

From the Sacramento Business Journal

<http://www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/print-edition/2012/11/30/the-project-that-time-forgot.html>

# DMV building: The project that time forgot

## Remodel took 14 years to finish

Premium content from Sacramento Business Journal by Sanford Nax, Staff Writer

Date: Friday, November 30, 2012, 3:00am PST



### [Sanford Nax](#)

Staff Writer- *Sacramento Business Journal*

[Email](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

Remodeling a half-million-square-foot building is challenging by any measure. Doing it with 2,500 employees still inside requires a juggling act of mammoth proportions.

"It's like a small town," said [Michael Haviland](#), departmental construction and maintenance supervisor for the state Department of Motor Vehicles, who oversaw the 14-year, \$130 million remodel of the agency's 525,000-square-foot headquarters building on Broadway.

The marathon project ended this month. For the first time in well over a decade, the building is no longer a construction zone.

Many employees started and ended their DMV careers in that zone. Toddlers in the on-site day-care center when construction started in 1998 are now in high school.

The building was constructed in 1962 and was outdated by 1998. Project managers wanted to give the building another 30 years of life by bringing it up to modern codes, removing asbestos and other hazardous material and making it more energy efficient and earthquake-safe.

The giant floors — each is 72,000 square feet — and small windows meant few workers inside could see natural light. And the building, commonly called "The Headquarters," was widely regarded as the ugliest in town.

"Now it has been transformed into one of the most attractive in the city," said [Nick Docous](#), an architect with **Lionakis**. His firm did the main architectural work, as well as interior design, structural engineering and sustainability design. Docous estimates the renovation employed 5,000 workers at one time or another — not counting workers at off-site suppliers.

### **Should it have been torn down?**

Various alternatives to remodeling were explored, including razing the structure and starting anew or building a replacement structure somewhere else.

Officials determined that renovation would be the cheapest alternative. The building is the largest of a 25-acre campus that also contains two other structures — 250,000 square feet and 35,000 square feet respectively — so any relocation or new construction would affect them as well. The entire campus houses 3,300 employees and manages registration and licensing for the state's 33 million cars.

Haviland said the cost of moving employees, renting temporary space, razing the existing structure and building anew was too much.

"We looked at all the different scenarios," said Haviland. "The only way to get started was a floor-by-floor renovation. That was the only thing there was funding for ... A reasoned approach to move people throughout the building was the only thing that made sense."

Another reason for choosing to remodel the DMV building was its structural integrity, Docous said. "It had tremendous bones and infrastructure in place," he said.

He said a fiscal analysis is under way to determine — with the benefits of hindsight — if the renovation was indeed the best way to go. That analysis should be done by February.

Each floor had to be bid out as a separate construction project, lengthening the process.

"Six different bid packages," Docous said. "Each floor took an average of eight or nine months or a year, depending upon how complicated it was."

And budget vagaries were a big factor; sometimes the DMV's budget appropriations would be approved and sometimes they would be delayed. A two-year gap interrupted one project, Haviland said.

Through it all, employees persevered. A worker would go home on Friday and come back Monday to a new work station on another floor. "We had to get into every aspect of our operation, down to where people sit and their access and their computer systems," he said. "It was a series of domino moves. Thousands and thousands of moves without trying to move anyone more than once. It was like a giant Rubik's Cube."

It was the largest DMV remodeling project, and was among the most ambitious remodel in recent state history. The closest comparison is the renovation of office buildings 8 and 9 at 714 and 715 P streets. Design review on those began in 2006, and construction was

from 2006 to 2010. It was a 632,600-square-foot remodel that cost \$157 million, and resulted in a project that received a gold LEED rating.

### Revamped inside and out

The DMV project brought the building up to current seismic and other code standards and will likely be 30 percent more energy efficient.

The new building skin of glass and insulated panels cuts heating and cooling costs. The southwest portion of the structure, which receives the most sun, has a second skin designed to take advantage of the sun in both summer and winter to save energy.

One result: Larger windows and hallways allow sunlight to reach deep into the building. In some cases, this work reduced space available for desks, but it was deemed worthwhile for employees to have natural light.

The four major finish elements — glass, aluminum panels, insulated metal panels and composite phenolic panels — are arrayed in such a way that the building looks different from every angle.

A new central plant behind the building uses state-of-the-art equipment to produce chilled water and steam that heats and cools the renovated headquarters as well as the two other DMV buildings and a host of other state office buildings.

Covering the roof are 2,295 solar panels, which produce 625,000 kilowatt hours of power, or enough to supply the electrical needs of about 70 homes, said [Gary Verbeke](#), senior energy advisor with the Savings by Design program at **Sacramento Municipal Utility District**. The DMV received two rebates stemming from the solar installation totaling \$481,585.

Verbeke said SMUD incorporated 10 of 13 energy-efficiency recommendations made by SMUD. Those included replacing lamps and sensors throughout the building with more energy efficient types, and upgrading air conditioning equipment.

Sanford Nax covers real estate, planning, development, construction and economic issues for the Sacramento Business Journal.