

# BANKER & TRADESMAN

THE REAL ESTATE, BANKING AND COMMERCIAL WEEKLY FOR MASSACHUSETTS

## 'Green' Thinking Comes Alive In Cambridge City Hall Project

By Kristie DiSalvo

**T**HE BUILDING AT THE CORNER OF Broadway and Inman streets in Cambridge looks like any other in the neighborhood – obviously historic with a brick facade and sweeping 8-foot windows. Walk in the front door, however, and the difference is immediate – this isn't your average City Hall Annex.

"Intelligent" lighting automatically adjusts according to daylight levels, and turns off when rooms are empty; solar roof panels create about 10 percent of the building's electricity; and glazed windows minimize heat loss or gain and prevent the fading of fabrics. It's a new look, a new style and one of the first historic green building projects in the state.

"The city has really gotten behind doing the responsible thing when it comes to renovating major projects," said William R. Hammer, president of Somerville-based HKT Architects.

The city, along with HKT and Milford-based Consigli Construction took a new approach to historic renovation by following the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program, more commonly referred to as LEED. They followed the guidelines so closely that HKT believes it can attain a Gold rating for the building. The annex is one of the first historic buildings in Massachusetts to be renovated according to the council's standards.

About one-third of the energy



The Cambridge City Hall Annex, located at the corner of Broadway and Inman streets in Cambridge, is one of the first historic buildings in Massachusetts to be renovated according to U.S. Green Building Council standards.

consumed in the United States goes toward the heating, cooling, lighting and appliances in buildings, according to the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. Advocates of environmentally friendly design have been trying to reverse that trend for 30 years – and after last year's blackout that affected dozens of cities in the eastern United States and Canada, it's a movement that's gaining momentum and popularity.

More and more developers are contemplating "going green" with solar- or wind-based energy, naturally flowing water, an emphasis on natural lighting and ventilation and high-performance windows, doors and insulation. Proponents say that sustainable development not only makes a building more efficient but also lessens the impact on the environment. Green build-

ings create less waste, conserve water and use more natural and recycled materials.

### 'Band-Aid' Approach

The Cambridge City Hall project, according to rating guidelines, should have used 50 percent of recycled materials. HKT and Consigli Construction actually brought that percentage up to 90. The project, which follows the basic, energy-saving components of environmentally sound practices, also encourages public transportation. The annex offers employees pre-tax subsidized MBTA passes and an on-site employee transportation coordinator. It also provides an outdoor bike rack, indoor bicycle storage and shower facilities for employees and limits parking to one space for every four employees to encourage car pool-

*Continued on Page 12*

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*Continued from Page 10*  
ing.

The city projects several benefits from its green design, including a 44 percent reduction in CO2 emissions and an overall annual savings of 56 percent.

Green buildings aren't a new concept. However, they're often a tough sell with developers. Installing thicker windows and using more efficient heating and cooling systems initially increases construction costs, although developers who take the plunge benefit from a short-term payback, in some cases as soon as three years.

Cambridge faced its own unique challenges in melding green and historic – a situation rarely, if ever, approached in Massachusetts. The project faced scrutiny from the Mid-Cambridge Neighborhood Historic District Commission, which objected to exposed mechanical or photovoltaic panels on the roof and expressed concerns about the appearance of thermal windows. While it posed a challenge, the design team eventually found glazed windows that matched its predecessors and met the state Energy Code.

The annex, completed in 1871, originally served as the Harvard School. Construction cost \$30,000. The building later served as a home base for the Longfellow School in the early 1930s and later became an annex for Cambridge High School before becoming part of City Hall in 1942.

"It was always just a Band-Aid," Hammer said of renovations throughout the years. "No one really made the transformation from school to public use."

The opportunity presented itself in February 1999, when the city discovered a mold infestation. Staff relocated and redesign began. David Perry Architects began the process four years ago but when that firm's offices closed, HKT took over the design phase and followed the process through its completion five years later.

The team restored historic brick parapets on the building's facade. Due to a complete gutting of the interior, nothing of historic significance remains inside, according to Hammer.

The building, known as "57 Inman" to the locals for its old entrance onto Inman Street, now features a main, atrium-style lobby off Broadway Street. Designers moved the entrance off Inman to create a sense of arrival. Before, visitors entered a cement stairwell on the side of the building. Now, residents are greeted by a cherry-wood stairway and murals by Mike Glier, the head of the Art Department at Williams College. His theme focuses on the environment and incorporates the Dutch Hornpipe Ivy that can be found along the sides of many Cambridge homes and the Charles River.

"Cambridge is on the cutting edge," Hammer said. "You see a lot of institutions, in part, wanting to do a LEED building because it's the right thing to do but it costs more up front, even if it makes sense in the long-run. Cambridge is one of the few public entities that's committed to this." ■

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