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Repackaging the Store: Design Strategies that Add Value

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Retailers understand the periodic need to remerchandise to improve the store's appeal and bottom line...just as owners of retail property need to refresh or re-configure their physical assets.

Rosen Johnson Architects has worked with owners to reposition the retail components of their commercial properties in an ongoing demonstration that skillful and attractive design leads to sustainable results for owners and their tenants. A few case studies from our file illustrate the value of sensitivity to retailers' and owners' needs; positioning the stores for steady returns.

Strategy Fits Location

A repositioning project (pictured) was completed in a Manhattan residential neighborhood with improving property values and a demand for more appealing retail venues. A former bank branch with small windows set into large brick walls was an uninviting place for new retail uses. The entire building was stripped to its structural frame and new storefronts designed that allow for flexibility in demising the property. New mechanical systems were provided and a new corner tower conceals specialized equipment needed for restaurant uses. The tower prominently marks the location of this assemblage of shops along First Avenue and provides additional signage opportunities for the tenants.

Getting in on the Ground Floor

A retail property on the ground floor of an office or multifamily residential building offers an opportunity to serve the bottom line while putting the best "face" on the building. Putting the office or home over the store is a traditional arrangement in New York City, and one that is gaining currency elsewhere as "new urbanist" principles take sway.

At 1251 Avenue of the Americas, Rosen Johnson Architects spent ten years with owner Mitsui Fudosan upgrading the property and converting it from single-tenant occupancy. One objective was to improve the visibility, accessibility and value of the building's



Above: Renovated retail building at 401 East 20th St, NYC.

Right: Prior to renovation.

side-street retail leases. We added a 15,000 SF floor within the building's 35-foot-tall ground floor. Steps that led to retail entrances along 49th Street were removed so that shops were brought to grade, and the doorways were widened. New signage marquees consistent with the building's original architecture are visible from 6th and 7th Avenues. Inside, a spacious, attractive extension of the building's lobby was created to allow ease of access to the retailers. Additional service elevators and new mechanical systems were provided to complete this package of improvements.

The changing retail character of the Wall Street area spurred George Comfort & Sons' request and our response to invigorate the ground floor of their building at 2 Wall Street. Along with adding a second lobby entrance from Broadway, the owner wanted to transform the fortress-like base. The building's historic main banking hall with 40-foot ceiling rose above a tall, windowless, granite base. Provision was made to insert new glass storefronts between large stone piers that were preserved in order to maintain the building's aesthetic integrity. What had been an austere corner at a prime intersection was trans-



formed for a contemporary retail environment.

The evolution of nearby neighborhoods dictated a better retail presentation for a Trinity Real Estate building at One Hudson Square in lower Manhattan.

Once again, Rosen Johnson Architects worked with the owner for many years to convert the light-industrial building to meet the needs of a modern multitenant office use. Located between Soho and Tribeca and at the center of a district ripe for reinvention, the building needed new storefronts, and retail infrastructure to serve a whole new class of tenants and shoppers. The new storefronts are respectful of this classic Ely Jacques Kahn deco tour de force, and are allied to other façade improvements while enlivening the streetscape and providing for a variety of shops.