

Project Information

Gap International Headquarters
Springfield, PA

Project Overview

Pursuant to the completion of GAP International's new corporate headquarters in Springfield, PA, C. Erickson & Sons was asked to return for the completion of a second phase, adding an additional 29,000 square feet to the building's original architectural footprint.

In keeping with the existing Feng Shui design, the new addition blended with the original structure's full-height curtain windows, sweeping its architectural lines into a graceful patio dining area, as well as seamlessly expanding interior spaces.

The addition embraces not only the practicality of functional workspace, but the easily overlooked subtlety of art in design: executive offices boast an arrangement conducive to the Feng Shui flow of business, dually inviting natural light and the elements of success through high windows and orchestrated patterns of foot traffic.

More than just an aesthetic improvement, the addition added and renovated a number of amenities, including a patio-level, dine-in kitchen, interior office and meeting spaces, as well as free-floating second-floor balconies.

Committed to maintaining a comfortable work environment for our clients throughout construction, Erickson completed the project while the original building was still fully occupied.

Design & Craftsmanship

Incorporation of the addition into the original structure went above and beyond the architectural and functional melding of new and existing office space. In addition to expanding the building's overall footprint, it effectively created a whole new profile to what was already an award-winning feather in Erickson's construction management cap.

Key design features that set apart the GAP Headquarters addition include:

FENG SHUI

Feng Shui is an art and science that orchestrates the subtle forces of the elements in design. Utilizing color, materials, the placement of furniture and flow of traffic, it supports productive and harmonious work and living spaces, balancing and channeling positive energy throughout a given space.

Like the first phase of the project, the GAP Headquarters addition was designed and built with the fundamentals of Feng Shui in mind, including a redesign of areas where new construction had altered the intended "flow." Traffic areas were rerouted to maintain seamless paths around work areas and interior offices, and new executive offices were built to ensure that they remained at a location optimal to Feng Shui's principal.

Another design feature rooted in Feng Shui design was the lack of corners throughout the space. Outside corners project an undesirable, sharpened angle that the owners wished to avoid. The solution to this was an accent on curved structures and materials, such as the exterior curtain walls, metal panels, concrete retaining walls, millwork panels and natural stone tops.

Like the original structure, the open, "yang" design of the addition includes high ceilings and solid maple office fronts, which compliment the abundance of natural light and surrounding, wooded landscape.

EXTERIOR PATIO

The sprawling, 7,500 square foot, two-level patio features serpentine retaining walls topped with radiused bluestone pavers and stainless steel railings. The concrete retaining walls and footings extend 20' underground due to the steep grade, and the expanse of the patio. The patio was also

outfitted with exterior lighting, power, and audio for outdoor conferences and corporate functions. A graceful addition to the exterior, it provides an attractive and functional overlap of interior and exterior environments.

EXECUTIVE SUITE

In Feng Shui, the "Commanding Position" refers to an arrangement conducive to concentration and productivity. Accordingly, in the building's original layout, the executive offices were placed in the appropriate Command Position, furthest from the front door of the building. With the construction of the new addition, the suites were moved relational to the new shape and structure of the building.

The shape of the rooms and furnishings, natural materials, and stepped ceilings give the executive suite a graceful flow from corner to corner. Radius maple millwork panels wrap the common wall between the office and video conference room, drawing the two areas together.

The video conference room is outfitted with state-of-the-art audio / visual equipment for client meetings. Radiant floor tubing, embedded in the concrete slab, both heats the space and minimizes duct work, allowing for higher ceilings, and the building's characteristic full-height exterior windows.

Just beyond the broad span of vertical windows, a balcony following the curvature of the exterior glass curtain wall adds subtle visual interest, while still maintaining the careful geometry of the building's clean façade. From within, the surrounding woods are invitingly accessible, enhancing the elemental feel used throughout the suite.

Excellence in Project Teamwork

The project team consisted of the design and construction team from the original building construction, creating a smooth, undemanding project for the owner, and team-wide understanding of the owner's high-quality expectations, method of design, and decision-making.

The open, daily discussions of construction details allowed the construction to be completed quickly, and for the architect's vision for the space to remain unbroken. The constant flow of communication allowed for unconventional details and materials to be installed effortlessly, and coordinated with the adjoining systems.

The owner's requirements for the project's "on time and on budget" completion were secondary to building and maintaining a quality environment, and one in which employees would ultimately feel at home and at peace in their work. Regardless of one's opinion of Feng Shui's affect on design, the personal and emotional touches that were infused by careful planning and execution can be positively felt by anyone who spends time in the space.

Happily, Erickson was indeed able to complete the project on time, and under budget, without the sacrifice of the careful details that went into the project's planning.

Innovation in Construction Techniques or Materials

The addition added several innovative features, such as the radius stainless-steel balcony, radiant floor heating, and a "floating" toilet design, in the bathroom of the executive suite. In keeping with the principals of Feng Shui, however, the overall affect of the addition is best defined by the subtle interaction of its component elements.

All rooms have operable windows, combating the sense of claustrophobia and stagnancy that can come from too controlled an interior environment. The installation of MechoShade drapes allow privacy between interior rooms and corridors, where glass walls stand in the stead of solid, opaque partition walls.

Additionally, the aforementioned glass partitions required extensive maple framing, as well as maple wall paneling for curved areas. Installation of these panels required reinstallation in some

areas, due to Erickson's commitment to a truly quality finished product.

The client's desire for optimization of hidden space led to the integration of closet and storage areas which typically would have boasted nothing but drywall. Most of these storage spaces used hidden doors and hidden hardware, allowing them to blend seamlessly into the wall finish of the room.

Meeting the Challenge of a Difficult Job

Despite the expected challenges of any construction project, the issues surrounding the GAP Headquarters addition were blessedly few, and handled with such aplomb by all involved as to be of no great issue after the fact.

Some of the challenges faced during construction included:

FENG SHUI

The emphasis on Feng Shui did not allow the same room for correction and improvisation as a project without such design specifications. Any given issue required a solution that was both practical, in keeping with the surrounding space, and in line with principals outlined by the Feng Shui consultant. Erickson relied on flexibility and careful planning to maneuver around obstacles as they arose.

SEASONAL CONDITIONS

Special consideration was given to fast-tracked scheduling and purchasing; the foundation package and steel package were purchased early, so that the structure could be enclosed prior to the onset of winter weather.