

Why a consulting firm chose to build HQ in rural Northeast Austin

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GasPedal is stepping on it.

The Austin-based company is getting ready to move out to the ranch — a rural corporate headquarters campus in Northeast Austin that’s may make other entrepreneurs green with envy.

The 44-acre site at 10300 Springdale Road is verdant with foliage and wildlife. Walnut Creek meanders through the middle of the site, which appears completely unspoiled but is just 15 to 20 minutes from U.S. Highway 290 and I-35 northeast of downtown.

The existing 20,000-square-foot warehouse is being transformed into a completely unconventional office space, and across the way, the company also purchased a ranch house built in the 1960s — now renovated as a cozy corporate bed-and-breakfast.



Andy Sernovitz is CEO of GasPedal, which is building a new headquarters on a sprawling 44-acre site about 15-20 minutes away from U.S. 290 and I-35.



GasPedal purchased the properties in December 2014 for an undisclosed price.

“It’s all about making a place where our employees want to spend their day,” said Andy Sernovitz, the funny and offbeat CEO and founder of GasPedal, which advises major brands and Fortune 1000 companies about best practices through peer-to-peer communities.

Sernovitz credits GSD&M, one of Austin’s most prominent advertising agencies, for setting a high baseline for corporate culture. He initially operated GasPedal at GSD&M in free office space after he moved his company from Chicago.

In 2014, Sernovitz got serious about finding his own piece of real estate and noticed the vacant warehouse on Springdale Road after holding a company retreat at the Barr Mansion & Artisan Ballroom nearby. There was a for-sale sign out front and he convinced his real estate broker, Conley Covert of SkylesBayne Co. to follow up.



Of the choice to build in a rural area, Sernovitz says: “It’s all about making a place where our employees want to spend their day.”

Sernovitz knew the property had potential.

“The more we looked at it the more apparent what a great deal it was, but it didn’t fit the average banking template,” Sernovitz said.

His staff talked with about 30 banks before being introduced to Horizon Bank, an Austin-based bank.

Jeff O’Jibway, executive vice president of Horizon, along with Blyth Rehberg of Texas Certified Development Co., put together a financial package that worked for GasPedal.

“Nobody else understood what we were trying to do,” Sernovitz said.

Customized space

GasPedal purchased the properties in December 2014. No financial details were disclosed, but documents at the Travis County Clerk’s office show that GasPedal obtained three loans from Horizon Bank secured by the property — for \$1,525,000, \$1,220,000 and \$952,500.



An existing 20,000-square-foot warehouse on the site has been repurposed into a conference zone, open working area and a village of personal office space. Not pictured, the company also purchased a ranch house built in the 1960s — now renovated as a cozy corporate bed-and-breakfast.

For the first several months of 2015, Sernovitz sought in vain for an architect.

“Everyone wanted to talk with us because it’s kind of a goofy property, but it took a long time to find the right architect,” he said.

He settled on Stephen Oliver, principal of Opa Design Studio, which has a varied portfolio of residential and commercial projects including tenant buildouts for Kerbey Lane Cafe and Cuvee Coffee.



Structura Inc, an Austin-based construction company, is the general contractor for the project.



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Oliver and Sernovitz envisioned three zones for the old produce warehouse — a conference zone, an open collaborative zone and a village of individual offices — laid out as little row houses with windows and ledges.

“Everyone can customize their space,” Sernovitz said.

The conference area will be accessible not only to employees and clients, but to the public, as well.

Large windows and garage doors have been installed to create wide streams of natural light and to allow the building to function as an indoor-outdoor space. A basketball court and other recreational facilities have been built, though roaming the secluded paths and trails may appeal most of all to employees.

Structura Inc, an Austin-based construction company, was chosen as the general contractor.

Rusty Morgan, CEO of Structura, and Oliver worked together before on the Live Oak Brewing Co. project in Del Valle.

The ranch home has been remodeled as a hospitality facility and will be available to employees to house family when they come to visit. Other employees based outside of Austin may also crash there during business trips.



In the warehouse, large windows and garage doors have been installed to create wide streams of natural light and to allow the building to function as an indoor-outdoor space.

“This whole idea of feeling at home just keeps coming up,” Sernovitz said.