McMenamins Elks Temple
Tacoma’s seven-story Elks Lodge was built in 1916 when fraternal organizations were integral to the community. Architect Edward Frere Champney made his reputation as lead designer of Seattle’s 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition. His flair for the dramatic is expressed in the lodge and its adjacent “Spanish Steps” which link Commerce Street and South Broadway. The building’s reinforced concrete construction was modern for its time but its facade is Neo-Classical in design.
The Elks building sat empty and deteriorating for decades. Its owner in the early 2000s wanted to demolish the building, however the City of Tacoma prevailed in court and the immediate demolition threat ended. Subsequently the building remained empty, continuing to deteriorate. In October 2009, McMenamins purchased the building with plans to rehabilitate it.
McMenamins is a family-owned chain of brewpubs, breweries, music venues, historic hotels, and theater pubs in Oregon and Washington. Many of their locations are in rehabilitated historical properties and they are known in the region for their unique style. Construction on the Elks, originally slated to begin in spring 2012, began in earnest in 2017.
The building utilized federal historic rehabilitation tax credits as well as Washington State’s Special Tax Valuation Program. The reimagined building includes 45 guest rooms, multiple bars and restaurants (including al fresco dining on Tacoma’s iconic Spanish Steps), a music and events venue, and much more.
The total project cost clocked in at $34,558,000. With McMenamins’ eye toward weaving together art, local history, and their signature interior style, the Elks Temple has fast become a central community gathering place.