

COMING CLEAN

Arrow Linen project a blueprint for LI industrial reincarnation

By **DAVID WINZELBERG**

With its Brooklyn laundry facility at capacity, Arrow Linen Supply was ripe for a major expansion. The trouble was finding a suitable building in the right location that the 68-year-old business could stretch out in.

Six years and about \$18 million later, Arrow has successfully transformed an obsolete industrial property in Garden City into a cutting-edge, energy-efficient laundry operation that will soon employ about 170 people.

Getting to this point wasn't easy. With desirable industrial buildings in high demand but in short supply on Long Island, Arrow's search was challenging.

"We were looking for them for four years, trying to find the right fit," said Frank Posillico, owner/broker of Alliance Real Estate in Deer Park, who led the linen supply company's hunt. "They considered property in Farmingdale, but they wanted to be closer to the city."

Eventually, Arrow targeted a 72,069-square-foot building on 3.2 acres at 615 South St., owned by WAC Lighting, which was moving to a new 145,000-square-foot headquarters in Port Washington. For Arrow, the Garden City building was perfectly situated, far enough away from any residential neighborhoods yet near enough to its New York City client base and future suburban customers.

Unfortunately, like most of the area's older industrial inventory, the South Street building had a 16-foot-high ceiling, too low for Arrow's needs, so it hired Uniondale-based Space Technologies Inc. to raise the roof.

For Jeff Allen, an STI principal, height-challenged buildings present plenty of opportunity, not just as new

business for his firm, but also as blank canvases for repurposing.

"Most of the older industrial buildings on Long Island were built for manufacturing and light assembly, and a lot of that's evaporated," Allen said. "Now there's more of a need for warehousing and distributing, which requires higher ceilings."

STI has been using its patented process to raise the roofs of industrial buildings across the country since the 1980s. Several Long Island buildings, including three NBTY warehouses in Ronkonkoma and the David Peyser Sportswear distribution center in Bay Shore, had their lids lifted by STI.

The cost of a roof-raising operation ranges from \$5 to \$25 per square foot, depending on how high the ceiling goes up and the overall size of the structure. The price per square foot is lower for a larger building. The spread of the columns inside the building also has an effect on the price. Allen said more steel has to go into it if the columns are closer together.

Raising the ceiling of the Arrow building from 14 to 25 feet high was only the start of its transformation. Specialty design builder Arco/Murray National Construction then stepped in to create the systems at the heart of the laundry.

Arco/Murray has designed and built more than 80 similar high-capacity laundry facilities around the country, but the Arrow project was the Illinois-based company's first design-building on Long Island and the first inside a building where the roof was raised.

"This is definitely one of the biggest we've built," said Elliot Mata, an Arco/Murray principal. "In a market like Long Island, raising the roof of an existing industrial building makes a lot of sense due to the fact that there aren't

a lot of options for land or existing available buildings that have the clear height necessary."

Mata said the main reason Arrow's roof needed to be raised was to fit a gravity material handling system, which automates the movement of the linen from washing to drying to finished product.

Besides installing water-stingy washers that use less than half the water of traditional washers, Arco/Murray put in an energy-efficient process water system that uses hot wastewater and exhausted flue gases to help heat incoming water used by the washers. In addition, the system employs extractors used after washing to eliminate most moisture, skipping the drying process and thus reducing the need to depend solely on energy-using dryers.

The retrofitting of the South Street building not only allows Arrow to save on energy costs, but it greatly increases the firm's laundry volume, opening the door for growth. For Arrow, which has been running two shifts at its 55,000-square-foot Brooklyn plant, the project means more jobs and expansion for the future.

"We'll be able to acquire smaller linen and uniform supply companies," said John Magliocco, the company's president.

Construction took about two years, and was aided by economic incentives from the Town of Hempstead Industrial Development Agency.

"This shows what a building like this can become," Posillico said.



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