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Roofs are being lifted to turn old properties into attractive warehouses

As older manufacturing facilities fall into disuse, even though their locations are often desirable, their limited ceiling heights have made them difficult to sell or lease. Modern warehouse/distribution centers require more height to create the cubic space needed for economic storage density. To solve that “mis-match” between available buildings and the new height requirement, the process of “roof lifting” has been growing as a valuable tool to transform “obsolete” structures into valuable high-clearance properties.



veloped in 1972, and has been utilized to lift roof heights in buildings ranging from 10,000 to over 1 million s/f. The technology is sophisticated, but easy to comprehend. First, the existing vertical steel columns supporting the roof structure are cut at their bases, and encased by new steel “sleeves.” Then, specialized hydraulic jacks atop these sleeves lift the old columns in unison, at the rate of one foot per hour. The roof rises, along with its lighting, heating, and sprinkler systems, undisturbed. Finally, the new height is enclosed with new upper wall structure. This yields a fresh appearance, and a building that now attracts the active market of high-cube warehouse operators.

The economics of the process are enticing. Because there is no demolition of the roof, nor its utilities, these items are “re-cycled,” merely moved to a new elevation, so time and expense are minimized. Recurring taxes based on floor area are not increased. There is no impact on parking requirements. Less area means less employee travel, for more productive

order picking. The building gains immediately increased near-term value, and signifi-

match their own new height requirements, avoiding costly demolition and rebuilding.

It is now practical, and becoming imperative, to take a second look at the typical low roof building that sits idle, and consider the ingenious reconstruction process which “elevates” it to the roof-height needed for it to become a sellable/leasable, income-generating property.

cantly improved future marketability.

Diverse applications of the lifting procedure have achieved wide appeal:

- Brokers are now able to sell their well-located, but low-roof properties to warehouse prospects, who are no longer limited by the original roof height.

- Buyers and tenants are now able to expand their search to include those old low-clearance buildings, and convert them into the high-cube structures they seek.

- Owners and developers are now able to re-evaluate their existing holdings, and upgrade them to draw new tenants, or maintain existing occupants by expanding to meet their needs.

- Retailers can locate new stores at attractive existing locations, by retrofitting vacant low-ceiling stores to

The dramatic roof-lifting process has been utilized to house facilities for companies as varied as Nikon Camera, Firestone Rubber, Nature’s Bounty Vitamins, Allied Van Lines, Hewlett Packard, Colgate Palmolive, Office Max, Linens ‘N Things, Best Buy, etc.

The days when 14 ft. to 22 ft. clear buildings were considered economically suitable for storage are long gone. It is now practical, and becoming imperative, to take a second look at the typical low roof building that sits idle, and consider the ingenious reconstruction process which “elevates” it to the roof-height needed for it to become a sellable/leasable, income-generating property.

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