

BANKER & TRADESMAN

THE REAL ESTATE, BANKING AND COMMERCIAL WEEKLY FOR MASSACHUSETTS

ESTABLISHED 1872

Burlington Building Benefits From Firm's Forward Thinking

By Caitlin Noonan

FORWARD VISION MAY BE AN INHERENT TRAIT in the development industry, but Nordblom Co., a Burlington-based property management, development, brokerage and leasing firm that manages the vast majority of Northwest Park in Burlington, takes that attribute to a new level. The company doesn't just anticipate change; it designs its buildings to accommodate it.

Nordblom Co. has built a reputation of working with its clients at Northwest Park and satisfying their specific needs. "We build to work for each tenant," said Douglas Wynyard, senior vice president of Nordblom Corfac International Brokerage, the firm's real estate division. "And it's been a real success story to be able to manage a company on a relationship-oriented approach."

"In renovating a building, we go through a series of 'what if?' scenarios," he continued. "How many different ways can we play this in the future? If we can create more options, the project is less risky down the road. And if we're clever enough and game-plan well, we're not just making an investment on one tenant but also many tenants in the future."

Keeping with its unique approach of flexible design, Nordblom Co. did the preparation work for its current construction project at 52 Second Ave. nearly six years ago. In 2000, the 27,520-square-foot structure underwent a gut renovation in order to prepare for the occupancy of a new company.

"In 2000, the owners wanted to update the building," said Steve Logan, senior vice president of development at Nordblom Co. "It was used as an industrial building up into the 1990s, but that had become pretty much obsolete by that time in Burlington, where the market was geared more toward office than industrial [structures]. So we



Nordblom Co. did the preparation work for its current construction project at 52 Second Ave. in Burlington nearly six years ago. The project involves the renovation of the office space at the property, which is part of Burlington's Northwest Park.

put together a team of architects and engineers who designed a renovated building that took the exterior skin off, stripping the structure down to its steel."

Although the building was only supposed to be welcoming one office tenant, Nordblom's developers designed the space to easily accommodate up to four tenants under the same roof.

"First, we created a lobby and common hallway through the building, which was designed so that it could be used as a nice, spacious lobby for one company, but also could be [sectioned off] to act as an entryway for a number of companies," said Logan. "We also located new restrooms so that they could be accessed from the lobby or the hallways. When a single tenant occu-

pies the building, the hallway opens up as a major thoroughfare. But the bones of the hall were designed in a way so that, if we wanted to bring more companies in, we could easily add new tenant entrances."

'The Most Logical Way'

In addition to their more evident design in creating a flexible floor plan, the developers focused on details behind the scenes.

"From a mechanical standpoint, we put four HVAC systems on the roof, so the space could be easily adapted to house four tenants within one building. We also installed five electrical meters [when we ordinarily would just install one]," said Logan. "We planned ahead and thought of the most

continued on page 2

logical way that the space could be broken up into four quadrants.”

In January of this year, the existing tenant in the building sold off a part of its company, thereby condensing itself into two-thirds of the space it originally occupied. In embarking upon the project, the developers already had completed a large portion of the work involved in the renovation.

“It didn’t really cost the owner any more initially during the rehab for us to build in this flexibility. At the time, with the amount of work we do to start, we get discounts

based on volume. And most of the work that we were doing, we would have done anyway,” said Logan. “We had to put in bathrooms, it was just a matter of where; we needed to build a lobby, but it was just a matter how we did it. We worked on the construction as you do in any project, but we did so while keeping an eye toward the future flexibility of the building.”

The first phase of the project – the half of the building currently undergoing renovation – is scheduled to be completed by the end of March. Phase two – the other half of

the building – is expected to be finished by April.

Like its adaptable structures, Northwest Park has seen its share of adjustments over the years. “Northwest Park reflects exactly what’s going on in the economy. For a time we primarily had defense companies, then software companies, and now there’s a mix with a large number of medical device companies,” said Wynyard. “Perhaps it’s a statement of the design of the buildings – that we’re able to mirror changes and make buildings flexible.” ■