

# The Lance Armstrong Foundation

The Cyclist's LEED-Certified Nonprofit in Austin, Texas, Focuses on Living Strong  
Architecture by Lake/Flato Architects/Interior Design by The Bommarito Group/Text by Nancy Collins



Lance Armstrong worked closely with Lake/Flato Architects on new “green” headquarters for his foundation in Austin, Texas, which supports those affected by cancer.



TOP AND ABOVE: The architects rehabilitated a former warehouse, opening up the space to emphasize health and wellness. The garden is by Ten Eyck Landscape Architects.

LIKE THE MAN BEHIND IT, THE LANCE Armstrong Cancer Foundation speaks to the realization of impossible victories. After years of occupying “generic office space” in Austin, Texas, the seven-time Tour de France winner (who is himself a cancer survivor) decided that the team that has raised nearly \$350 million deserved headquarters as dynamic as their “Live Strong” ethos. And he knew exactly what he wanted, after visiting New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, whose office, he says, “was set up like a stock trading pit, with his desk in the middle—no walls, glass, privacy. Everybody was equal.”

Duly inspired, Armstrong and foundation president Doug Ulman took their idea to Ted Flato and Robert Harris at San Antonio-based Lake/Flato Architects. “In their previous space, they’d been cooped up in little offices, which didn’t encourage collaboration,” explains Flato. “Lance wanted the new headquarters to reflect his people and their culture. It was important that the space have a youthfulness and energy.” Adds Harris, “He was adamant that the space have an egalitarian commonality where no one, including him, would have a private office.”

*continued on page 44*

AFTER PHOTOGRAPHY: CASEY DUNN PHOTOGRAPHY; BEFORE PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY LAKE/FLATO ARCHITECTS, INC. PORTRAIT: ROBERT RECK



“Lance wanted the new headquarters to reflect his people. It was important that the space have a youthfulness and energy.”



*continued from page 40*

Mandate in hand, the architects flipped into high gear on the reinvention of a 30,000-square-foot former warehouse in East Austin—“a part of town,” says Harris, “that hadn’t seen much love.” And where, says Armstrong, “we weren’t expected to go. But the area’s changing, and I think we played a small part. When we announced

that our space was available to any Austin nonprofits for their activities, we figured no one would take us up on it. But it’s always full.”

“Though Lance is sharp, determined and focused on achieving his goals,” says Harris, “he’s equally interested in the unique personality of the place and people he’s working with.” To find out firsthand,

he put the question to his 80-strong staff. “What do you want us to do?” he asked. One of the main requests was for natural light, which proved to be a conundrum for the architects, who were working with a building that had few windows. They solved the problem by designing a sawtooth roof with north-facing clerestory

*continued on page 46*

**ABOVE LEFT AND ABOVE RIGHT:** North-facing windows in the sawtooth roof permit natural light to flood the spaces, which offer flexible solutions for both casual and formal meetings.

**RIGHT:** The loading dock is now a communal gathering place that utilizes wood salvaged from the original building. Throughout, the furniture was designed by the Bommarito Group.



continued from page 44

story windows to produce a more diffused light. "Taking off that big wooden roof was an opportunity for us to bring in the outdoors," says Flato. Notes Harris, "At a desk during the day, there's enough light to work. You never need a lamp." Still, compact task lighting is there if needed.

The expansive, loftlike floor space, meanwhile, is as uplifting, free-flowing and unlimited as the thinking it seeks to inspire. "To enable the staff to collaborate and connect, we designed a 'main street' that runs through the building," says Flato. "The solid elements form 'neighborhoods' so that each of the various departments has its own space and place."

Privacy can still be had—in a closed-off conference room as well as eight strategically placed "crates" made out of lumber salvaged from the roof. When that ran out, they used old wood from the bleachers at Gilley's, the bull-riding bar made

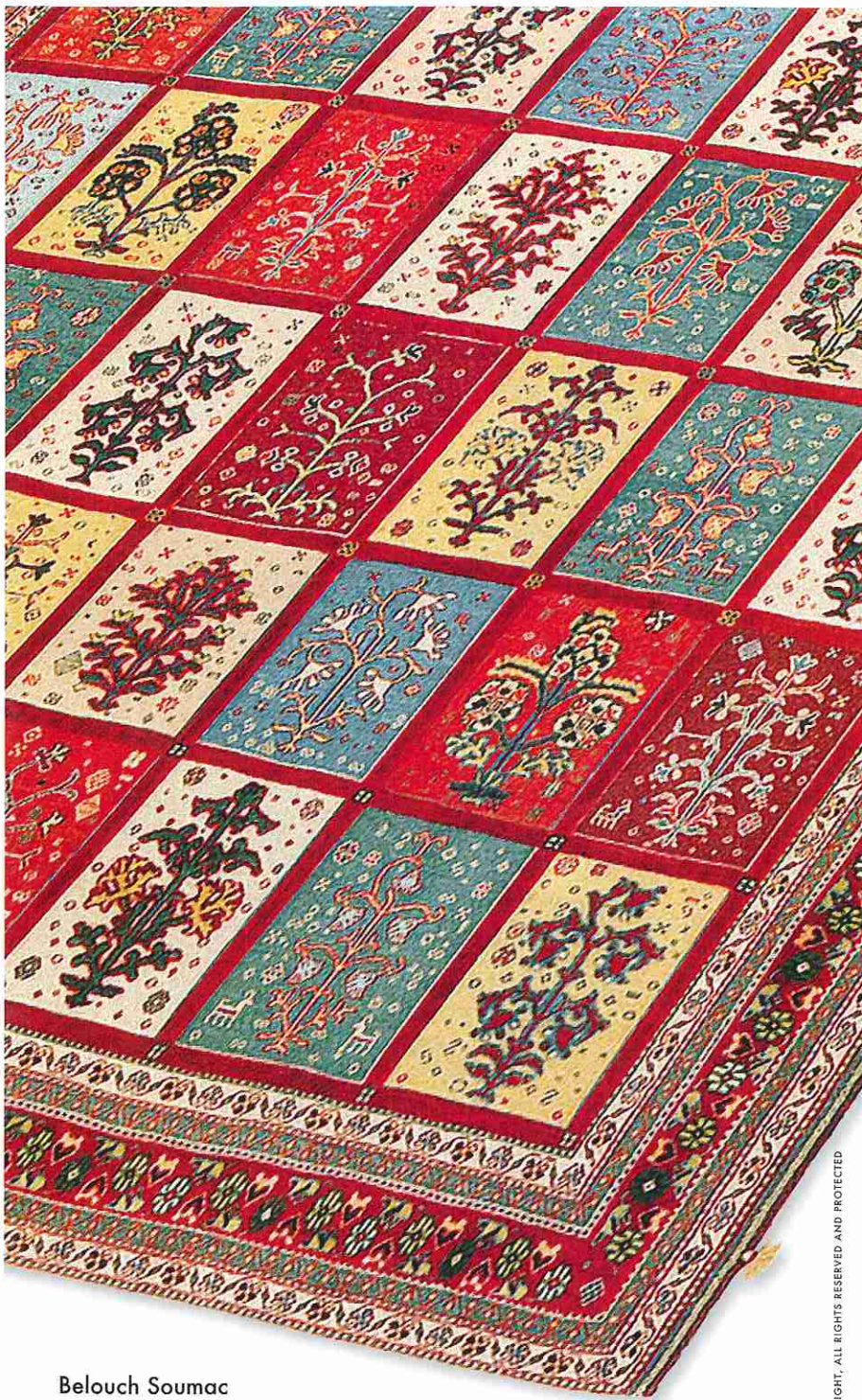
The loftlike floor space is as uplifting, free-flowing and unlimited as the thinking it seeks to inspire.

famous in *Urban Cowboy*. "The boxes with doors can be fully enclosed," says Armstrong, "while those with open-slat sides create a semi-enclosed conversation setup. Anyone walking by can hear what's going on and pitch in."

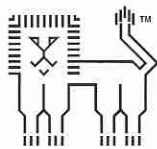
And the effect on the foundation's esprit de corps? "Great, because they had input," says Armstrong, who points out that there's also a gym, locker room and showers so that the staff can commute to work by bike. "Most importantly, however, this building—like the phrase 'Live Strong' and the color yellow—is now part of something more intangible, a place where you can talk to someone and say, 'Finally, I feel that thing called... hope.'"

He pauses. "I love this space, but, hopefully, we'll one day be out of business. Until then, we'll keep working hard toward the time when nobody needs us anymore." □

For more information, go to [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org).



Belouch Soumac  
9' x 12'



**ZOLLANVARI**

201.330.3344

TRIBAL RUGS FROM SOUTHERN PERSIA