

Reebok's new HQ will be at Design Building in Seaport District

By **Tim Logan** GLOBE STAFF DECEMBER 07, 2016



Reebok said it will relocate its headquarters from Canton to the Innovation & Design Building in Boston's Seaport District.

Reebok is joining the stampede to the Seaport.

The maker of athletic shoes and gear said Wednesday that it will move its corporate headquarters, and 700 jobs, to the Innovation & Design Building, a sprawling former warehouse on the edge of Boston's waterfront that is fast becoming a hub for creative firms.

Reebok will move next fall into about 220,000 square feet on five floors, with office space, a two-story gym, a design lab, a retail store, and a public restaurant. They even plan to create a mile-long running track around the building.

"We have a goal of being the fittest, healthiest workplace in the country, and this new location will go a long way in helping us achieve that goal," Reebok president Matt O'Toole said in a statement. "It will be a workplace unlike any other in the city."

In November, Reebok announced plans to leave its longtime home in Canton and move to Boston, in part to tap the city's young workforce and expose its brand to more potential customers. Last year, rival Converse Inc. made a similar move, from North Andover, while the sneaker makers New Balance and Puma have long been in the city.

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With rents rising in the Seaport, the timing is good, said Ani Collum, a retail strategist at Retail Concepts, a Norwell consulting firm. The move should help Reebok attract a younger and more diverse talent pool.

And then there's the cool factor.

"It's a lot cooler to say you're in the design and innovation district, as opposed to a suburban office park," she said.

For Reebok and its parent company, adidas AG, the move is part of a broader restructuring that includes shedding 300 jobs. Some employees will be let go, while others will be offered jobs at adidas's North American headquarters in Portland, Ore.

In picking a new home, Reebok looked for a creative, collaborative environment, O'Toole said, plugged into the broader design and manufacturing community in Boston. The IDB offered that.

"One of the aspects that appealed to us was the incredibly innovative culture that is so apparent when you visit the space," he said. "I know this environment will inspire our people, and I hope we can inspire those around us, as well."

The vast building on Drydock Avenue, a former military warehouse-turned-industrial hub, has been undergoing a major overhaul in the past two years by its new owner, the development company Jamestown. It has added everything from new windows to shipping container food stands on the building's massive old loading dock.

The building has attracted a wave of new tenants, including the architecture firm Elkus Manfredi and the MassChallenge startup accelerator. The design consulting firm Continuum, software maker Autodesk, and America's Test Kitchen have moved in, too.

In all, about 83 percent of the 1.4 million-square-foot building is leased. About 3,200 people work there, a number that will grow to the mid-4,000 range once all of the signed tenants have moved in.

For a certain kind of company, the windswept and once-gritty corner of the waterfront makes sense, said Joe Fallon, who heads the Boston office of the real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield.

"They're going to an area that has really been emerging but is still evolving," Fallon said. "They're looking down the road, in terms of where their employees want to be."



Plus Reebok brings a household name, and the biggest tenant yet.

“It’s a real statement about the 24-hour urban innovation neighborhood we’re trying to create there,” said Jamestown’s president, Michael Phillips. “These are the new manufacturing jobs and the healthy companies that sort of drive our economy.”

City officials welcomed the move, which follows General Electric Co.’s decision to bring its world headquarters, and 800 jobs, to the nearby Fort Point Channel area. Several smaller companies have moved their headquarters to the area in recent months.

It is “another example of how Boston is attracting innovative, global companies that are invested in making our city a better place,” Mayor Martin J. Walsh said in a statement. “I welcome Reebok to Boston, and look forward to engaging with them about how we can ensure all Bostonians lead healthy, active lifestyles.”

Reebok is seeking no tax incentives, city officials said.

Some details are still being worked out, including the layout and location of the one-mile running track. While images provided by the company depict an outdoor workout space on a deck outside the building’s second floor, it appears a track is more likely to be built at street level.

Another detail that will need to be worked out: a Reebok sign atop the eight-story IDB, with the company’s red triangle logo visible from Boston Harbor and under the path of planes taking off and landing at Logan Airport.

A spokesman said the images were “ideas.” A spokeswoman for the Boston Planning & Development Agency said it would review any sign proposals.

The huge space will include a retail store, a two-floor 30,000 square foot gym featuring a CrossFit box and boxing ring and an outdoor running track.

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