



Super solution

When a Queensland orthodontist was looking at prospective properties, he never thought that an old tyre factory would become the practice of his dreams.

When it comes to dentistry, an eye for detail is a necessity. Brisbane orthodontist Dr Michael Whyte used this skill when he spotted a dilapidated commercial building on the outskirts of the city precinct. He could visualise this old building as his new flagship practice. Originally built in the 1940s, the 704-square-metre building in the Brisbane suburb of Red Hill had been used by various businesses over the years, including a tyre factory, car dealership, sports training venue, gymnasium and party shop. “It had the look of a factory in Eastern Europe during the

1950s,” says Dr Whyte, laughing.

The property’s eclecticism didn’t deter the orthodontist, who was already running several practices, including Coorparoo, Thornlands, Ashgrove and Central Queensland. “I’d been looking for two years to find the right property to relocate our Ashgrove practice as we had outgrown it,” he recalls. “After many failed attempts, including getting knocked back by councils, I could see this property would work, although it was probably a bit larger than I needed.”

Despite this trepidation, he was confident after getting guidance by leaders in the field—commercial manager Bob Brown of Eulan Brown, architect Mark Floate of Floate Architecture, and BOQ Specialist consultant Michael Foley. From the get-go, Brown had been the man on the ground, sourcing potential properties as well as managing Dr Whyte’s other practices. When he first viewed the Red Hill property, he was attracted to the location due to its high visibility, plus suitable off-street parking. However, just like

Dr Whyte, he could see that the building was “probably a bigger project than we originally anticipated”.

After crunching the numbers, Dr Whyte and Brown turned to BOQ Specialist consultant Michael Foley, with the idea of buying this property via Dr Whyte’s self-managed super fund (SMSF) as holding commercial property was within the SMSF’s investment strategy. “Besides an SMSF property loan, a lot of practice-specific fit-out work and overall refurbishment of remaining tenancies was required,” says Michael, whose solution was to borrow a fit-out loan outside the super route. “A super fund itself can’t borrow to improve, change or expand a property, so initially we could only lend in super to acquire the original asset.

“All these loan facilities are fairly common now at BOQ Specialist, but considering the overall project size and value required outside the fund, we had to be very flexible in the way we looked at the funding for the conversion and renovation,” explains Michael. “Our team’s ability to understand the client and their business was the most important piece in the proposal. This allowed us to provide the funding to invest in the building when it’s essentially unsecured.”

With finance under control, Dr Whyte and Brown then turned to architect Mark Floate to convert the run-down tyre factory into a sleek, high-tech orthodontic practice within a year. This involved complex structural work because the property was divided into front and back sections. The refurbishment also had to correct drainage problems, repair the failing blockwork walls at the rear, and remove asbestos from the lintels. “We essentially re-connected the two old buildings by reinvigorating the walkway, which is now part of our waiting room,” explains Dr Whyte. “It was a real vision by the architect.”

The refurbishment took nearly a year, and was finished off with stylish fit-outs designed by Floate Architecture and Premis Solutions in late 2014. As Dr Whyte was aware, the street presence was key in attracting passerby traffic. High-end finishes and glass bricks add a contemporary edge to the industrial space.

For Dr Whyte, it would have been a struggle overseeing this build as well as running his branch practices, but working with Brown made it all possible. “Bob insulated me from a lot of difficult issues. He was sorting out the construction and fit-out issues behind the scenes. Meanwhile, Michael also kept the stress down so we could easily manage the repayments and other financial issues,” says the orthodontist who has been running his Brisbane practices for the past seven years now.

While all parties can’t resist mentioning the enormity of the building, has the space been used efficiently? It’s a definite ‘yes’ from all three. As well as running Whyte Orthodontics with two consulting/treatment rooms and a three-chair treatment area, the property includes five other tenancies. However, unlike the olden days, there’s no eclectic garage/party shop/gym complex. Each business has been finely vetted. “We are trying to attract traffic that’s appropriate for orthodontists,” explains Brown, who’s first sign-up was the Brisbane Brass & Woodwind retailer. “There are a lot of parents coming here to pick up, buy or repair instruments for their kids, so that generates an associated knowledge of where we are located.”

Whyte Orthodontics has been running at its new location since October 2014. “It was a major production but having Michael on board meant I still had time to keep my practices running during one of the most difficult times of my life,” says Dr Whyte. □

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DR MICHAEL WHYTE



Michael Foley

BEST PRACTICE

When Dr Whyte was keen to buy a new property through his self-managed super fund (SMSF), BOQ Specialist consultant Michael Foley was who he turned to.

“Dr Whyte wasn’t simply buying a standard suite that fits his needs alone,” he says. Since the property required extensive refurbishment of the practice and the five other tenancies, plus fit-out and equipment installation, it was a complex transaction. While it was possible for the property to be owned by an SMSF, another loan was needed for unsecured fit-out and equipment costs.

“This set-up was sophisticated and some lenders may have viewed this as a negative,” says Michael. “Now that it’s up and running, I think it’s worked out really well. I was really struggling with the concept of the property in the early stages but when I saw the concept from the architect, I knew it had real merit. In fact, it’s an exceptional property, and I’m sure Dr Whyte has achieved everything he wanted.” □

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