



CAM[®]

M A G A Z I N E



SPECIAL ISSUE
2016

TECH PLAZA REBIRTH

A NEW DESIGN STATEMENT

"THIS IS NOT YOUR FATHER'S TECH PLAZA"

BY ROY JONES

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
BETH SINGER PHOTOGRAPHER, INC.

In 1959, John F. Kennedy delivered his presidential campaign speech at Tech Plaza in Warren, just 13 days prior to his election. That historic moment, as well as stories of nostalgia from Warren residents recalling patronizing Tech Plaza in its heyday, has made a lasting impression for years in the Detroit/Southeast Michigan area.

But Warren, despite being Michigan's 3rd largest city, lacked a downtown or a walkable business district of any significance, and all its existing shopping centers were deficient in respect to poor pedestrian connectivity between

stores. The location at the intersection of Warren's two main arteries, Van Dyke and 12 Mile Road, across the street from the GM Tech Center, was the best retail site in the city since 1960 and



▲ The newly renovated 134,000-square-foot Tech Plaza is located at Van Dyke and 12 Mile across from the GM Tech Center in Warren.

remains so today. There became a need to create a unique design to attract upscale tenants and to make a design statement for an old shopping center that had been in Warren for 55 years. Thus, the rebirth of Warren's "Tech Plaza."

THE TECH PLAZA VISION

The vision for Tech Plaza as "Warren's Downtown Shopping Destination" was established through a collaboration of owner, architect, design consultant and construction manager during the property and acquisition process. Enhanced by GM's commitment to invest \$1 billion in its campus, the project team determined

early on that restoring the "Tech Plaza" brand and making the project walkable would be fundamental to realizing their vision for the project. The project team, all members of which are based in

Metro Detroit, consisted of Owner - Petzold Enterprises; Architect - Tiseo Architects, Inc.; Design Consultant - R. Berlin and Associates; and Construction Manager - NCS Construction Services, LLC.

It should be noted that plaza branding and walkability have declined in significance within the strip shopping center industry. Development trends have shifted towards designs that enable retailers to impose their individual branding elements onto the façade – often at the expense of plaza branding and pedestrian-friendliness. It is rare that the naming of a strip retail center has significance to the developer, retailer or customer. Most big box centers are configured with the presumption of shopping one store per visit. Large spacing between store entrances, absence of canopy covered sidewalks, and large spans of parking that isolate pad buildings from the strip building are among the impediments to pedestrian circulation that are common in current strip center development. The rebirth of Tech Plaza bucks that trend with its renewed focus on both branding and walkability.



▲ Senator Kennedy's 1959 Presidential campaign speech at Tech Plaza.

TECH PLAZA BRANDING

Walmart acquired the 25-acre Tech Plaza in 2013. The center was almost entirely vacant and had fallen into disrepair. Walmart sold 11.4 acres containing 130,000 square feet of mostly vacant buildings to the current owner in early 2014. In March 2014, Walmart opened its 185,000-square-foot remodeled supercenter for business. Walmart replaced the "TECH PLAZA" monument signs with "WALMART," effectively eliminating the plaza's identity at the time of the owner's acquisition.

Without rights to add signage along the roads, the project team faced the challenge of how to restore the TECH PLAZA name. The team felt it was important to maintain the name because it had been there since

1959. The decision was made to integrate a monument sign into the building architecture at the corner where the two buildings meet. This monument served multiple objectives, including tying together one of the project's architectural themes – the radius roofs; and giving the TECH PLAZA sign a prominent home at the tallest point of the structure visible from every vantage point along both roads and throughout the parking lot.

The radius roof was identified as the distinguishing architectural feature of the

Walmart building. The decision was made to adopt this feature to give the entire plaza cohesiveness. Building materials were selected in tones to compliment the Walmart exterior. However, the quality of the materials had to be superior to support the upscale branding objective. Whereas Walmart utilized painted block and EIFS, Tech Plaza was finished with metal panels, natural stone and brick, with EIFS used at a minimum and up high. The objective of the brand was not to compete head-on with Walmart, but rather to offer an upscale complement of higher quality merchandise.

The TECH PLAZA sign mimicked the Walmart design, but to achieve quality, the owner and the team came up with the idea

to use one solid piece of steel purchased out of state, then was painted and assembled on-site. This was all part of the owner's desire to create a standard and uniform look throughout the 134,000-square-foot facility.

WALKABILITY

The existing center had flaws that needed to be addressed to improve customer circulation. The drive lanes along the storefronts were too narrow and posed traffic safety hazards, including a history of collisions at the high-traffic corner where the drives intersect. The handicap ramps, cross walks, and handicap parking spaces lacked logic and adequacy. Sidewalks were narrow and had awkward grade transitions. Building footprints required modifications to eliminate some of the deepest bays and introduce a group of stores with shallower bays. This all resulted in smaller tenant spaces, increased store count and store entrances in closer proximity – all intended to promote walkability and retail synergy.

ARCHITECTURAL CHALLENGES

Tiseo Architects, Inc., Livonia, was faced with a number of new design challenges. The existing framework was preserved and the new design had to work within the existing structural system. The existing structure was stripped right down to the steel. The build-out would all be new at this point and the design would have to follow the steel in place. According to Benedetto Tiseo, president of Tiseo Architects, Inc., "One of the biggest challenges we faced with this project was the fact that we were working with essentially six different buildings, and each had their own structural steel framing design that we had to integrate into one cohesive design to meet the requirements of the new shopping center."

Kimberly Nakhleh, associate AIA, lead designer and senior project manager added, "The most challenging aspect from a design perspective was building in flexibility for both the interior layouts as well as exterior signage, since there was no pre-leasing and it was unknown how the spaces would be demised. We also wanted to make sure that the owner had flexibility in the future to meet whatever the retail demand might be in 10, 20 or 30 years. The design is such that it can meet whatever the demands might be with minor, if any, modifications required." The resulting design achieved the desired flexibility required by dividing the façade into anchor, junior anchor and small shop segments.

The architect was also required to create a design complementary to the adjacent Walmart building consisting of arches and brick while supporting the owner's desire to attract upscale tenants. In addition, they needed to select materials that would be durable and low maintenance to align with

the owner's "buy and hold" long-term investment philosophy. According to Steven Visconti, president and project executive from Bloomfield Hills-based NCS Construction Services LLC, "Petzold Enterprises - Tom and Bill Petzold - have a solid history of successful acquisitions statewide and across the country. This is largely due to their commitment to using quality materials that will last, and employing top-notch sub-trades, architects, engineers and managers."

Tiseo Architects, Inc. was able to provide extensive project supervision to modify the design as required throughout the process as existing conditions were uncovered that either couldn't be changed or were cost-prohibitive to change. Kimberly Nakhleh stated, "The design had to remain fluid throughout construction so that we could adapt to the unknown challenges that ultimately exist when you are working with a renovation of this type. It was definitely challenging, but that's what makes the resulting outcome so gratifying."



▲▲ Before and after views from 12 Mile Rd, of the old East Building – South Elevation.


CONSTRUCTION CHALLENGES

Construction techniques and systems have changed dramatically over the last 55 years. In the past, materials were oversized, and there were less inspections. Thus, the contractors on this project had to adapt to these changes and face the re-work challenges.



The demolition portion of the project was immense because floor slabs were thicker and foundations were substantially larger than current standards, due to the inexpensive cost of concrete material at the time the center was originally constructed. Also, the utility infrastructure was in poor condition, so the owner demanded the elimination of overhead lines for aesthetics, as well as the removal and replacement of storm drains, water lines, gas and electrical. Hidden debris was also encountered and removed. Poor soil-bearing properties at



▲ Shoring was used to support the existing roof so that joists could be shortened and modified in the field.




Industrial Strip Out

We can clear your space to make room for new machines, office space or any other application; and rest assured that your surrounding property will remain intact and in most cases operational.

Complete Heavy Industrial & Commercial Demolition Services

Join the Celebration



30
Years of Service
SERVING NORTH AMERICA
SINCE 1984

LICENSED • BONDED • INSURED

800-664-3697

Email: info@nadc1.com

www.nadc1.com



North American Dismantling Corp.

In Pursuit of Progress



the parking lot resulted in areas being undercut and filled with engineered granular materials. North American Dismantling Corp. (NADC), Lapeer, tackled the majority of the demolition work. They performed work on nine different structures and buildings at the Tech Plaza. The selective demolition included the removal of block walls, which required extensive shoring, the stripping of all brick masonry, the demo of the storefront, canopy system, tile, floor coverings, mechanical equipment, and various electrical components. Extra time was spent with the development of potential fall hazards for the removal of HVAC Roof Top Units, ductwork, canopy framing along with gas line disconnects and capping. Tim Seagraves from North American Dismantling added, "On this project, as on any project, it is very important to have a well thought-out safety plan. Engineer controls were used to maintain safety for our employees and surrounding workers at the site."



▲ **Sign Monument steel erection showing two cranes lifting, one of three, field assembled, 9,000-lbs. rolled steel eyebrows.**

Existing structural systems were compromised and complicated due to past renovations, additions and modifications. Roofs and walls were raised in a portion of the building that had insufficient clear height to meet the requirements of today's retailers. Utilities in the R.O.W.'s were congested, creating difficult challenges for new utility installations. The coordination of utility systems required precision. The existing condition of the roof system which included decking, insulation, membrane and drainage, was in varying states of deterioration and not in compliance with current building codes. Assessment of the multiple roof segments and selective replacements needed to be done with both reliability and budget efficiency.

Esko Roofing & Sheet Metal, Shelby Township, installed a fully adhered Firestone 60 mil Black EPDM roof system along with a Berridge Zee Lock curved standing seam metal roof system. Steve Eskelinen from Esko said, "The installation of the EPDM roof system was challenging because of the weather conditions, but by applying Firestone's LVOC products (low temperature), it made the installation process much less complicated. We roll formed the Standing Seam Metal Panels on site because of the length of the panels. Due to NCS Construction's professionalism, the project went pretty much as scheduled and trouble-free."

There were other construction challenges that were unique to this project. Exposed steel-framed radius roofs and the corner monument tower posed logistic demands. Steel members measuring up to 50 feet in length and 9,000 pounds in weight were delivered to the site and placed inside the building where they were prepped and painted. The building had to be sealed to control dust, and climate-controlled to meet the painting requirements. The coating process utilized a powder coat paint to create a durable "auto body" finish. The steel erector had to assemble, on site, the finished pieces with extreme care.

6 - K Construction Co., Brighton, was selected by the construction manager to complete the structural concrete

COCHRANE SUPPLY

SINCE 1967

PROUD TO BE YOUR LEADING BUILDING CONTROLS DISTRIBUTOR

- HVAC CONTROLS
- ENERGY MANAGEMENT
- SECURITY
- FIRE/LIFE SAFETY
- LIGHTING CONTROLS
- WIRELESS SOLUTIONS

LEARN MORE:
COCHRANESUPPLY.COM
 (800) 482-4894

TRAINING, SUPPORT, & SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT FOR BUILDING AUTOMATION SYSTEMS HARDWARE & SOFTWARE.

- HVAC Controls Boot Camp
- Niagara4 Certification
- Honeywell Spyder Training
- EasyIO Certification
- Johnson Controls FX Training
- And Many More Classes!

LEARN MORE AT
COCHRANETECHSERVICES.COM
 (248) 591-3560

(foundations) and architectural concrete (column wraps) for the project. Included in the foundations portion of the job were trench footings for the southern addition on the east building, masonry screen walls on both buildings, and the façade addition on the west side of the east building. 6 – K also installed the spread foundations for the Tech Plaza sign located between the East and North Buildings. They were also responsible for the architectural concrete column wraps at each structural column at the façade of both buildings. According to Andrew LaHaie, project manager for 6 – K, “The project called for retrofitting the existing building shell with foundations and architectural concrete in areas that were not considered additions or new construction. By working closely with the architect, construction manager, and other trades, we were able to overcome these challenges with minimal delay. Sequencing posed a challenge as different areas of the building were being demolished while others were being constructed simultaneously. The communication with NCS was paramount in effectively scheduling 6 – K’s portion of work. As the project progressed, we were able to meet deadlines and goals.”

Dealing with the existing conditions of the building was something that the carpentry contractor, TLA Interiors, Madison Heights, had to overcome. According to TLA President Anthony Ciotti, “Any time you’re updating the façade of a building or adding on, it’s a challenge blending new to old.” TLA completed the rough carpentry portion of the project, including the cold formed metal framing for the exterior walls, pilasters, storefronts and façade. They also managed the exterior sheathing, the non-combustible blocking that was required, the air barrier wrap, rigid and batt insulation, as well as the gypsum board at the interior side of the storefront framing. Hunter Douglas panel systems were also installed to the underside of the soffits. Ciotti added, “The installation of these systems did wonders for the building aesthetically. It’s a clean look that truly fits the new design of the building.”

Ciotti complimented NCS by saying, “NCS provided the proper supervision and safety personnel on-site at all times. They facilitated the constant flow of communication from the owner and the architect, right down through the trades. The teamwork on a project this size cannot be understated, and this was evident from the first pre-construction meeting. This was a very positive experience for us, and we were glad to be a part of it.”

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

Again, at his Tech Plaza campaign rally, Senator John F. Kennedy addressed a community that was under distress from the loss of thousands of jobs in the military supply industry. Yet he delivered an optimistic, forward-looking message: “We are going to put people to work. Michigan and the country has to move. We know it in Warren. We know it in the country.”

This same optimism and confidence in Warren’s future was essential for the team to pursue its vision of restoring Tech Plaza as “Warren’s Downtown Shopping Destination” and generating hundreds of construction and retail jobs in the process. The owner had a “build it and they will come” approach, which meant that the design was created without any pre-leasing. As stated by Tom Petzold, “Neither I nor the architect had dealt with designing a project of this magnitude without knowing at least some of the tenants that would occupy the spaces, and so it represented a real challenge in how we laid out not only the building elements, but the utilities as well. This challenge is what ultimately resulted in the flexible design that I wanted and that Tiseo Architects, Inc. was able to achieve.”

The project has had a favorable response from national retailers – with Marshalls, DSW, ULTA and Five Below leading the way as early lease signers. The leasing has resulted in 19 tenant spaces ranging in size from 1,600 to 22,000 square feet, plus a pad site for a 22,500-square-foot future expansion. The use categories are soft goods, food, services and fitness, with each use group

segmented to foster energy and avoid conflicts between uses.

Stewart Napier, a multiple franchise restaurateur and owner of Penn Station, stated, “Tech Plaza is the best built shopping center I have ever been a part of. I have been astonished at the response to the ‘Help Wanted’ sign I placed in my window during the build-out. Hiring staff is a problem across the industry and I am experiencing this challenge at my other locations. But what has happened here has been different and entirely unexpected. The applicants are mostly from Warren, more qualified than typical, and are excited to work in an environment within their community that they have witnessed transform over the past 18 months. I now have a staff of 30 hires and we are ready to open for business.”

Tom Petzold commented, “For my small, family business to be able to approach this project in the way we did required assembling the project team at the onset of the property acquisition process whose commitment, experience and integrity could be trusted. Had we not forged the relationships with Tiseo, Berlin and NCS Construction Services from prior jobs, this project with its many unforeseen challenges would never have been possible. We also forged new relationships with subcontractors and engineers. It was gratifying to be a part of a team that was able to foster a culture of pride. There was a spirit among the trades that they appreciated playing a role in a project that had historic significance, and they sensed would have a positive, lasting impact on the community.”

Steven Visconti said, “Our strength is the ability to assemble professional construction teams that can react quickly to challenges associated with major renovations and older facilities, while maintaining both budget and schedule. We spend years building relationships with owners and architects by consistently responding to their needs and constructing their projects as if they were our own. Our responsibility is to add value by controlling cost, quality and schedule.”