

Real Estate Journal

COVERING ALL OF LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK CITY AND UPSTATE NEW YORK

Developers are investing in the future: Lifting roofs to increase value and attract tenants

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Space
Technology

Old problem

The era of American manufacturing as a dominant factor is rapidly dwindling. Real estate professionals know that facilities originally built for production purposes are now commonly vacant, and are unable to match current user needs. In a consumer-based economy, companies require high-capacity storage and distribution centers for their products, not low-ceiling manufacturing plants. Yet many of those out-dated sites stand as well-built, centrally located structures that would be attractive if only they offered the cubic space that would complement their accessible locations.

New solution

Industrial developers feel the pain of their "obsolete inventory," along with the brokers who need to find proper site matches for their clients. But with the growing popularity of roof-lifting technology, owners are now exercising their ability to transform these old, low-clearance buildings into high-ceiling warehouses, and both groups are reaping the benefits. Developers are renovating those aging properties, to bring them up to the storage capacity that will attract and retain tenants. No longer do "inad-

equated pallet count" or "insufficient height" pose obstructions to closing deals on existing properties.

Future outlook

The increasing use of the roof-lifting process by developers, investors, REITs, and others, indicates their confidence that the future value of their properties is directly related to their ability to adapt to a changing market. The company that provides the patented "E-Z Riser" process for roof-lifting, Space Technology Inc. (STI) of Melville, reports enormous growth in the realization by developers that increasing height can be the key to modernizing their sites, and to creating income-producing assets instead of "obsolete" holdings.

The process

The details of the process are simple to understand, yet sophisticated in their implementation. First, each vertical column in the structure is cut and enclosed by a steel "sleeve." Next, special hydraulic jacks lift all the columns up through their sleeves simultaneously, at the rate of one ft. per hour. This causes the entire roof to rise, along with lights, sprinklers, heating, and other roof-top equipment, undisturbed. The newly created height is then enclosed with an upper wall section. The result is a freshly modernized property, accomplished rapidly by merely elevating the existing structure, rather than demolishing or creating a new one, offering tremendous savings of time and expense.

The cost

Building conditions and construction vary widely, so even for initial cost evaluation, some basic informa-

tion about the site must first be collected. (STI offers free estimates anywhere in the U.S.A.)

Since the roof-lifting procedure enables owners to circumvent the expensive options of demolishing the old roof and utilities, and to avoid construction of additional s/f, which would incur land requirements, added taxes, parking accommodations, and zoning issues, the cost savings can be staggering. According to the informative website www.Rooflift.com, Roof-lifting projects include the required structural engineering, steel fabrication, delivery, installation, roof-lift, and new upper wall enclosure.

Various applications

Many owners, finding themselves with vacancies, are utilizing the services of STI to fill those empty buildings with tenants who require higher clearance or storage capacity. The cost savings become obvious, especially when compared to the price of remaining unoccupied for any length of time.

STI also reports that when owners are exposed to the concept, and realize the results, they often begin to aggressively acquire other, low-clearance structures, frequently available at relatively attractive prices. They then engage in promoting "adaptive re-use" by lifting the roof, creating dramatic changes and impressive profits, converting out-dated eyesores into income-producing assets.

Aside from these applications, the "non-invasive" procedure also enables landlords to avoid losing good tenants who have outgrown their currently

leased premises. What may be astonishing is the discovery that the entire process of roof-lifting is often accomplished while ongoing warehouse operations continue, undisturbed! Innovative advances now enable the entire lifting procedure to be performed while the tenant continues operating, with a weather protected and secure enclosure provided throughout the project.

The benefits of roof-lifting are not limited to industrial applications, but have had an impact on retail development as well. Many retail sites are chosen, only to find that the existing building falls short of their own prescribed height, originally established to maintain consistency throughout their chain of stores, or to create a "retail-warehouse" environment. Rather than pass up that location due to the prohibitive cost of removing and rebuilding the structure, companies such as Office Max, Linens 'N Things, and Best Buy have profited from Space Technology's Roof-Lift solution.

The trend

Developers are a savvy group. Their mission, to build or buy and renovate properties, requires that they continue to attract and retain tenants, even in a changing marketplace. The growing application of the process of lifting roofs to create more cubic space, rather than relying only on s/f, is a testament to their flexibility, and to their confidence in the future values of older real estate.

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