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A look at the transformation of two downtown Boston tower assets; 99 High and 40 Broad St.

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Despite the turbulent economy, there is an influx of capital improvement programs underway in Downtown Boston. Seven towers are undergoing or have recently completed significant renovations that are changing the face of the city. Two properties that are being completely transformed are 99 High and 40 Broad St. Here is an inside look at both.

As construction manager, Jones Lang LaSalle has completed construction on behalf of building owner TIAA-CREF, of a far-reaching project at 99 High. Improvements at the iconic 730,000 s/f office and retail tower have made it virtually a new building inside and out. Previously perceived as having great "bones" but low aesthetics, the repositioning and branding program has successfully taken the asset up market to position it among Boston's premier towers.

The improvements to the exterior are nothing short of transformative, providing for an entirely new upscale street level experience and adding value to tenants. The open main entrance now showcases the building's address with an arresting jewel box of mirrored glass. The façade of the first two floors was upgraded to feature new Colonial Gold granite columns from India. There are new brass window storefront finishes, new awnings with the interlocked nines logos highlighted by down lighting. Sidewalks along High St. have been replaced. New energy efficient perimeter lights illuminate the first 20 stories of 99 High's distinctive scalloped bay windows. Now, when you approach the building from High and Congress Sts., the impact is dramatic.

The building's already high performance infrastructure was updated with HVAC and electrical upgrades, improved security technologies, and modernized elevators. This has earned it the prestigious EPA's Energy Star label.

New energy efficient glazed windows will be installed on all 32 floors reducing the heat and cooling loads, and an outdoor plaza area for a new restaurant will be open this spring. This will add the finishing touches to this major renovation. With occupancy at 93%, TIAA-CREF's vision for 99 High will be realized as advanced technology meets elegant design.

In 2006, amidst high interest from hotel and residential developers, Transwestern Investment Co. purchased 40 Broad St. with plans to retain it as an office building and offer a large block of contiguous space at a non-tower price point. At the time it was an under performing asset, viewed in the marketplace as tired, institutional, and dour with an inefficient lobby and high vacancy.

Built on the cusp of Modernism in the Neo Classical style, and located on a full city block, the challenge here was to make improvements that would appeal to a young, hip target audience. Merge the best of classic architecture with modern elements to attract companies migrating from the Back Bay and beyond.

Completed in nine months, the repositioning of 40 Broad St. included a contemporary glass entryway bringing abundant natural light into an inviting new two-story lobby that doubled its size.

The lobby was built in contrast to many of the new lobbies downtown that are stark for security reasons. It is a modern expression with blond wood and multiple colored glass panels, new stone flooring, original art commissioned for the space, bold lighting, seating areas and a repositioned front desk create a stylish, uplifting atmosphere.

Refreshed elevator cabs extend the lobby finishes up and into the building. There are now new elegantly designed multi-tenant lobbies, enhanced natural light, and raised ceilings to 9'8" in most of the office spaces. Major upgrades to the mechanical systems, and a large central light well help set the tone for the boutique mid-rise's new image.

At 99 High and 40 Broad, the construction team partnered with our leasing agents, property managers, architects and engineers early, even before design began. This drove marketing strategies resulting in attracting high caliber tenants from other markets. The owners' return on investment is maximized, the towers have been transformed, and the downtown experience has been elevated at a time when Boston needs it most.

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