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## **Project of the Month: HYLWA, Inc. builds new 23,000 s/f The EDGE Fitness Club at Basser Kaufman's retail center**

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HYLWA, Inc. just completed a new 23,000 s/f fitness center located at 600 New Haven Ave. Their client, The EDGE Fitness Clubs, is touted as one of the premier fitness chains on the East Coast. The project helps to revitalize the former Staples Plaza that includes Big Lots, a liquor store, Starbucks and an optometry office. This new EDGE Fitness facility is a smaller version of their 40,000 s/f prototype in Fairfield which opened earlier this year. EDGE and HYLWA took the full-sized EDGE concept and successfully downsized it to fit the existing location. It will serve as the prototype for future similar-sized facilities.

The location presented some challenges. EDGE was concerned about customers feeling like they'd be working out in a strip mall right next to big box retailers. HYLWA addressed this concern by building a new façade. The dramatic front window wall sets the fitness center apart from its neighboring businesses. The bold signage and glass entrance way with full interior view give customers the experience of walking into a health club they can call their own.

Unique features of the Derby EDGE include energy saving induction lighting, massive 16' blade ceiling fans by Big Ass Fans (yes, that's the name of the fan company!) and the latest technologies in precision engineered workout equipment. This location will feature all the other attractive offerings such as Kidz Kare onsite childcare and The EDGE Café Juice Bar.

Steven Kaufman, principal of property owner Bassar Kaufman said that The EDGE Fitness adds spark and vitality to an aging strip mall that was impacted by the economic recession, like other similar retail plazas throughout the region. The building revitalization performed by HYLWA brought a new beginning to the existing shopping center. Kaufman further explains that he was approached by several fitness clubs interested in the location but was intrigued by EDGE due to their private ownership and hands-on management style.

Most health club male/female ratios are close to 50/50. Kaufman was very impressed by EDGE's customer demographic profile which is 70% women, due largely to more group workout offerings such as Zumba. Other retail businesses in the plaza will benefit from additional foot traffic. Men are more likely to schedule their exercise regimens following work while women tend to spread that activity throughout the day. This brings multi-tenant benefits because neighboring tenants will see increased plaza traffic during all business hours.

HYLWA Inc., based in Meriden, CT has a strong specialty in designing and building fitness centers as well as retail stores. Top EDGE executive, Vin Sansone has been very pleased with HYLWA's project management expertise which helped simplify and expedite all phases of construction. EDGE plans to work with HYLWA on additional expansions including a new fitness center in Hamden for which a lease has just been signed.