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This issue of STO Insights highlights some of the building repositioning projects the Structure Tone organization has delivered, whether the work involved transforming a former data center into a state-of-the-art outpatient medical building (p.12), modernizing an historic retail center into a mixed-use attraction (p.30) or building a new 17-story building atop an existing former factory (p.22). We also spoke with four of the country’s leading developers to get their perspectives on building repositioning as a strategy, and where they see the market headed next (p.10).

In this issue, we are also extremely proud to spotlight the newest member of the STO family: Ajax Building Corporation. With multiple offices in Florida and Georgia, Ajax manages a mix of both ground-up and interior construction projects across a diverse range of markets, from K–12 and higher education, to city, county and state government, to healthcare and historic restorations. Please read more about their impressive expertise and services on page 16.

Competition for space is fierce in cities across the globe. With little room (or time) to build new, creating modern, functional spaces out of existing buildings is critical. From gut renovations to core and shell reconstruction—and everything in between—building repositioning has become one of the most efficient and effective ways for owners to make the most of their assets.
"It was a bit of a sketchy area and the building we were considering looked like it hadn’t had any investment for decades," says John Brown, Govan Brown senior partner. "When we actually bought it, at one point I thought, ‘What did we just do?!’ But once we saw the potential of the building, it all started to make sense."

Since then, Govan Brown completely transformed the building from a former metal processing plant into a modern, inspiring, collaborative workplace, and the surrounding neighborhood has become, arguably, the “hippest” part of town.

BUILDING A BRAND
The idea to move came after years of operating in the same, small office space. By 2012, staff numbers had skyrocketed and the space had become incredibly cramped. What’s more, the office simply wasn’t up to the standards of a productive work environment.

“There were no meeting spaces, no café areas, no brand,” says Brown. “There was nothing to make us stand out as an interiors business.”

The new building essentially provided Govan Brown with a blank slate. The industrial building’s high ceilings lent themselves to an open-plan layout, but the team needed to reinforce a good deal of the structural infrastructure and reconstruct the building’s MEP systems before the true reconfiguration could begin.

In addition, there were, of course, a lot of unknowns—plus the full workload of their clients’ projects to manage. The key, says senior partner Jon Taylor, was to plan ahead. They assigned a dedicated project team to manage the Govan Brown HQ project so that the rest of their staff could remain focused on their client projects. They also factored in plenty of time for the surprises they knew would arise.

Once a heavily industrial area, the Junction neighborhood in Toronto has steadily transformed over the years into a sought-after place to live and work. When Govan Brown decided to relocate its headquarters to the Junction, however, the success of that revitalization had not yet been realized.

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD
So the project team dug in, working with architect Giannone Petricone Associates to create a 42,000sf collaborative, productive workplace, including open-concept work stations, a board room and other meeting areas, a café and even a carpenter’s shop where employees can work on innovative ideas.

The office is also well stocked with places for play—from an in-house gym and clubhouse complete with games like pool and foosball to a roof deck lounge with a stone fireplace and BBQ facilities. All of these features are surrounded by the exposed wood and brick reminders of the building’s history, blended with more modern finishes and furniture.

After a few years in the new space, the Govan Brown team can attest that the office has become a key factor in employee recruitment and retention and a priceless showpiece for demonstrating Govan Brown’s capabilities as an interior contractor—and what you can do with an extremely challenging site.

“We approach clients with a higher sense of empathy now,” says Taylor. “Having lived and breathed the process, it helped us better understand what goes into repositioning a building and made us better construction managers. We’re still very, very proud of it.”

The way you plan for the unknown is to accept that there will be some,” says Taylor. “The experience really was a testament to good construction management.”

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The building, which was built in 2000, had excellent bones, Spear Street knew they needed to modernize some elements to attract new tenants. That meant identifying the assets the building already had, what kind of tenants they wanted to attract and what upgrades would help them meet their goals. With the hopes of drawing interest from large, established companies—from financial corporations to tech firms—Spear Street decided to target the area that gives everyone their first impression: the lobby.

MODERNIZE AND ACTIVATE

The team brought in Studios Architecture and Structure Tone to transform the existing lobby into the kind of modern, dynamic space that tenants would be drawn to.

“With such a large floor plate and nearly five stories, it’s definitely going to be a fitting space,” says Joseph Durando, Structure Tone project manager. “Lots of green marble, brass and gold, woodwork...it was very nice but a bit old-fashioned.”

To modernize the space, the project team essentially updated everything the eye can see, from the flooring and wall finishes, to the furniture, to the organization of the space itself. The floors were redesigned with poured epoxy-based concrete, while the walls, ceilings and elevators were updated with intricate moulting and other millwork. All of this work was happening concurrently, making organization and communication central to the work plan.

“All the trades were working at the same time,” says Vincent Confreda, Structure Tone area manager. “For the floor, we had to closely manage when we do the concrete pours and where we stop so you can’t see any change in color between sections. The elevators were being modernized at the same time, too, so it was definitely tricky to coordinate all the moving parts.”

SUPPORTING THE ARTS

Perhaps the biggest challenge—and the most striking feature—of the project was the custom feature-wall. Created by Ferra Designs, the wall was designed to depict the Northern Lights in grayscale, immediately drawing people’s attention and creating a distinctive talking point. The wall features a series of aluminum panels with strategically sized and placed holes and stains to achieve the artistic effect. Accordingly, the panels themselves had to be installed meticulously.

Above A

The project activated the formerly cavernous lobby with inviting seating and features. While the building, which was built in 2000, had excellent bones, Spear Street knew they needed to modernize some elements to attract new tenants. That meant identifying the assets the building already had, what kind of tenants they wanted to attract and what upgrades would help them meet their goals. With the hopes of drawing interest from large, established companies—from financial corporations to tech firms—Spear Street decided to target the area that gives everyone their first impression: the lobby.

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The metal feature wall was custom designed to represent the Northern Lights.

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With over 50,000lbs of aluminum across the panels, structural stability was critical. The original design had transferred the structural load of the panels to the lobby floor; however, as construction began, the project team discovered the floor load was already near maximum capacity. The team went back to the drawing board to redesign the substructure, shifting the load instead to the wall substructure with additional steel supports. Every piece of steel and aluminum was not only fabricated with pains-taking accuracy, but also marked with a unique identification number so it was clear where and how it should be installed.

“The team at Ferra are true artists, so the fabrication process took some time,” says Durando. “We worked very closely with them to keep up to speed on every stage and have everything ready for installation.”

CREATING COMMUNITY

The award-winning effort at 70 Hudson Street did the trick—the building is nearly completely leased. Spear Street is now working on upgrades to its sister building at 90 Hudson, including retail programming to generate foot traffic and create community around the two buildings.

It was a pleasure to collaborate so well with all the partners on this project,” says Confreda. “With such a great space and these beautiful views, this truly is an incredible place to go to work every day.”

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Built in the 1940s, Grayson Heights once housed Bank of America’s South Texan data center opera-
tions. However, when the bank relocated their data center almost a decade ago, the space was never filled. Hoping to restore the building’s purpose, the owners partnered with Structure Tone Southwest to transform the facility into a Class A office build-
ing that aligns with today’s modern standards.

PLANNING AHEAD
It was clear from the start that the building had a few inherent challenges. Originally a two-story structure, Grayson Heights was first expanded in the late 1950s. Then, in the 1970s, the former owners added an adjacent five-story tower. Considering these two major renovations were completed in different decades—each with its own distinct con-
struction methodology—the project team knew construction could get complicated. Preconstruction lasted a full six months, during which the team worked closely with the design team to transform the facility into a Class A office build-
ing that aligns with today’s modern standards. Filling that gap was a constant communication with the design team from day one.”

PROBLEM SOLVING
Despite this extensive preconstruction effort, there were obstacles the team couldn’t have antici-
patated. The design for the tenant spaces called for open floor plans with high, exposed ceilings. But when demolition began, they discovered un-
expected electrical services and plumbing behind several walls located in the center of the floors. Not to mention, asbestos was seemingly every-
where they turned—meaning construction was delayed until the area they were working in was asbestos-free. The toxic material was so prevalent in the 1940s structure, the team continued to find traces in the mastic and damp-proofing behind masonry even after the building was abated. “We were finding challenges every time we opened a wall,” Dmitrzak says. “We worked with the client to get as close to their vision as possible while sticking to the budget.”

Below the surface
Transforming the 18,000sf basement into leasable space posed another interesting challenge. Lacking two means of egress, the team installed an elevator and connecting stair on the two-
story side of the building to bring the basement up to code. Working with a structural engineer, they used massive steel supports to handle the concentric loading while cutting holes in the slab of the first and second floors, as well as the roof. Unfortunately, elevator work in the basement was not as smooth. When the team excavated for the elevator pit, there was far more groundwater than expected. First thinking the water was from an un-
characteristically rainy season, they soon discov-
ered there was an underground stream running directly below the building. To ensure flooding wouldn’t be an issue for future tenants, the team designed and installed a permanent pump system with floats to keep the water table from encroach-
ing on the building.

A TEAM EFFORT
Outside, Bank of America’s 10-lane motor bank was demolished, and the additional space was used to expand the existing parking lot for new tenants. The team also installed contemporary ribbon windows and, in some areas, stripped the beige paint off the façade to expose the original 1940s red brick. Throughout construction, the client occupied the fifth floor of the tower and was able to experience the project’s challenges firsthand. Their proximity made solving some of the project’s unexpected is-
issues much simpler.

Commercial Evolution: Reviving Grayson Heights
On any repositioning project, unforeseen challenges are par for the course. But when SA Quad Ventures and Stream Realty Partners decided to completely rebrand their nearly 80-year-old property on the outskirts of downtown San Antonio, Texas—a building with an already complicated construction history—adaptation was the name of the game.

When you’re repositioning a building, you have to marry the client’s vision with the existing building’s capabilities,” says Mark Jones, regional vice president of Structure Tone Southwest’s San Antonio operations. “Being practically on-site, Stream Realty got to see what that really looks like and we were able to work through the challenges together.”

Now finishing up the extended parking lot, the Southwest team has also begun working on the building’s interiors. In fact, they’re even fitting out new tenants. The

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ger at Structure Tone Southwest. “We were in constant communication with the design team from day one.”
The existing building stock has tremendous opportunity to be repositioned to meet tenants’ expectations for modern spaces and amenities. So what is the repositioning opportunity that could be daunting to another real estate company. We have a deep track record of ground-up development and repositioning. That higher degree of difficulty is a competitive advantage for us.

What are some of the biggest challenges of repositioning?

Farrell: The uncertainty of the existing conditions. In 100-year-old buildings, either the as-builts are unreliable or there are renovations that took place over the years, and those as-builts are unreliable. So it has a compounding effect that raises the degree of difficulty.

Pitchford: Programming changes that occur well beyond the early planning stages. Sometimes they’re tenant driven, sometimes they’re owner driven. Either way, our goal is to accommodate these requests without impacting the schedule. It’s critical that we have a dynamic and properly phased work schedule that considers the existing tenancy and logistics to avoid change orders that can add significant costs and time.

L&L: Getting projects through entitlements is a big challenge. Technology is also changing all the time. We simply assume we’ll have to maximize technology in every project. The hard part is when we’re planning a building that will be occupied three years from now—it could all change by then. It’s really hard to be at the front of it when the front keeps moving.

What is the market like right now for repositioning?

Farrell: We also think about where we can add value. If it’s complicated, if it’s large, it might be an opportunity that could be daunting to another real estate company. We have a deep track record of ground-up development and repositioning. That higher degree of difficulty is a competitive advantage for us.

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What is the market like right now for repositioning?

Farrell: The market is quite strong considering tenant demand in tandem with investor interest. Repositioning is a redevelopment opportunity where you can buy a cash-flowing asset that will remain cash-flowing while you’re creating value.

Pitchford: There’s a strong demand across many of our markets for a successfully repositioned older space. If it can look older and authentic, and yet have the feature comforts and amenities of modern, Class A office building, then that’s a winning formula.

Piccinich: There is an incredible market right now in NYC for redeveloped properties. Owners and tenants are ultimately attracted to buildings at a favorable cost basis that are close to public transportation, have large floor plates and a well-designed infrastructure, all of which provide the right ingredients for redevelopment.

Where do you see this trend headed next?

Pitchford: I think we’re at a tipping point with office densification. Many tenants are looking for a balance of private and open office floor plans, as well as multi-purpose meeting space. Converging will continue to evolve and there’s a growing interest in shared amenity spaces.

Pitchford: In markets where entitlements are difficult to obtain, usually a repositioned asset already has all those things. But we see that this trend of repositioning assets is here to stay and it’s just a matter of do you have the patience and wisdom to pick the deals that will be successful.

Tech tenants continue to grow, and many of them are more focused on existing buildings that have a true architectural identity. So you’re going to see a lot of those tenants gravitate toward these types of assets—they’ll be in more demand.

L&L: I wouldn’t even call this a trend. It’s well established. People want new features, not necessarily new buildings. We’ve also very focused on incorporating health and wellness into our buildings now. It’s certainly a focus for us going forward as we reposition assets.
Quality Care, Close to Home
In the last few years, Westchester County, New York, has become somewhat of a healthcare hub. With its proximity to Manhattan, the area offers suburban patients the convenience of local service with the caliber of care found in the large hospital networks in the city.

By 2016, the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) had taken notice and was expanding its Manhattan base into the suburbs. A former IBM complex in White Plains, New York offered just the right location—but it needed some major upgrades to become a premier outpatient center.

A BUILDING WITHIN A BUILDING
The building in question is a 50,000sf former data center within a 620,000sf complex. HSS and its design team from EwingCole reimagined the space to include modern staff offices, exam rooms, physical therapy space, a rehabilitation pool, sports performance and physical therapy services, a premier outpatient center.

The team gutted the interior and rebuilt it, including installing all new MEP services independent from those of the larger complex. The electrical switchgear had to be separated from the larger system, and new generators and a cooling tower were added to the roof to accommodate the extra power requirements of medical equipment.

SUPPORTING MODERN MEDICINE
With large medical equipment now part of the interior, the building also needed some structural adjustments. Most notably, it needed a structural system robust enough to support a state-of-the-art MRI machine—which weighs up to 8 tons.

The MRI also affected the project’s scheduling. The magnet inside an MRI needs to stay cool, so the MRI suite and its HVAC system had to be ready by the time the MRI arrived. And with a hard delivery date, there was little wiggle room in the schedule.

“It really came down to detailed preplanning,” says Dunn. “We worked from the top down by removing small sections at a time. We had to make some substantial enhancements to the building structure to receive and house an MRI machine above the ground floor,” says Dunn. “We added a large amount of high-strength steel to support the tremendous concentrated load.”

As the panels came down, the team rebuilt the façade with glass curtainwall to fill the interior with natural light. All of this work, however, was happening within one section of a larger, occupied campus—meaning the Pavarini team had to be especially vigilant when it came to safety and especially aware of the potential impacts of their work on those around them.

“We developed a noise and vibration mitigation plan for the site that included controlling noise with sound partitions and limiting vibration by separating the precast concrete structures from the main building structure before demolishing the precast,” says Dunn. “We also set up extensive signage and fencing around the perimeter of the site and developed an overall site logistics plan with the site owners. As the project progressed, we altered the plan to best accommodate the construction and the tenants.”

For the HSS Westchester project, which officially opened in October 2018, the team had to find a way to reuse the existing building. The panels spanned two floors, resting on the first, “The panels spanned two floors, resting on the first,” says Dunn. “We worked from the top down by removing the nonstructural infill first, then cutting through the structural portion. As we worked down, we folded each section down over the next to be removed.”

The new facility includes sports performance and physical therapy services. As those panels came down, the team rebuilt the façade with glass curtainwall to fill the interior with natural light. All of this work, however, was happening within one section of a larger, occupied campus—meaning the Pavarini team had to be especially vigilant when it came to safety and especially aware of the potential impacts of their work on those around them.

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VISION ACHIEVED
When the project was completed, HSS hosted a grand opening, and staff, doctors and patients have been flocking to the location ever since.

These incredible results, as the project team acknowledged, didn’t come without challenges. Just ask HSS CEO and president Louis Shapiro.

“It’s a beautiful campus, but to really do this project, you needed to have a vision,” he said. “Because this building that we’re in now was not pretty. It was concrete.”

With that vision achieved, HSS Westchester now allows Westchester County residents access to world-class care, right in their own community.

At HSS Westchester, everyone Azure Engineering Group
Architect:
EwingCole
M&E Engineer:
Kallen & Lemelson
Structural Engineer:
Disalvo Engineering Group
-sector:
Healthcare
Customer:
HSS Westchester
Completion:
October 2018
Objective:
To create a new building out of an old one extending into the building
To basically build a new building within an existing one
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People rave about what a beautiful facility it is,” says Patterson. “When we helped HSS move in, every office was full with doctors who want to work from this location.”
520 Madison Avenue

Perfectly positioned in the heart of Midtown, the famed Plaza District has long been one of Manhattan’s most sought-after commercial neighborhoods. But trendy Plaza District has long been one of Manhattan’s most

A VERTICAL VENTURE: 520 Madison Avenue

Built in the 1980s, 520 Madison offers premier office space in a prime location, but as part of a larger initiative to revamp a few of New York’s well-established properties, Tishman Speyer set out to create more commercial space at the top of the 43-story building. To make room for tenants on the 42nd and 43rd floors—plus a 2,200sq ft landscaped terrace—the mechanical-equipment room (MER) on the 43rd floor needed to be relocated to the roof and elevator access had to be extended to the top level. Tishman Speyer brought on the Structure Tone team to help lead the way, but before they could get to work, they needed a dynamic approach that could get the job done within Tishman Speyer’s tight timeframe.

SUPERIOR SCAFFOLDING

Rather than encase the entire building in scaffolding, the team decided to build a unique scaffolding system on the roof that extended slightly down the face of the building.

“It was like the superstructures usually done on bridges,” explains Michael Musci, Tishman Speyer senior director. “It allowed us to build on top of a building full of tenants without building into the structure.”

However, to safely build a scaffold of this size at 570ft off the ground, the team had to prepare for every process and possible complication.

Detailed design. Designing this complex concept took over 15 iterations of scaffolding drawings—each of which was reviewed by Structure Tone, the steel and scaffold contractor, and two engineering teams. The primary engineer monitored the loads this 60-foot framework would impose on the building, while the third-party engineer proofed the design.

Swift winds. To ensure the scaffold was designed for the correct windspeeds, the team embolded a firm that specializes in wind modeling and forecasting. The company built a scale model of the building, scaffold and every building within a 1,000ft radius. After testing the model in a wind tunnel, they concluded the design should be enhanced from the 110mph winds specified by New York City code to withstand winds of 130mph.

Hanging hazards. Demolishing the façade around the top floors meant the crew was breaking and removing thousand-pound slabs of granite with only the scaffold separating the huge stones from the street below. The team came up with a process to secure and test each slab, so they couldn’t slip before or during removal.

Unpredictable weather. Any rain, snow or winds exceeding 30mph meant all work on the scaffold came to a halt. The team analyzed two weather reports per day and prepared for weather events up to five days in advance. Before and during snowstorms, extra laborers came in to help shovel the scaffold and work areas on the roof. The roofers even used their butane torches to help melt the snow.

THROUGH THE ROOF

Getting materials and equipment to the job site also required some creative problem-solving. The only way to transport the necessary components to the roof was through an 8ft-deep freight elevator in the basement—meaning all elements had to come in at 7ft, 11in. Once on the top level, each piece was hooked onto a trolley beam, wheeled out of the freight car and lowered into place.

“The size and weight of the components were critical,” says Pennella. “Everything had to be brought in and erected by hand with a tremendous amount of care.”

That level of care extended to the mechanical equipment room migration as well. At 8,000lbs a piece, lifting the elevator motors to the 43rd floor in an occupied building required extensive research and coordination between the project team and building management. To move the equipment without disturbing tenants, the team cut a 10x10ft hole in the roof and built a temporary, waterproofed structure for the elevator to descend and then built a temporary, waterproofed structure from the scaffolding over it. Then, they installed a chain fall host and gently lifted the equipment from the 43rd floor to its new location on the roof.

We tried to plan for everything,” says Ron Pennella, Structure Tone project manager. “So, when we ran into challenges along the way, we were able to stay on schedule.”

Through the roof and elevator, the team had to mop up hundreds of liters of water per day, but as the roofers moved the last block, the crew fell in line and kicked back with a true sense of accomplishment.

“Though the migration went smoothly, punching a hole in the roof triggered a series of unforeseen air pressure-related issues known as the stack effect. Fairly common in high-rises, the stack effect refers to the difference in outdoor and indoor air pressure that can cause a building to act like a chimney—all the heat rises to the top in the winter and vice versa in the summer. In addition to affecting temperature regulation, the stack effect can disrupt the way elevator operators take the ride. Thankfully, there was a simple solution: windows! The team combined off areas with temporary walls and opened the windows on select floors to relieve the pressure.

MEANT TO BE

Matching the building’s new façade to the original was a concern from day one. The stone used for 520 Madison’s façade was sourced from an open-pit quarry that shut down years ago. Determined to find a match, the team connected with the quarry owners in South Dakota, who found stones that had been quarried 37 years ago. Those slabs were shipped to Canada to be cut and finished, and then to New York to see if they’d match the existing façade. As it turned out, those blocks were part of the batch quarried for 520 Madison’s original exterior in 1981—Tishman Speyer’s very first development.

Ultimately, thanks to an amazing team effort, this phase of 520 Madison’s delivery was three months early, within budget and without a safety incident. “From the inception of the bid, Structure Tone had the most dynamic approach and the right team to tackle a project like this,” says Musci. “I don’t think there are many other firms in the city who could have done what they did.”
INTRODUCING

Ajax

Last fall, the Structure Tone organization welcomed a new member of the family: Ajax Building Corporation. With over 200 employees across the US Southeast, in its over 60 years in operation, Ajax has become one of the fastest-growing construction companies in the region.

Founded: 1958 in Tallahassee, FL by JB “Block” Smith
Offices: Florida, Georgia and South Carolina
Services: CM at Risk, Design-Build, Agency Construction Management, Program Management, Virtual Construction, Public-Private Partnerships, Sustainable Construction

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

WILLIAM P. BYRNE
President

JAY SMITH
Vice President

DEREK GAMBLE
Vice President of Operations

BRIAN DESOTELL
Chief Financial Officer

MARC REEVES
Director of Risk Management

PAM FISHER
Director of Human Resources

JUDD WEST
Director of Preconstruction Services

JOE TUCKER
Director of Field Operations

Learn more about Ajax at www.ajaxbuilding.com

SIGNATURE PROJECTS

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
Earth, Ocean, Atmospheric Science Building
$59M, 140,000sf
This new seven-story facility will be home to the offices, classrooms, teaching labs, research labs and academic spaces that support FSU’s nationally recognized Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science department.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA
Morsani Center for Advanced Healthcare
$41M, 226,000sf
The Morsani Center combines world-class healthcare with a state-of-the-art building designed to facilitate learning. Ajax led the construction of this patient care facility, which houses everything from diagnostic imaging and ambulatory surgery to outpatient services and research centers.

FULTON COUNTY
East Roswell Library
$4M, 17,000sf
East Roswell Library is a single-story LEED® Silver building whose design centers on connecting with the wooded surroundings. “I have appreciated the exceptional care that the Ajax team has given this project. I would not hesitate to work with the team again or recommend your company’s services.” — Swakena Griffin, branch manager

PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS
Largo High School
$55M, 257,715sf
The project included the construction of two new buildings that house classrooms, a student union and a 1,590-seat gymnasium, as well as a central energy plant and renovations to the existing auditorium.

CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG
Police Department HQ
$61.8M, 163,300sf
Currently under construction, the new police headquarters includes a new main building with an Administrative Wing and Property & Evidence Wing, as well as a parking structure and central energy plant.

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Signed STO Insights 2019 | 17
GIVING BACK:
London’s 30 Good Deeds

In 2018, Structure Tone London hit a major milestone—30 years of business in one of the world’s most prominent cities. To celebrate this huge accomplishment, Structure Tone’s London office decided to give back to the community they’ve built in for the last three decades. From 5Ks and bake-offs to organising industry fundraising events, the Structure Tone London team truly committed to making a difference in their community. Here are some of the great causes they supported throughout the year.

“Positively impacting our community has always been a top priority for us, but this year we kicked it up a notch. 2018 was about thanking London for 30 great years, which for us meant giving back to the community in any way we could,” says Dean Manning, managing director of Structure Tone London. “I’m especially proud of our London team. Their tremendous effort is what really brought this initiative to life.”

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“CHARITY & COMMUNITY TRACKER”
WATERFRONT REVIVAL: American Water HQ

For decades, the Delaware River waterfront in Camden, New Jersey was a hub of industrial activity. But as manufacturing declined across the US, Camden suffered. Many factories closed and, over time, the waterfront was largely abandoned.

For the last several years, however, the city, state and development community have been working to restore the waterfront and create a social and economic center that draws workers, visitors and residents back to Camden.

One of the companies invested in that effort is American Water. The nation’s largest publicly traded water and wastewater utility company was looking to consolidate its operations into one headquarters, and the Camden waterfront provided just the right opportunity.

FROM THE GROUND UP

The developer, Liberty Property Trust, enlisted the help of LF Driscoll and Jingoli to build the brand-new, 220,000sf, 5-story facility. To build along the waterfront was helping to revitalize the city and our subs through the entire process to ensure it lined up just right.

“The whole site was historic fill,” says Tom Stefanko, the quality of the soil was a concern. After years of industrial activity and inattention, water, however, meant starting with the ground.

“Everything had to be reused on-site or disposed of through a ‘The whole site was historic fill,’ says Tom Stefanko, the quality of the soil was a concern. After years of industrial activity and inattention, water, however, meant starting with the ground. Roughly 3 feet of new, clean fill caps the existing soil. To complicate matters, the building sits atop an existing 84-inch combined sewer/storm outlet (CSO) that had to remain active throughout construction and tie into the overall site’s water and wastewater infrastructure. As the team worked around the CSO outlet, they encapsulated everything in concrete and essentially built the rest of the building in three sections (north, south and central atrium) to allow the outlet to function. While these soil precautions were necessary, they did affect the design. The project team raised the building pad to adjust for the added fill and carefully monitored the underground work to ensure the infrastructure did not impact the rest of the structure.

“We were taking these measures all while drifting yachts for the building itself,” Stefanko says. “Everything had to be coordinated very closely right out of the chute to make sure all elements aligned as they should.”

MODEL TEAM

Coordination continued to be the operative word as the building began to take shape. The Driscoll team was working with two architects: RM Stern for the core and shell and Gensler for the interior. To ensure their designs synced up in the field, LF Driscoll leaned on the virtual design and construction experts in their Advanced Coordination Team (ACT). ACT works directly with the design teams to precoordinate their models into one unified model with ready-to-build contract documents. That precoordination created a baseline from which the entire team could work.

Virtual coordination also helped solve some challenges with the building’s exterior. The building is primarily a steel frame with punched windows and glass curtainwall. However, the design uses the metal panels to trace the outline of the interior traveling stairs. In other words, from the outside, viewers see almost a stepped look as the panels protrude outward and down, following the path of the stairs. The team worked out those challenges in the model before fabrication began.

“It was a complex design,” says Stefanko. “Every panel had to be coordinated and modeled with the design team and our subs through the entire process to ensure it lined up just right.”

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

While the building is beautiful in and of itself, perhaps the most stunning features are the water walls in the atrium. Just as the name entails, water cascades down these four-story glass walls, making an immediate statement about American Water’s mission.

The beauty of the building is one thing, but the impact it’s having on the city is another,” Stefanko says. “This project helped create a lot of local jobs and more opportunities for the community and is really making a statement about the future of the Camden waterfront. We are so proud to be part of it.”

The atrium also highlights water in a Learning and Innovation Center—an educational space dedicated to all things water and to highlighting the building’s many sustainable features. The LEED Platinum building includes low-flow plumbing fixtures, green roofs, high-efficiency HVAC and glass systems, LED lighting and an extensive water reuse system. American Water celebrated its grand opening in December to great fanfare—and tremendous community support. The new building marks the company’s physical investment in Camden as well as continued support of nearly a dozen community programs, from schools to charitable organizations.

The building’s foundation is an auger cast pile system in which the team drilled down about 50 feet and replaced the soil with grout and a center-reinforcing bar and support. Those bars then connect to concrete-grade beams that support the building. To complicate matters, the building sits atop an existing 84-inch combined sewer/storm outlet (CSO) that had to remain active throughout construction and tie into the overall site’s water and wastewater infrastructure. As the team worked around the CSO outlet, they encapsulated everything in concrete and essentially built the rest of the building in three sections (north, south and central atrium) to allow the outlet to function.

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Once again, coordination was critical, not only to install the walls correctly but to ensure the wall systems did not affect the adjacent elevator lobbies. “The whole atrium was designed around these walls,” Stefanko says. “If anything was the slightest bit off, it could affect the walls or, vice versa, ruin the elevators.”

The atrium also highlights water in a Learning and Innovation Center—an educational space dedicated to all things water and to highlighting the building’s many sustainable features. The LEED Platinum building includes low-flow plumbing fixtures, green roofs, high-efficiency HVAC and glass systems, LED lighting and an extensive water reuse system. American Water celebrated its grand opening in December to great fanfare—and tremendous community support. The new building marks the company’s physical investment in Camden as well as continued support of nearly a dozen community programs, from schools to charitable organizations.
Most building repositioning projects involve gutting an older building and starting fresh with modern infrastructure and interiors. But at 441 Ninth Avenue in New York City, Cove Property Group is thinking—quite literally—outside of the box. In addition to modernizing the existing 9-story structure, the team of Cove, Kohn Pedersen Fox and Pavarini McGovern is building another 17 stories above it, creating a modern commercial office building with the abundant lighting, high ceilings, outdoor terrace spaces and other amenities that appeal to today’s tenants.

“The repositioning projects that tend to be most successful are the ones that respect the heritage of the existing building,” says Tom Farrell, partner at Cove Property Group. “At 441 Ninth, the character of the overbuild in and of itself has an industrial quality to it. We didn’t turn our backs on the industrial heritage of the podium building—we embraced it.”

To reinforce the columns, PMG used a somewhat unique method: shotcrete. Shotcrete involves spraying concrete out of a hose and nozzle at 80mph onto the column. Once signed off on by the structural engineer, the rebar cage around each column is filled with the spray concrete and becomes a structurally sound component.

The project team hosted a topping off celebration last fall, and the project is now on track to be fully completed in the summer of 2019. For McFadden, the entire effort has been a labor of love.

“What I’ve been most proud of to date is that we are pushing the schedule, maintaining quality, and, most importantly, maintaining our safety record. That’s the number-one goal for us at all times.”

Above ▲ Demolition of existing slabs makes room for a new structural core

First built in 1962 as a manufacturing facility, the building has changed hands a few times over the years, most recently functioning as an office building for EmblemHealth. Cove recognized the building’s potential and developed a repositioning plan that respected that history.

“Let there be light”

One of the first features the design tackled was lighting. As a former factory, the interior was dark. The new design adds glass panels on the first floor and expands the existing windows vertically by nearly 4ft, adding nearly 80% more vision glass to the space. The 17 new stories include an all-glass façade with expansive ceiling heights on each floor to ensure tenants get plenty of light.

“We laser scanned the whole envelope of the building to find a way to double the size of the windows and strategically demolish portions of the masonry,” Farrell says. “But none of that is possible unless we know how the wall maneuvered in and out, whether it was 5 or 10mm, and how those spandrel beams wandered and meandered up and down. Laser scanning the building from the outside gave us a 3-dimensional accurate road-map to figure out how to engineer the windows.”

Down to the core

Making these changes—and particularly adding a whole new building—meant structural reinforcement was more important than ever. After stripping the building to its core and shell, Pavarini McGovern headed into the basement, digging under the existing foundation elements to enhance the 15 building footings. The team also brought up a new core, from New York City bedrock up through the top of the building. Once the core was to the top floor, they began the structural steel program.

“We waited for the core to be completed to start the structural steel so the steel and tower crane did not catch the concrete core,” says Michael McFadden, Pavarini McGovern superintendent. “The integrity of that core and the 17 reinforced columns is what allowed us to put a new 17-story building on top of a 9-story one.”

Above ▲ Existing foundations and column footings were strengthened with steel rebar and over 330 yards³ of concrete in a single pour
In refurbishment projects, a building’s technical systems (aka “MEP” systems) are perhaps the most important piece. Why? These systems are the heart and veins of the building. In other words, a refurbished building won’t be a success without modern, functional infrastructure. But addressing these systems early—and thoroughly—is vital.

**WHERE’S THE UTILITY?**

Finally, we do a deep dive into the status of utility connections, typically the water supply and foul waste, electrical power, fire protection, gas intake systems and telecoms. Discrepancies or shortcomings between these systems and what we are trying to build must be identified early since it can take significant time to rectify a large delta between required and delivered service capacities. These assessments can include everything from testing water quality and boiler/chiller performance to ensuring delivered air rates and fire protection system loop capacity are as expected.

While such a thorough analysis of a building’s technical systems may seem above and beyond the norm, it can save the owner years of costs and headaches. In one recent example in Dublin, after receiving our water quality analysis of the heating and chilled water systems, it became apparent that the recently completed base-build system was not in good condition. We advised the client team accordingly and, through diligent efforts, were able to ensure the base-build team completed a second cleaning. That added step ultimately delivered a clean system that avoids potential future problems to the fit-out works or to the client’s ongoing maintenance.

**DILAPIDATION REPORTS ARE KEY**

Once we get into a building, the first task of our technical services team is to ascertain what exactly we are dealing with. Typically we are taking over base-build systems that are a number of years old and often suffering from less-than-perfect maintenance regimes. This refurbishment also often involves the primary plant items of these mechanical and electrical systems, such as boilers, AHUs and electrical power infrastructure.

Copies of the building’s Operation & Maintenance manual and safety file help provide some of that research, along with all maintenance records. With this information in hand, the tech services team can deploy the chosen electrical/mechanical contractor to carry out a complete survey of the building systems across all disciplines of the relevant electrical and mechanical systems. This “dilapidation” report needs to be as in-depth as practically possible. The more detailed knowledge we have about the actual performance and condition of the systems versus the designed performance, the more we can protect the project team and our clients from inheriting problems.

**WATCH FOR THE GAPS**

A common potential issue we encounter is gaps in the systems. To prepare for those as much as we can, we assess all the building’s hard services systems. This assessment may not always involve the typical mechanical and electrical system which we are augmenting as part of the fit-out, but it may be important nonetheless to have survey data. Systems such as underground drainage, lifts, bird control systems and storm and sump drain systems can be easily overlooked during initial dilapidations, yet become legacy problems if not fully documented.

**TIME IS MONEY**

While the main scope of the dilapidations survey is to outline the condition of the received building systems, it is crucial that we highlight any potential cost or programmed impact the report result may have on contracted works. These potential impacts should be identified and investigated early so that the construction team can come to the client with potential resolutions or alternatives.

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HCP, Inc. is one of the largest healthcare real estate investment trusts in the US. With Philly’s robust healthcare market, the company set its sights on adding a Philadelphia building to its portfolio, ultimately finding the right opportunity at 3535 Market Street. However, the property’s anchor tenant, Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, had already announced plans to leave the building for its brand new facility (built by LF Driscoll)—meaning HCP would need to make some changes to attract new tenants.

To do so, HCP hired the team of L2P and Structure Tone, developing a plan to update the 1970s-era building both inside and out. On the exterior, the team reskinned the first two floors, replacing dated precast concrete with a metal panel curtainwall and low-iron glass that allow passersby to see the modern new space inside.

Inside, the team gutted the unoccupied 8th through 16th floors to prepare them for new tenants. They also upgraded the core restrooms on the upper floors and completely renovated the 12th floor, which features HCP’s building management offices and a new 10,000sf conference and amenity center.

The most striking renovation, however, is the lobby. In a complete redesign, what was once a dark, cold space now features a grand aluminum panel canopy and ceiling, terrazzo flooring and bright, clean tones.

“We assumed we would eventually have to do a major repositioning of the building,” Billy May, HCP director of asset management, told the Philadelphia Business Journal. “We can’t make a new building but want to get as close to market as possible.”

Philadelphia is famous for a lot of things. The Liberty Bell. The signing of the Declaration of Independence. Cheesesteaks. But perhaps a lesser-known claim to fame is the city was home to the first hospital in the country, Pennsylvania Hospital. Since that hospital’s opening in 1751, the city has continued to be a healthcare leader, drawing patients, doctors, researchers and investors from across the globe.

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**LIGHT AND BRIGHT**

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“With the white terrazzo, teak wood, and white and beige tile, the space is just so much brighter and more welcoming,” says John Donnelly, Structure Tone project manager. “It’s a phenomenal difference.”

**OLD BUILDING, FAMILIAR CHALLENGES**

The transformation didn’t come easily, of course. The building’s age meant that many existing conditions had to be remade to improve the building envelope and systems. “The building is almost 50 years old, so some elements were never updated as the codes changed,” says Donnelly. “We had to work very closely with the architect and owner to find feasible solutions.”

These unexpected issues also tightened the budget. “We had to work with the client and design team to shuffle some priorities and make sure we stayed on track,” says Donnelly. “If the team hadn’t been so collaborative, it would have been much more difficult to meet the project’s goals.”

**REPOSITIONED FOR SUCCESS**

With the repositioning now complete, HCP is working on signing new tenants, and they are getting interest from medical groups as well as academia and corporations. That kind of attraction is further proof that the repositioning market is ripe.

“Updates like those at 3535 Market attract all kinds of tenants,” Donnelly says. “And for owners, it’s much more efficient to update the lobby and exterior than to build a whole new building. It certainly adds a competitive edge.”
UPTOWN OVERHAUL: 2401 Cedar Springs

Occupied by a single tenant for 30 years, the former GuideStone building in Uptown Dallas had simply become part of the visual landscape. “Because it had been there so long with the same tenant, it just wasn’t on people’s mental radar screens,” says Joseph Pitchford, managing director at Crescent Real Estate, who recently purchased the building. “But it’s in a tremendous location and has great bones, so we knew if we did a proper job on repositioning it we could really increase its value.”

The Crescent team enlisted the help of Corgan Architects and Structure Tone Southwest to begin the top-to-bottom transformation, which will include everything from completely opening up the lobby to creating an entirely new entrance experience.

DOWN TO THE BONES

The interior of the 200,000sf, 7-story building is being completely redesigned and rebuilt. With the former traditional-style office layout now gone, the building will feature white-box office space, plus all the amenities of modern office building, from a fitness center and meeting areas to coworking suites and dining options.

But knocking down walls to get to those bare bones did expose some unknowns.

“When we peeled back the onion layers to get to the core of the building, we discovered some infrastructure challenges,” says Christopher Lang, Structure Tone Southwest senior project manager. “Some of the systems weren’t quite up to current standards.”

Some of the fire-rated partitions, for example, were not up to code, and the HVAC system’s air intake was not going to be sufficient. The project team launched a series of design charrettes to figure out how to bring more air into the building, whether that’s installing new units to the roof or other system measures.

The interior will also feature an entirely new lobby with multiple entrances, abundant light and higher ceilings.

“We’re big believers in what we call a ‘through lobby,’” says Pitchford. “It’s a lot more convenient, and it really increases the value of the building. We’re big fans of what we call ‘through lobbies.’”

The Corgan team also renovated and rebuilt the cupola above the entrance. Inspired by that signature hidden building into an incredibly dynamic, visible and dramatic structure, “This glass rotunda on the front will take this somewhat hidden building into an incredibly dynamic, visible and dramatic structure,” says Pitchford. “It’s really going to be beautiful.”

While construction on the cylinder hasn’t begun yet, the project team has been working very closely with the designers to plan that phase down to every detail—and dollar.

CREATIVITY AT WORK

Outside, the revamped building will have an entirely refreshed façade with a new curtainwall system, striking new entryway, valet parking drop-off area and outdoor patio, among other features.

The primary challenge in making those changes, however, is the site. Situated at the corner of Cedar Springs and Maple Avenue, the building has very little frontage to the very busy streets, meaning worksite space is extremely limited. In preparing for the project, the Structure Tone team proposed a creative way to manage that space safely and economically.

“We’re using a gas-powered scaffolding and climbing mast system,” Lang says. “It acts like an elevator of sorts to climb up the building so we can keep the work organized vertically within the tight site.”

A key focus area for the scaffolding system is the entryway. The existing building featured a large cupola above the entrance. Inspired by that signature feature, Corgan redesigned the entryway to replace the cupola with a large, six-story glass cylinder.

“This glass rotunda on the front will take this somewhat hidden building into an incredibly dynamic, visible and dramatic structure,” says Pitchford. “It’s really going to be beautiful.”

“‘Through lobbies’ add another entrance to the building,” Pitchford adds. “We’re big fans of what we call ‘through lobbies.’”

“Some of the systems weren’t quite up to current standards,” agrees Lang. “A lot of issues can come up in repositioning that don’t occur with a ground-up building,” he says. “So far, the Structure Tone team has been very adept at solving those problems and keeping the project on track.”

PLANNING AHEAD

So far the team has completely gutted the interior of the building and is preparing to begin the exterior work. And while there have been some delays in getting going, the team has been able to take advantage of that extra time to get everything lined up for go-time.

“We’ve spent a lot of time working with the client and the project team on the budget,” says Lang. “We don’t always get this much time to really experiment with different materials and ideas, and that’s paying off.”

Crescent’s senior project manager, Adam Soto, agrees. “A lot of issues can come up in repositioning that don’t occur with a ground-up building,” he says. “So far, the Structure Tone team has been very adept at solving those problems and keeping the project on track.”

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Project Details

Size: 200,000sf
Client: Crescent Real Estate
Owner: GPIF 2401 CS LLC
Architect: Corgan Architects
MEP Engineer: Telios
Civil Engineer: Hart Gaugler + Associates
Structural Engineer: Corgan Architects

OFFICE: STSW DALLAS

STO Insights Spring 2019

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399 Washington Street is right in the middle of this retail hotbed. Built in 1881, the five-story building housed a number of retailers over the following decades, settling as a Barnes & Noble in 1976. But as the years went on, the businesses along Washington Street began to struggle, and the district started to lose its luster as a shopping and tourist destination. One after the next, the flagship stores closed, including the Barnes & Noble in 2006. For the last 13 years, 399 Washington remained vacant—which didn't help Downtown Crossing’s image problem.

By the mid-2000s, however, developers began reinvesting, including building a 60-story residential tower, adding a grocery store and wooing large retailers like Old Navy and Primark as well as major companies such as Havas and Arnold Worldwide. In 2017, L3 Capital and LaSalle Investment Management seized the opportunity to become a part of this overall revitalization, purchasing 399 Washington Street with a whole new vision in mind.

**PRESERVATION WITH MODERNIZATION**

The Chicago-based ownership team brought in Chicago-based OKW Architects and owner’s rep RL Edward Partners and enlisted the Boston-based team at Structure Tone to reposition the historic building into a new office and retail destination. The property will maintain the character of the original brownstone while offering the infrastructure and amenities of a modern commercial building.

The project involves “white boxing” the entire interior plus rebuilding the core and shell, from restoring and updating the façade to rebuilding the passenger elevators and installing new MEP and fire alarm systems. Given the building’s age and long-time neglect, the project has posed a few challenges on the construction side:

1. **Surprises.** Knocking down walls in a 130-year-old building is bound to come with some surprises. “We would open up a wall and find another wall behind that, and another behind that,” says Michael Cantalupo, Structure Tone project manager. “And since we didn’t really have up-to-date drawings, those unknowns made it difficult to plan.”

2. **Power.** With no tenant in the building for 10-plus years, the electrical system had practically been abandoned. The project team had just enough power to get through the demolition phase.

3. **Distance.** The owner and architect are based in Chicago, meaning frequent visits during demo and planning were not feasible. The engineering team is Boston-based, however, so local collaboration was not a problem. Ownership is always “extremely accessible and collaborative,” says Cantalupo, and once redevelopment begins, they will be on-site regularly.

**ON ITS WAY**

As of winter 2019, the team has put up scaffolding and removed the paint from the façade as they prepare to install new glass curtainwall panels on the first two floors. Inside, demolition is complete; the next stage is to begin rebuilding all the infrastructure systems. The project is expected to be fully complete by the end of 2019.