



## Making an Entrance

### ENERGY-SAVING WINDOWS AND DOORS

usually aren't the most newsworthy updates in a historic preservation, but two such solutions completed as part of the critical 10-year preservation of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City a couple of years ago warrant careful review for their elegant simplicity.

Asked to find an energy-efficient way to keep the cathedral's 9,000-pound bronze doors open during visiting hours, **Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects (MBB)**, the firm leading its preservation, designed transparent glass insertions to enable the practice without obstructing the church's inspiring architecture. The MBB team understood that the doors are left open because "the entrance is symbolic of core congregation values of openness, welcome, and a sense of refuge," explains MBB partner Jeffrey Murphy. Still, leaving them ajar had previously led to an expensive loss of conditioned air and energy. The solution: MBB worked with **Silman and Eckersley O'Callaghan Engineers** and glass manufacturer **Seele**, to devise massive transparent glass pocket doors that slide open and closed using **Vitrocsa's Invisible Wall**

System. Now, at the push of a button, the panels slide within floor channels and vanish into the new interior wall MBB built out to house them. With the original bronze doors open, the clear-glazed entry looks virtually unobstructed.

Just like the impressive bronze doors, the cathedral's lofty ceilings are meant to inspire worshippers and need to remain visible. But with a high volume of visitors, they're also less than ideal for quiet worship. So in the cathedral's Lady Chapel where regular devotions are held, the architects employed glazing again—this time, using it to control noise.

MBB conceived an 880-square-foot, 48-foot-tall glass wall that reaches the Lady Chapel's arch to acoustically isolate the space. **CRL Jackson** 900 doors with ultra-slim rails and custom hardware grant entry into the chapel and close as needed without hindering sightlines. "The archdiocese recognized that an all-glass scheme would achieve their goals for the chapel while being deferential to the cathedral's architecture," says Murphy. "As you approach the chapel the transparency makes it appear as if there's no wall at all."—*Sheila Kim*



### GLASS ACTS

Glass sliders enable St. Patrick's bronze entry doors to open (top left and right) without wasting energy. A floor-to-vaulted ceiling glass wall (above) acoustically seals off the Lady Chapel.