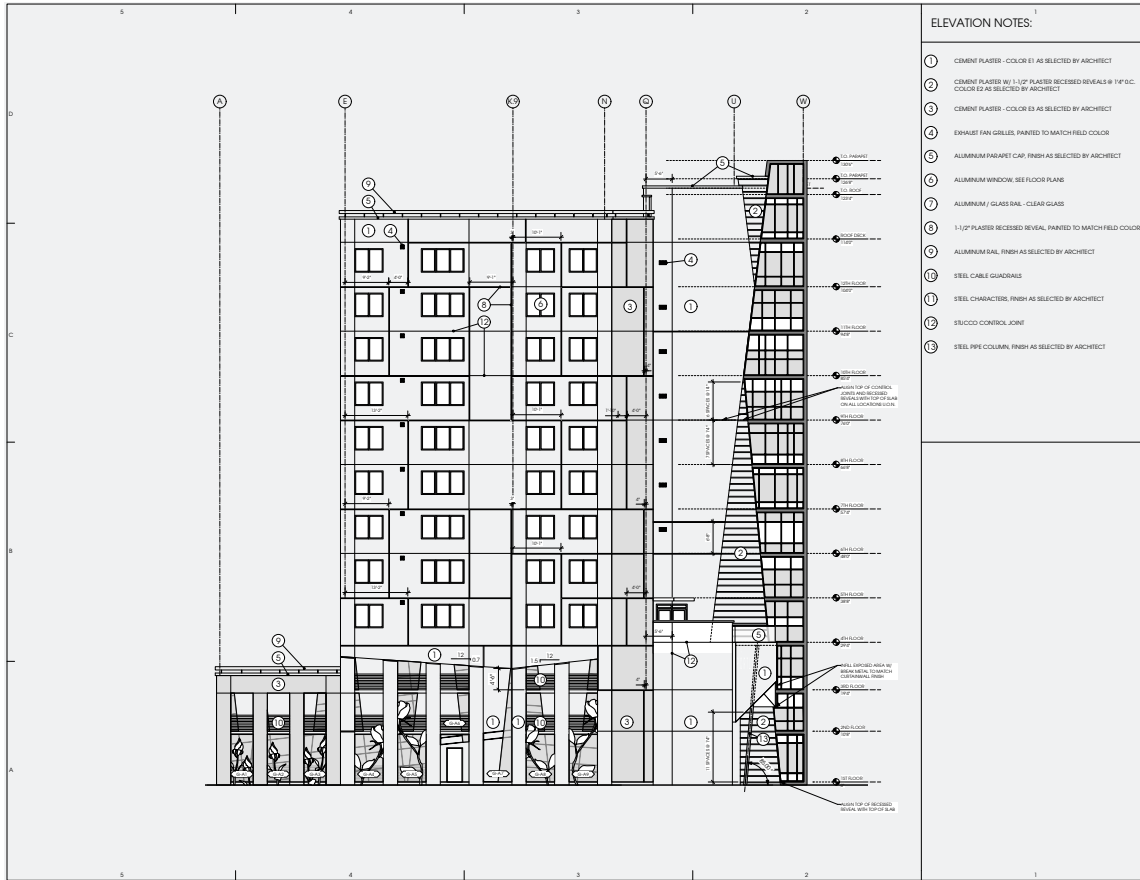


One challenge ROJO faced during the project's evolution was the lot's small size. Exploring different scenarios in Vectorworks Architect software proved critical to optimally sizing the space, including its three levels of parking. "I don't know how we would have done the vertical stacking without a tool like Vectorworks Architect," Glisson says. "We needed to evaluate if certain geometries were going to be more conducive to the unit placement. The software confirmed our design decisions and saved us an incredible amount of time."

Saldana also credits the software's presentation capabilities for enabling the project's smooth approval process by the State of Florida, the City of St. Petersburg, and a private developer. "We're only as good as we can communicate to the client, and Vectorworks Architect helped us communicate our ideas effectively."







## A BRIGHT FUTURE WITH BIM

Looking ahead, ROJO's founders envision BIM playing an increasingly larger role in streamlining their workflows. For example, Glisson asserts that as subcontractors develop BIM models for their millwork, HVAC, and other products, construction details are rendered moot. Architecture firms like his can therefore work with the subcontractors and contractors directly. "We don't need to create a BIM model and then have them BIM again," he says. "The subcontractors can just BIM their work first and bring it back into our model. That's going to be a lot of fun to work with." How soon can everyone get there? Glisson and his team hope to leverage their experience with BIM to help the contractors they work with make process improvements within five years.

Saldana also sees huge timesaving opportunities with more prevalent BIM. "Contractors can input our model into their shop drawings. Then, we can put 100 percent of our time into the design, rather than documenting and drafting, and provide more accurate bidding." That sounds like progress for everyone.

## BE INSPIRED

Read about more designers who transform the world with Vectorworks software at [vectorworks.net/success-stories](http://vectorworks.net/success-stories).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## ROJO'S DESIGN COMMANDMENTS

Thou shall not nudge.  
Love thy project as thyself.  
If you don't knoweth, asketh.  
Know and love thy grid.  
Know thy class structure.  
Understand thy upgrade, upgrades are good.  
Your drawing files reflect on you.  
Hold thyself accountable.  
Treat .dwg users as you would wish to be treated.  
Live according to your faith.

