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Credit crunch has companies making old buildings new again

Architecture firm ASD redesigning old North Fulton business park as new headquarters

By Gertha Coffee
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Architecture firm ASD is turning a commercial real estate frog into a prince with its redesign of an old North Fulton business park as the new corporate headquarters of JAS Forwarding Worldwide.

While the credit freeze has all but halted new construction, renovations are picking up as companies look for ways to accommodate changing office needs. The challenge is to create something special, experts say.

"There are many attractive assets -- underutilized old buildings that don't have to be torn down," said architect Roberto Paredes, a vice president and principal at ASD's headquarters in downtown Atlanta. "Often, a second or third life can be achieved."

JAS announced in January that it purchased Cosmopolitan North, a six-acre property in Sandy Springs, and will redevelop it to serve as its world and U.S. headquarters. Griffin Construction Services is the general contractor of the more than \$20 million project. ASD is the architect.

JAS said the existing campus -- built in the late 1960s and early 1970s -- would be customized for the logistics company's employees, visiting customers and vendors.

"It was so old, it didn't work as a modern office campus," said Paredes. "It had outdoor corridors," and the purchase included four separate buildings. The renovation connects two of the buildings with an atrium. A third will serve as JAS U.S. headquarters. One is being demolished.

The updated campus will include office and conference space, a fitness center, jogging trail, game room and hotel-like guest suites for visiting executives. The company will house 172 employees at its headquarters. The project is scheduled to be finished next summer.

Renovating was less expensive than demolishing in this particular instance, said Paredes.

ASD has been involved in a number of renovation projects in metro Atlanta, including Peachtree 25 and the Hurt Building.

“There is a significant opportunity for minor and major building renovation and repositioning,” added Thom Williams, president and CEO of ASD, which has offices nationwide.

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