

REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

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Upgrades in the Bag for Princeton Shopping Center

Rosen Johnson Architects Revitalizes Historic Neighborhood Center

Rosen Johnson Architects today announced that construction is under way for the renovation of an unusual and historic shopping center near the heart of Princeton, New Jersey.

Owned by Manhattan-based George Comfort & Sons, the 25-acre Princeton Shopping Center opened in the early 1950s with the look and feel of a town center – shops arranged around a walkable “village green”.

It was described by *Architectural Forum* magazine as “adding important new design elements” to the “emerging suburban building type” of a car-friendly, one-stop place to shop. It remains historic not only for its age but because the “typical” suburban mall quickly took a different direction – not so intimate, and not as neighborly as the Princeton center.

The original *mid-century* design of Princeton’s 225,000-square-foot neighborhood mall is apparent in the sleek, low-slung, one-story buildings whose roofs extend to shelter walkways that link shops around a rectangular courtyard. Six buildings housing 50 businesses surround two acres of lawns, plantings, and open air that make the Center “a haven for area residents,” and “a staple in the Princeton community,” according to local observers.

Working with the owner’s team led by president Peter Duncan and executive vice president Dana Comfort – and with a township that values the Center as a community asset – Rosen Johnson Architects provided designs that reshape key elements to create a



more inviting and functional complex.

Buildings and grounds are rejuvenated. Taller, illuminated sign bands conceal rooftop equipment and provide ample space for the merchants’ distinctive logos, which are now visible from the parking lots or the courtyard. The sign bands are coordinated with tenant signage, wayfinding and graphics that promote the ease and enjoyment of shopping.

The entrance portal on North Harrison Street is treated with new lighting and an eye-catching sign that identifies the *Princeton Shopping Center*. A new, vaulted skylight illuminates the formerly dark passageway from the entrance to the central lawn. Sleek new awnings shelter perimeter walkways, and breezeways between buildings are rebuilt with faceted fabric roofs.

New pathways cross the courtyard on the diagonal, satisfying the shoppers’ natural inclination to cross by the shortest route and encouraging commerce. A new landscape plan defines the smaller courtyards leading to the inviting sweep of new plantings on the central lawn.

A checkerboard of metal mesh frames the clock on its familiar tower, and a broad new awning shelters its base, providing space for concessions and outdoor tables. Site lighting, graphics, benches, tables and other amenities complete the upgrades and contribute to a consistent appearance sympathetic to the original design intent.

Additional Design Credits:

Landscape: Mathews Nielsen

Graphics: Epigraph

Illustration: Vladislav Yelisayev