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WALTER E. SMITHE STORE RENOVATION

Project Location: Oak Brook, Illinois
Architect: Craig A. Podalak Architects
Owner: Walter E. Smithe
Contractor: Victor Construction Co.

Project Description:

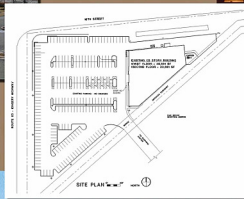
Walter E. Smithe - Custom Furniture's expansion program required a store in the Oak Brook shopping area. This high-end custom furniture retailer preferred a stand alone building in lieu of a mall-type store. The 40,000 SF building that previously housed a Sears Homelite Store just northwest of the Oak Brook Mall, was vacant. However, this did not have any Walter E. Smithe store features that made it desirable for their image, except street exposure.

The store had no windows (except the entrance area), and was completely internal with artificial lighting. There was no central focus area. Walter E. Smithe's program required an open plan with a lot of sunlight, especially at the fabric display areas where the customer selects their furniture fabrics. Smithe also wanted separate display areas for different furniture types, while keeping the plan open so the customer could always relate to the entire store in order to return to a piece of furniture seen earlier. Smithe wanted to relate all of these open spaces to each other by the use of common architectural detailing.

The store's final design was successful in meeting Smithe's program requirements. The building was 'opened up' by adding windows to the exterior wall in certain display areas, providing a central focus point with a large opening (80'x50') in the second floor, with an added 25'x25' roof skylight which created a two (2) story atrium space with natural light for the display of the fabrics.

The spaces were visually connected by using cornice/wood trim detailing, 30,000 SF of wood flooring, column detailing (matching the cornice trim), that enclosed existing building columns, downspouts, and sprinkler risers.

Extensive structural design was necessary to allow for added rooftop HVAC units (due to the added windows and skylight) as well as the new 30'x50' atrium floor opening (in the second floor) with a new grand staircase and the 25'x25' skylight. Windows had to be located in bays that did not have structural cross bracing (several cross braced areas had to be re-braced). Construction occurred around the clock in order to renovate this 40,000 SF facility in three (3) months.



A renovation of an existing non-descript facility into a revitalized retail setting. The jury commented that "The architect achieved Owner's building program requirements very well. He successfully converted undistinguished big box into very attractive, well-planned and welcoming space. The interior stairwell and skylight created beautiful space that achieved Owner's requirements - open plan, related detailing more inviting and appealing. The detailing very attractive - differences in flooring, interior stair design, and use of stair to move people through space well conceived".



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