

# AIA Richmond Chapter 2006 Design Awards

## Honor Award Winner

### **Project: Recladding of Richmond City Hall**

Owner: City of Richmond, Virginia  
Architect: SMBW Architects, Richmond, VA  
Location: Richmond, VA  
Completion: December 2005  
Building Type: Public, Civic  
Program: Building Facade Replacement + MEP Systems Upgrade  
Budget: \$25,000,000  
Final Cost: \$21,000,000

### **Jury Comments:**

- Tremendous urban intervention that is well controlled at the detail level.
- Transformed something considered by many to have a negative stigma into a positive symbol of the city.
- Made something from an icon that previously did not work very well.
- First rate urban space.
- Roofscape and entry particularly elegant.
- Technical achievement.
- Contribution to city identity and image.

### **Project Description:**

Richmond City Hall is situated in the heart of downtown Richmond's commercial and civic corridor. The design team was tasked by the Client to review and evaluate the existing condition and remaining service life of various materials, components, and systems at Richmond City Hall, built in 1971. Although it was determined that a significant portion of the building's infrastructure remained intact and functional, the survey also revealed the presence of an on-going and potentially dangerous condition called *hysteresis* at the building envelope that was adversely affecting the appearance and structural integrity of the facade's marble panels. The panels had begun to crack, bow, and loosen over time due to temperature changes and the infiltration of moisture. As a result of the study, the recommendation was to remove the existing marble cladding, which was progressively failing, and replace it with a palette of stainless steel, painted aluminum, and granite.

The design team seized the opportunity to both resolve a pragmatic issue and redefine the mass and scale of the building to establish a prominent visual marker on the skyline. A public rooftop observation deck was also remodeled with butt-glazed glass panels and a streamlined stainless steel canopy projecting along the south facing Broad Street facade as a contemporary interpretation of the cornice lines on other major public buildings in the city. It, along with new steel and glass entry canopies at sidewalk level, relieved the rigid volumetric symmetry of the building. As one half of the existing marble column enclosures only concealed hot and cold water risers, air ducts, and rain leaders, the "faux" columns were modified to allow a significant reduction in perimeter surface area and increase the visual permeability of the facade. In addition, the corner columns of the building were removed, revealing cantilevered floor plates.

This major urban project came in significantly under budget and has enabled Richmond City Hall to present a new image to the city while extending its useful service life well into the 21st century.

**Project Credits**

Architect: SMBW Architects, PC  
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Richmond, VA 23224  
804.233.5343

Project Team: Fred Ortiz\_Principal in Charge  
Fred Hopkins\_Project Architect  
Jason Hendricks  
Fouad Khalil  
Maija Kreishman

Consultants: Wiss Janney Elstner\_Building Envelope Consultant: Dan Lemieux  
Daniels and Associates\_Structural Engineering: Janet Daniels  
HC Yu and Associates\_MEP Engineering: Harold Lanna

Contractor: James G. Davis Construction Corporation  
12530 Parklawn Dr.  
Rockville, MD 20852

Owner: City of Richmond  
900 E. Broad St.  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
Owner's Representative: Richard Morse, Architect

Photography: J West Productions, LLC



Front Entry Detail



Front elevation / roof detail



Detail of renovated skydeck