

# Nip 'n Tuck

## COSMETIC SURGERY

*for older buildings*



Edward J. Goodwin, AIA

**B**UILDINGS DON'T ALWAYS AGE gracefully. Outdated technology, tired-looking facades and dark lobbies can make properties much harder to lease.

You're a large developer who has a vision--a centrally located office park with promise. Yet, how to update it? With careful planning and thoughtful design, architectural "surgery" changes this complex into Class "A" office space, thus bringing an excellent return on owner investment.

This building trend has come into its own in recent years. New technologies, products, and techniques are meeting the challenges presented by our nation's aging structures. Some have asbestos issues; others are simply deteriorating. Rather than watch them decline, savvy businesses are creating marketing magic by purchasing and then turning such properties around into fast-tracked successes.

One such project is the Valley Forge Office Center. The developer, Keystone Property Group (KPG) is known for its ability to see and create opportunity through redevelopment, development, financing, leasing, and property and asset management. According to Gregory R. Hansen, CCIM, Senior Vice President of Marketing & Development at KPG, "We have partnered with Thomas E. Hall &

Associates on many of our projects and have been pleased with their creative architectural solutions to the challenges presented. Keystone 'Vision for Value' drives our success. We apply that vision in recognizing and pursuing opportunity, whether redeveloping underperforming assets or developing new buildings, and create winning ventures that satisfy tenants and reward investors."

There are six buildings in the complex, all constructed in the 1960's-1970's. Details about the reskinned complex describe some of the structures as upgraded mid-rise, Class A buildings located in the most accessible area in King of Prussia, with direct access to Rt. 202, providing easy access to I-76, I-476, and the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

As part of the reskinning effort of these buildings, 480 Swedesford Road was stripped back to its "bare bones," which included removing the 1960's-era overhang. Then, a new cost-effective and thermally efficient E.I.F.S. exterior skin was installed, along with new energy-efficient windows and doors.

When buildings are occupied, the walls must be removed and the curtain wall replaced one bay at a time. Then, each trade erects the new building envelope. This process allows reskinning of a building to go much faster. An interior, protective partition is also built during the work.

# VALLEY FORGE OFFICE CENTER

BEFORE photo of 480 Swedesford Rd.

©Photo by Thomas E. Hall, AIA



BEFORE photo of 500 Swedesford Rd.

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AFTER photo

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Size: 50,000 sq. ft.



AFTER photo

©Photo by Thomas E. Hall, AIA

Size: 61,000 sq. ft.

This method is more cost-effective, and there are usually no environmental issues.

Now two separate buildings, 656 and 676 Swedesford Rd., will be connected with an atrium and enclosed with glass curtain wall. Challenges to achieve this design involved different floor elevations and building heights and were resolved using transition ramps and balconies. In addition, the new “skin” will be thicker than the old one. The firm had to find creative, effective ways to support the new wall while keeping the buildings functional, since they could not add to the existing foundations. Additional square footage will be added, along with a three-story atrium and glass elevators. When completely renovated, this 146,000-square-foot building will become the “flagship” of the Valley Forge Office Center.

Working closely with the project manager, Shields Construction Company, Inc. the firm found practical solutions to challenges. For example, even though an entrance ramp for busy Route 202 physi-

cally dissects the complex, “connecting” features, such as consistent light fixtures, will be added to help create a campus-like feel throughout. Using fast-track schedul-

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and erect the  
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ing on the project has allowed the firm to maximize efficiency and productivity. Thomas E. Hall & Associates is also doing interior design work on several of the buildings to achieve a completely

new look. According to Director of Interior Design, Cory Hunnicut, AIA, “The buildings on the campus will have their own identities, yet possess sympathetic characteristics and levels of quality. The 656/676 connecting atrium will be treated conceptually as an exterior plaza enclosed with three stories of glass that will extend into the sidewalls and then wrap back into separate voids carved into each wing. Bringing [a] building’s ‘skin’ into the main interior space will strengthen the identity of the buildings and that of their tenants. The soaring atrium features a stair and pool in the center of the space with bridges between each structure.”■

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