



# nerej

## **Chairman's message: Boston's newest \$70 million renovations**

June 10, 2009 - Appraisal & Consulting

The New England/Upstate NY CRE and the Boston CoreNet chapters held a joint event at One Post Office Sq., Boston, Mass. on April 30th. Approximately 108 members attended this evening cocktail reception event entitled: "Reinvestment and Repositioning-Inside the Equity Office Experience in Downtown Boston." The event included a presentation by Robert Brown, AIA of CBT Architects, Mike Sanchez, managing director of Shawmut Design and Construction and Andrew Maher, managing director of leasing, Equity Office explaining the \$70 million redesign of lobbies at One Post Office Sq., One Memorial (Cambridge), 225 Franklin and 100 High St.'s.

The renovations took one year to complete under challenging situations. There was a collaborative effort with the contractors, architects, owners and design work team. These buildings were originally constructed in the 1980's and were now a target by the owner to be more "of the moment." The lobbies were set back from the street and it needed more public space and meeting area for people to congregate. The team pushed the lobbies out to the sidewalk and built a full height glass exterior walls. The renovation increased the retail activity.

There were different concepts of the glass lobby with crystalline transparent view to take the Post Office park out front of the buildings and use the park for its looks and colors. The color of the lobby is therefore white to accentuate the park colors. The lobby stone was imported from one quarry in Italy which was visited by Robert Brown a few times. The stone was so heavy that a 10 ton crane was required to pick up the slab so that it would not break or crack. It took 4 hours to cut through the marble and 1 day to cut the granite. From the time the stone leaves the quarry mountain, transported to a boat and shipped to Boston, it takes 6 months. The cost of the stone for the quarry owner is \$3,000 to cut a block and he resells it for \$60,000. Brown stated that he looked at 50 blocks in order to select 3 blocks. Each stone block is cut and defined how it will be laid out; upside down or dry "lay." Each stone is  $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick and will snap if it is not picked up properly by the crane.

The lobby at One Post Office Sq. encourages business meetings. The Pavilion is now a conference center at Shawmut Bank and the old vaults are restrooms. At 225 Franklin Str., there was no front lobby so it was pulled out over the sidewalk and they took stone from the Italian quarry that had not been quarried in over 100 years and not seen in the US for over 100 years. They quarried under the top of the actual quarry touched due to a demand from the Italian government which had never been touched. The quarry was 2 miles from Michelangelo's home. The total investment in all 4 buildings is now over \$70 million. and was completed in a 14-16 month span. It took 6 months to design. They put aside 2-3% of the stone as reserves with a local fabricator in raw condition in case there is a future crack. A normal reserve factor is 10% but that would cost \$100,000 which was expensive.

The evening was also cooperative with the weather and many attendees toured the 3 buildings. It was a successful event.

Robert Nahigian FRICS, CRE, is the 2009 CRE chairman and president of Auburndale Realty, Co., Newton, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540