

Welcome to the MET



The MET Warehouse

From storage to architecture,
planning, and design



Iwan Baan

The Metropolitan Storage Warehouse, known as the MET, is a century-old Cambridge landmark transformed into the new home of the MIT School of Architecture and Planning (SA+P). Originally built in the late 19th century as a storage facility, the five-story, 500-foot-long, 195,000-square-foot brick building has been reimagined by MIT as a center for teaching, research, making, and public life.

Today, studios, classrooms, galleries, a café, workshops, offices, an auditorium, and common spaces extend through the former warehouse, making room for a vibrant in-person culture. The MET brings several SA+P units into closer proximity while allowing their different cultures and modes of work to coexist, also inviting exchange with the wider MIT and Cambridge communities.

**“A new center of gravity for
the campus”**

Hashim Sarkis, Dean, MIT School of Architecture and Planning

A building made for objects

More than a century of history

The Metropolitan Storage Warehouse was built as a private storage facility to safeguard Boston's valuables.

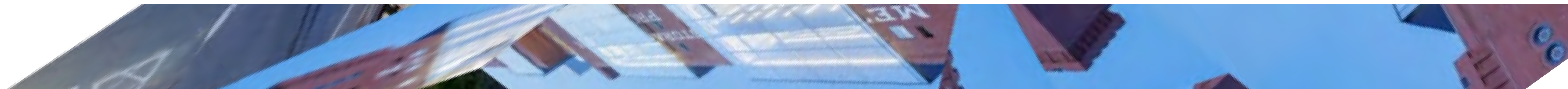
Beginning in 1894 with a design by Frederic Pope, and expanding through four additional sections by Peabody & Stearns, it reached its five-part form in 1911. By 1923, the storefront addition completed the 500-foot-long brick fortress with walls two feet thick and 1,500 storage units.

Its fortress-like exterior advertised the building as "FIRE PROOF," visible from across the river in Boston's Back Bay.

MIT acquired the property in 1962, while the Metropolitan Storage Warehouse Company continued to operate there. The MET, however, was never simply a place of storage. In fact, the building knew its share of occasional human occupation

over the 20th century, including a sandwich shop, music hobbyists, and fashionistas with ample clothing collections. It also housed workshops, repair spaces, and forms of hacking, making, and occupancy that resonated unexpectedly with the work of SA+P.

As its storage function came to an end in 2015, a new question emerged: how could a building designed for objects rather than people be inhabited anew? In 2017, MIT began planning for its adaptive reuse in consultation with the Cambridge Historical Commission, and in 2018, Diller Scofidio + Renfro (DS+R) was selected to lead the building's transformation as the future home of SA+P.



Carving out the new

Transforming the MET from within

How do you turn a building made for pianos, furniture, jewelry, furs, and even cars, into one made for people?

Drawing inspiration from the work of artist Gordon Matta-Clark, DS+R approached the warehouse not as a fixed artifact, but as a structure that could be opened, examined, and transformed. This choice to transform an existing, historic structure rather than build anew speaks to the school's vision for architecture and the built environment. Incisions and large carved-out voids open the building, bringing new forms of occupation into its interior.



While the historic south side is largely preserved, new openings intersect with the warehouse's original narrow windows, making the meeting of old and new visible in the façade itself. Along the north, substantial sections of brick are replaced with glass, bringing daylight into large, double-height studio spaces that span the building. Around them, the more cellular structure of the former storage rooms is retained and adapted for smaller teaching, research, and meeting spaces.

These interventions are deliberately left legible. Where floors, walls, and masonry have been cut, the exposed edges reveal cross-sections through the building's construction and make the meeting of old and new visible. Rather than smoothing over the transformation, the architecture allows traces of the past to remain.

The MET is also the first building on MIT's campus to undergo a transition toward large-scale electrification, using electric heat pumps as its main heating source. An innovative heat-recovery system captures heat rejected from the campus cooling system and uses electric heat pumps to generate heat for the building.

The MET is a living opportunity for students to learn the value of preservation and adaptive reuse, and to interrogate the future of the discipline. Students can see how the original warehouse was constructed, where it has been altered, and how an existing structure can accommodate an entirely different use.

“The building itself can be a teaching tool. There’s a kind of conversation between a contemporary strategy and the historical building. The traces are all there; they’re all revealed.”

Liz Diller, Partner, Diller Scofidio + Renfro



Things to notice



Inside

✦ *The columns*

Some of the building's original steel columns were encased in brick for fire protection. Today, some remain wrapped in their brick enclosures while others have been exposed, making different layers of the structure visible.

✦ *The cuts*

Look for places where floors, walls, and masonry have been cut away. The architects left many of these edges exposed, revealing both the construction of the original warehouse and the interventions that transformed it. Built in five stages between 1894 and 1911, the warehouse also reveals changes in construction over time, including in the engineering of its brick arches. No two cuts look quite the same.

✦ *The old storage rooms*

What did people keep here? Almost anything. Early advertisements offered storage for furniture, paintings, bronzes, statues, mirrors, books, trunks, pianos, carriages, business records, furs, and tapestries. Over the years, MIT students also stored their belongings here, including during summer breaks. Many of the MET's more than 1,500 individual storage rooms have since been adapted for new uses.

Outside

✦ *The fortress*

Look up at the square brick tower, narrow windows, and crenellated cornices along the roofline. The warehouse was designed to look secure as well as to be secure, giving the massive brick building the appearance of a medieval fortress.

✦ *The railroad*

The tracks alongside the MET are older than the warehouse itself. The Grand Junction Railroad opened in 1855 and helped make this part of Cambridge an industrial district. Loading bays once allowed goods to move directly between railcars and storage rooms. The line remains active today, including for occasional movements of MBTA and Amtrak trains.

✦ *The lettering*

The building was designed to advertise itself. Its enormous painted lettering could be read across the Charles River from Boston's Back Bay, announcing both the Metropolitan Storage Warehouse and its most important promise: "FIRE PROOF." More than a sign, the building itself became a billboard for the company.



The MIT School of Architecture and Planning

At the MET and across campus

SA+P brings together architecture, planning, design, media, and the study of the built environment at MIT. Working across buildings and cities, technologies and cultures, we explore how people shape the world — and how the world shapes us.

At the MET (W41), students, faculty, and staff from the Department of Architecture, the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP), the Norman B. Leventhal Center for Advanced Urbanism (LCAU), and the MIT Morningside Academy for Design (MAD) work in close proximity. The building also houses the MET Commons, SA+P's public interface for exhibitions and public programs.

“It’s a perfect expression of the historical importance of architecture at MIT and of the creative promise of this new hub”

Sally Kornbluth, President, MIT

SA+P extends across MIT's campus. The MIT Media Lab (E14), the Art, Culture, and Technology program (E15), and the Center for Real Estate (Building 9) connect the school to a wider network of research, teaching, and creative practice.

SA+P faculty and students work with colleagues across the Institute on interdisciplinary research in fields from AI to engineering to design to art and the social sciences. Many faculty hold dual appointments beyond SA+P.

The MET Commons

Where the school meets the public

The MET Commons brings exhibitions, lectures, events, and other public programs into the heart of the building.

Through its galleries and gathering spaces, the Commons offers a window into the ideas and work taking shape across the school and creates opportunities for students, faculty, practitioners, and the public to meet and exchange ideas.

The interdisciplinary focus of Commons programming allows for the presentation of expansive new approaches and creative output. For current exhibitions, events, and programs, visit **sap.mit.edu**.



MET Warehouse timeline



MIT Museum



MIT Museum



MIT Museum



Eric Fletcher



Iwan Baan

1894

Construction begins. Frederic Pope designs the first section of the Metropolitan Storage Warehouse.

**1896
–1911**

The warehouse expands. Four additions by Peabody & Stearns create the five-part complex seen today.

1923

The building as we know it is completed. A one-story storefront is added along Massachusetts Avenue.

1962

MIT acquires the property. The Metropolitan Storage Warehouse Company remains in operation.

2015

Storage comes to an end. Warehouse operations conclude as MIT considers new uses.

2018

DS+R is awarded the project. Diller Scofidio + Renfro is selected through a competitive process to lead the transformation of the warehouse.

2026

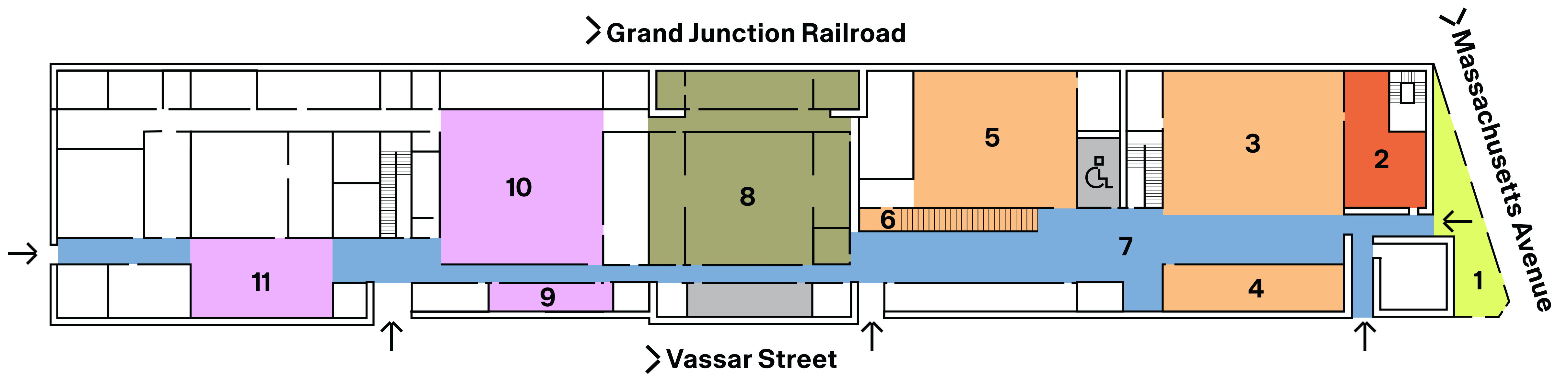
The MET opens a new chapter. The former storage warehouse becomes the new home of the MIT School of Architecture and Planning.



Iwan Baan

Public and exhibition spaces at the MET

- 1 Loewenberg (1956) Portico
- 2 Café+ by PAGU
- 3 Alan J. Dworsky (1957) Lobby
- 4 Sidara Gallery
- 5 Sidara Auditorium
- 6 Mark Gorenberg (1976) and Cathrin Stickney Staircase
- 7 Open Galleries
- 8 Bethany and Robert B. Millard Arena
- 9 MIT-LUMA Lab
- 10 Morningside Academy for Design Classroom
- 11 Morningside Academy for Design Lobby
- Bathrooms



Address

134 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Building size

195,000 gross sq. ft.

Public hours

Monday–Friday, 7am–7pm

Café+

Monday–Friday, 8am–3pm

Current program

For current exhibitions, events, lectures, and public programs, visit sap.mit.edu.

Accessibility

The MET is wheelchair accessible. A step-free entrance is located on Massachusetts Avenue, with elevators providing access to all floors. Accessible restrooms are available near the building lobby.

For accessibility questions or to request an accommodation for an SA+P event, contact sap-info@mit.edu.

Contact

sap.mit.edu
sap-info@mit.edu

sap

School of
Architecture
and Planning

MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology
School of Architecture and Planning
134 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139, USA

