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One Channel Center is part of a larger redevelopment of Boston's Seaport District, which will create more than 1.1 million square feet of residential, office, and commercial space.

The Seaport District's Office Anchor

CV Properties makes a green statement through its commitment to revitalize a forgotten area of Boston

By Julie Schaeffer

PROJECT

Location Boston

Size 525,000 ft²

Completed 2014 (expected)

Program Office and commercial space

TEAM

Developer AREA Property Partners and CV Properties (joint venture)

Architect ADD Inc (office) and Spalding Tougias Architects (garage)

MEP Engineer C3

General Contractor Suffolk Construction

Landscape Architect Halvorson Design Partnership

As One Channel Center—an 11-story, LEED certifiable building with 521,000 square feet of office space, 4,000 square feet of ground-level commercial space and a 980-car above-ground parking garage—moves into the final phase of construction on its major development along A Street in South Boston, CV Properties has increasing evidence that the development will continue to revitalize the Seaport District, a 1,000-acre area that represents the single largest urban redevelopment in the nation close to a major downtown area. Richard Galvin, president and founder of CV Properties, explains how.

gb&d: Why was it important to focus on Boston's Seaport District?

Richard Galvin: For the longest time, the formerly industrial Seaport was a bunch of empty parking lots in the hinterlands, at least from a Bostonian's perspective. It was also inaccessible; you had to cross over the Fort Point Channel to get there. Two big things happened that unlocked the potential of the area. One was the completion of the Big Dig, which opened up highway stops on the Massachusetts Turnpike and Route 93 right into the area, making it much more accessible. The other was the construction of a convention center and a Westin Hotel. Once we got past the recession, going into 2010 and 2011, pent-up demand was released, and developers started taking advantage of the opportunity. It was a classic 30-year overnight success story.

gb&d: It was still pretty close to the economic downturn, so how did the building project get off the ground?

Galvin: Channel Center is a seven-acre property. We bought the property, which consisted of five existing buildings—totaling approximately 370,000 square feet—and development rights for an additional 751,000 square feet of office and residential space on three separate unoccupied parcels in March 2007. The first few phases were renovations of the existing brick-and-beam buildings. We always thought one of the other parcels—a parking lot permitted for a couple of big office buildings—could be a great site for the right user, but the timing was wrong. During the crash of 2008 and the recession of 2009 and 2010, we focused on leasing those buildings. Then, in 2011, State Street Corporation began looking at alternatives to its existing location that would allow it to consolidate. It signed on as the sole tenant of the building and proceeded with design and construction.

gb&d: What was the impetus for making the building LEED certifiable?

Galvin: There are requirements in Boston that require new buildings to be LEED certifiable, but much more than regulation drove this decision. Sustainability has become the rule rather than the exception for sophisticated corporate tenants such as State Street. They recognize that new employees, the talented 25- to 30-year-olds they want to recruit, are much more grounded in sustainable practices and want to know the companies they're working for and the buildings they're working in are attentive to that. So what was viewed as a cute fad several years ago is now the norm. If you don't do it, you aren't going to be competitive as a building owner or employer.

gb&d: What did you do to meet those green needs?

Galvin: We did everything to meet demands for sustainability and LEED Silver requirements. For example, we're going to have a solar rooftop array and are working directly with State Street on an energy management system. We'll have native landscaping, bicycle storage, and energy-efficient lighting. We've also been paying close attention to travel distances, where demo materials went and where new materials are coming from.

gb&d: What are some of the building's notable elements?

Galvin: Visually, all of the Channel Center properties mix modern details while preserving the architectural charm of the past by combining cutting-edge office space with loft-style buildings. This building is no exception. Brick-and-beam architecture is reminiscent of the area's former life as an industrial community.

The office building will be divided into two volumes by a lit glass pane and two-story pedestrian passageway, and it will connect the office building to the garage and a 1.7-acre park on the corner of A Street and West First Street. As for the garage, we wanted to soften the precast concrete structure's appearance, so the garage's eastern side will be wrapped with a graphic designed by a local artist, and its western side will be wrapped in another graphic.

gb&d: Has the community had anything to say about the building? How has it reacted?

Galvin: We're fulfilling the promise of the area, and that's been welcomed. The community has also reacted positively to the planned public-use park, which will include a beautiful, green lawn area, a recreational area, a half basketball court, and a dog park to make it very active. Street improvements are also involved in the immediate area. They include the construction of Richards Street from A Street to the South Boston Bypass Road and the extension of Medallion Avenue from Iron Street to Richards Street. We're also making streetscape improvements, including new sidewalks, street trees, and lighting.

gb&d: What have you learned from the experience?

Galvin: It's been a complicated, multifaceted project, and that was a challenge. But through the effort, I've come to appreciate the importance of sustainability even more. From the very beginning this was going to be a LEED-certified building for the reason's I've noted. But also through the process, it's become clear to me as a developer that I have to be sustainable. I can't win otherwise.

GREEN

Certification LEED Silver (expected)

Site Urban, former industrial area

Water Low-flow fixtures, dual-flush toilets

Energy Rooftop solar array, energy management system

Landscape Native plants

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