

Future-Ready by Design: Reinventing the New Jersey State Office Building

How do you design a building when you don't yet know who it's for? That was the puzzle facing the State of New Jersey when they approached Lammey + Giorgio about the historic, but long-vacant, New Jersey State Office Building. There was no confirmed tenant. No program. And the proposed budget was questionably realistic.

Seeing More Than What's There

The building itself was full of potential: a historic façade, prime real estate, and strong bones. But it had sat empty for years, weighed down by uncertainty and underdefined plans.

However, the challenges began with the proposed sequencing: promising results before analyzing requirements. The State had committed to a renovation timeline and budget without the fundamental assessment that should precede any major real estate investment. When L+G conducted our analysis, we discovered their renovation budget was off by a factor of three.

Before putting pen to paper, L+G did something unusual—we hit pause. No concepts. No renderings. First, a full operational and building assessment. We evaluated the structure, systems, and envelope. We clarified what was viable and what wasn't. And, crucially, we helped the State define who the space was really for.

Our team worked side by side with NJ Division of Property Management and Construction (DPMC) to pressure-test assumptions, align stakeholders, and scope the project to match both budget and ambition.

"Too many projects fail in the planning phase because the wrong questions get asked," Giorgio explains. "We helped the State ask better ones—and that changed everything."

Designing Without a Program—and Without Waste

No confirmed tenant? No problem.

While most firms would see this as a liability, L+G saw it as an opportunity to challenge the fundamental assumption that buildings must serve single, static purposes. Instead

of guessing what the State would need and being wrong, we designed for the one thing we knew they would need: change.

Rather than lock into a single use, L+G designed a modular, high-performance shell that could accommodate a wide range of state agencies. The floorplates follow a consistent rhythm. Room sizes can flex. Departments can shift. The building adapts without needing to be gutted each time priorities change.

That adaptability is what makes the project truly future-ready. Whether it's one agency taking over every floor or five departments sharing space, the architecture is built to handle it with minimal disruption and maximum return.

Delivering More Than Drawings

Too often, design teams walk away once the drawings are approved. L+G delivered much more. Alongside construction documents, we handed DPMC a full adaptation playbook: a visual and annotated guide to how the space can be reconfigured over time.

That playbook includes multiple fit-out scenarios, each with guidance on:

- Code compliance
- Egress and safety
- Departmental adjacency
- Mechanical and IT coordination

Instead of reinventing the wheel for every new tenant, the State now has a roadmap. They can move faster, spend smarter, and make changes with confidence.

What's the ROA?

While most firms would have delivered a beautiful building that served nobody particularly well, L+G delivered a business platform through an architectural medium:

- Budget disaster prevented through reality-based planning, not wishful thinking
- Static monument transformed into dynamic business platform
- Uncertainty converted from liability into strategic advantage
- Long-term operational costs minimized through adaptable design
- Future renovation cycles eliminated through modular flexibility

The Return on Architecture came from strategic alignment—not just between design and budget, but between architecture and adaptability.

"We helped the State spend smarter, not just today, but for the next 50 years," Giorgio says. "That's what ROA is all about: value that keeps performing."

Your workspace is an investment. Are you getting the returns you deserve?

Your space is an asset. With the right design and strategy, your space can reduce expenses and maintenance costs and increase wealth and resilience.

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