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# Columbia Builds Cell Signaling Technology Biotech Lab



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Danvers, MA - So, you've probably heard about the office building turned hotel, or the historic landmark turned hotel, or even the hotel turned correctional facility. But have you



heard about the hotel turned research laboratory? That's exactly what's happening at the former King's Grant Inn located on Rte 128 Danvers which is now being converted into a new state-of-the-art headquarters and laboratory facility by Cell Signaling Technology, Inc. (CST) of Beverly.

By early 2004, CST, a leader in the Biomedical research field, recognized they were rapidly outgrowing their current North Shore location. Wanting to own and manage their own facility, they located some suitable locations and settled on the King's Grant Hotel because of its location, size, parking and growth expansion options. CST approached the hotel's owners, consummated the deal and soon began designing and reconfiguring the facility to suit their own needs. "By doing so, they were in the \$175 sf range as opposed to the \$300 sf range of most laboratory construction," said Doug Trees, Principal of D.F. Trees Associates Architects.



In touring the new 105,000 sf building, one can't help but be struck by the guest rooms that now house laboratory stations and corporate offices. Former multi-purpose function rooms have become office, marketing, laboratory, and other back-of-house space. Yet the conversion is flawless, as if the building was always intended for laboratory use.



Working in close collaboration with Trees Associates, North Reading-based Columbia Construction Company has been responsible for the creative transformation. Instead of a Tudor-inspired façade, complete with stucco and wide dark beams, one now sees natural shingles, glass accents, a new slate roof and restored trellises for climbing vines. The

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original footprint remains virtually the same. Construction has taken place primarily on the two existing floors, with the majority of it being demolished and rebuilt to suit CST's specific needs. 66 laboratories were constructed, with 11 fume hoods installed.

Key areas were retrofitted such as the stairwells, basement areas and all new mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems were installed along with new cladding, roofing and glazing. Along the northern and eastern sides, there are steel balconies that once led to guest rooms but now provide access between floors and they overlook the property's grounds.

One interesting hotel landmark remains – the enclosed indoor greenhouse pool area, which CST now plans to use as an informal Town Square, where impromptu meetings and gatherings are conducted. Serving as a backdrop to the main reception area, the pool itself has been completely filled in, original tropical flora remains, including 40-year old irreplaceable rubber trees which were kept alive during the winter season through innovative weatherproofing techniques. Four water features are being installed, as well as selected stonework and a wooden walkway which will provide an interesting landscape to visitors and employees alike. In addition, sophisticated water retention systems have been

installed where the pool was once located to allow for the use of non-potable water throughout the project's interior and exterior landscape.

Other items that help meet LEEDs criteria include the wooden trellises located at the side of the property, which provide natural shading to the property along the long rows of windows and privacy to those whose offices they shelter. Additionally, Cell Signaling was able to add five percent to the overall square feet of parking space, without changing the lot's original footprint.

Hamilton, MA-based Trees Associates, particularly known for their high-end design, carefully and discretely laid out workstations, refrigeration units, electrical outlets and other related areas so as to keep aesthetics high along with researcher functionality. This meant that detailed measures happened at every turn. Said Maynard Baker, Project Manager for Columbia, "Custom millwork designed specifically to Cell Signaling's researchers' specifications was installed, and careful attention was given to every detail, including the smallest ones such as where to place the electrical outlets."

Columbia Superintendent Greg Keller added, "Each lab has refrigerator chests similar to a restaurant or florists for the researchers. They are so large it was impossible to bring them up the stairwells. Instead, we opened up the ends of the corridor with large oversized glass doors so that the refrigeration units could be hoisted through them. The refrigerator's outlets were then run from the ceilings to allow for easier installation and subsequent repair work. The new corridor doors also allow for natural light in the hallway and laboratories. Throughout the facility you'll find little touches such as this."

Another innovative aspect centers on the structure's 8½-foot floor-to-floor height. Normally, modern laboratories would feature 14 or 15-foot high ceilings. However, the conversion did not allow for this without significantly changing the original building's design integrity. Rather than drastically alter the existing building, CST, Trees Associates and Columbia Construction opted to run ducts and related lines over the top and vertically down the building through into the laboratories.

In summary, the King's Grant Inn may no longer greet tourists and other area visitors but it surely remains a landmark. It will soon become one of the nations leading research labs and it is a tribute to teamwork, innovation and vision – key elements and testimony to Cell Signaling Technology and the team responsible for putting this project together.

