GLASS & METAL ALLIANCE

INDEPENDENCE BLUE CROSS | PHILA., PA

A complex lobby modernization was part of comprehensive building renovations.

By: Amanda Gibney Weko

CASE STUDY

Project Overview

A lobby renovation included creating two new building entrances plus new curtain wall, spandrel glass, and decorative glass features.

Location

G. Fred DiBona Building
1901 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA

Timeline

August 2013 - March 2014

GMA Glazier

Paul Rabinowitz Glass Co., Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

A MODERN LOBBY

A comprehensive lobby renovation was part of a floor-by-floor modernization of the DiBona Building, which houses the offices of Independence Blue Cross. The project replaced the main entry on Market Street with two new entrances on Market and 19th Streets.

An occupied building, a compressed construction schedule over the brutal winter of 2014, and a tall curtain wall presented challenges. Paul Rabinowitz Glass Co., Inc., delivered results that helped the project earn two 2014 BOMA The Outstanding Building of the Year (TOBY) Awards - Best Renovation and Best Lobby. The Elliott-Lewis Corporation, which provides facility management for the building, managed the project, with John Fenstermaker as lead. The Riff Group served as general contractor.

LASER FOCUS

Rabinowitz Director of New Construction Derek Erfurt and Director of Field Operations Steve Weiner managed the glazing project, which included the tallest curtain wall Rabinowitz had ever completed. Their focus on overcoming the project's challenges began with – literally – a laser focus. The construction team conducted a laser survey of the building exterior to identify exact measurements and mullion locations. A CAD drawing was generated from the survey, avoiding the need for field verification (or the variations and human error that come along with it).

The accuracy of the laser survey saved time and expense for such a large project. All of the curtain wall glass could be ordered before exterior demolition. "We didn't need to open the building to the elements in order to measure," explained Erfurt. "We took the CAD file, and matched up the new frame layout for fabrication."

Erfurt recalls the as-built drawings were limited and didn't include much detail. "We did a lot of selective demo to find the structural steel and identify locations for anchoring the new curtain wall." Investigative work included finding a close match for the glazing, since the original glass color wasn't documented.

CHALLENGES MET

The extensive renovation took months of planning, budgeting, and strategizing by Independence Blue Cross and the design and construction teammates to ensure that all 3,400 building occupants faced minimal disruption. The lobby work was done in three phases over nine months. As part of the team effort, Rabinowitz did not charge any preconstruction services fees, saving Independence Blue Cross money.

Changing the building entrances meant careful phasing. "This project was completed on time and under budget due to the closely coordinated teamwork and the 'consider it done' philosophy of Paul Rabinowitz Glass," explained Fenstermaker. "We worked hand-in-hand and not against each other. It was refreshing," added Weiner.

In order to control temperature inside the lobby and provide safe egress paths, Elliott-Lewis built temporary partitions to guide building occupants to the safest exits. New entries had to be finished before the main entry was removed.

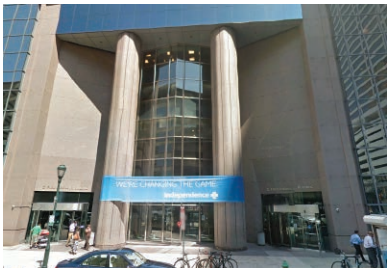
The tall curtain wall required Rabinowitz to use cranes (provided by Sautter Crane, a division of Elliott-Lewis) to set some metal into place instead of using manpower. The long spans also required intermediate tie-offs.

The extremely snowy winter of 2014 presented challenges to the glazing team. Low temperatures meant weather delays when it was too cold to apply sealants; even on warmer days, glaziers had to warm the silicone before use. Several snowstorms necessitated shoveling out snow-covered equipment.

GLAZING SCOPE

The glazing scope included curtain wall from YKK, Solarban 60 Low-E insulated glass from Oldcastle, and spandrel glass from Viracon. Decorative glass is a feature of the updated lobby, where more natural daylight illuminates the common areas and ADA accessibility has been improved. Decorative glazing includes a structural fin wall from Oldcastle. A laminated, backlit glass feature wall from McGrory is accented with benches and planters; McGrory also provided backlit glazing around the elevators. Half-inch clear tempered glass guardrails at the turnstiles were provided by C.R. Laurence.

Meyer Design, Inc., was the architect for the 840,000-square-foot, 45-floor building renovation, which involved lobby modernization, a new full-floor cafeteria, and updated office layouts.



The structure within the large stainless-clad columns had to remain; new revolving doors were carefully fit into the space between the existing vertical steel.

A lot of custom stainless steel cladding was fabricated to marry the existing steel to the new doors. Rabinowitz provided layout drawings for field constraints (an element not usually included in the scope) to help the general contractor make progress without waiting.