



Outside the Region: Spring Mill Corp. Center undergoes renovation and modernization project

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Conshohocken, PA The Spring Mill Corporate Center, a 635,000 s/f office park consisting of four major buildings at 1100 East Hector St., will undergo a major, multi-million-dollar renovation and modernization that will include the creation of a new stand-alone 40,000 s/f office building, expanded amenities and additional parking.

Originally constructed in the early part of the 20th Century, the 36-acre complex was formerly the site of the Lee Tire Co. and offers access to the Schuylkill River and the SEPTA train station.

An entity of the Dolgin family acquired the center in 2006 from Preferred Real Estate Investments Inc. in a \$61 million transaction.

In the ensuing decade, the new owners continued to make periodic improvements to the complex as it emerged as a leading suburban multi-tenant office and industrial tenant destination. These improvements included the conversion of former warehouse space to high-tech offices for tenants like David's Bridal, NSM Insurance and Lucky Vitamin; new roofs, exterior renovations and upgrade; lobby renovations; expanded parking; the addition of a 75-seat auditorium and training center; common-area systems upgrades; and fully redesigned courtyards.

"This new renovation and modernization initiative is the most aggressive and dynamic undertaking yet at the properties, heralding the final transformation into what the ownership feels will be one of the premier office parks in the Philadelphia market," said Kal Dolgin, co-president of Kalmon Dolgin Affiliates.

Included in the new renovation and modernization plan designed by Miller Purdy Architects will be the demolition of 120,000 s/f of old warehouse space to create over 320 parking spots. The remaining 42,000 s/f single-story building will be refinished as a stand-alone office complex with adjacent parking, open picnic space and high-tech interconnectivity.

In the main building, a 25,000 s/f interior section that was formerly used for storage is being reinvented and will contain a full-service 10,000 s/f health club complete with locker rooms and facilities; an amenity center that will house a Wi-Fi lounge with couches, pool and game tables and "grab-and-go" food service to augment the existing full-service café that will also be modernized this fall.

Connecting all of this together will be a new staircase leading from the third-floor office section into the renovated amenity center. All halls and common areas are going to receive a facelift.

“This renovation and modernization project is designed to attract the influx of job-seeking millennials drawn to Philadelphia by growing opportunities and housing that is more affordable than other major cities in the region,” said Dolgin. “It reflects the changing face of office design with less focus on private space and more on shared amenities and common areas that encourage employee collaboration.”

As a result of these plans, there has been a noted increase in leasing activity at the complex. Ownership recently signed Bimbo Bakeries USA, one of the world’s largest international bakeries, joining other new tenants such as eBay spin-offs Pepperjam, a full-service performance marketing company, and Square 2 Marketing.

The property is located across the street from new office and residential developments, the latter completed in 2016 and containing over 350 rental apartments with full amenity packages. Affiliated entities recently purchase a property adjacent to Spring Mill Corporate Center and intends to build additional offices and residential units starting this fall to augment the existing office complex.

The architecturally unique property has a long and storied history. A 7,900 s/f mansion on the property was originally constructed as a safe haven for King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette of France, who did not escape the French Revolution and were executed in 1793. The property was the site of Philadelphia’s first vineyard and the mansion was later used as law offices and professional space. The Spring Mill name reaches even further back in the property’s history as the site of the village of Spring Mill, which was established in 1704, and the surrounding neighborhood still goes by that name.

The main building at the site is a suburban landmark that was a symbol of the city’s past industrial might. It was built in 1910 by John Ellwood Lee, a graduate of Conshohocken High School. In 1883, Lee started a company that manufactured surgical supplies. Fascinated by the automobile, Lee sold that business to Johnson & Johnson and built the tire factory, helped by advice from Henry Ford. After labor troubles, the plant was bought by rival Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. in 1965, and closed in 1980. Many motorists still refer to the bend in the Schuylkill Expressway across the river from the building as “Lee Tire Curve,” a name long used in radio traffic alerts. In 1987, the plant was acquired by Preferred Real Estate Investments, renamed “Lee Park” and converted for office use. In 2005, the property was renamed the Spring Mill Corporate Center.