

# From 1950s Bunker to Contemporary: Imagination and Creativity Transform Space at Covance

The renovation and addition to Covance's building in Madison, Wisconsin completely transform a bunker-like structure into an exciting, contemporary facility that reinvents the client's image and boosts corporate performance.

The design centers on discovery. Every view from the building provides a different perspective of architecture and the outdoors. Unity is integral to the program, as well. The site, architectural, structural and interior design are highly integrated and significantly improve circulation through the space.

**Owner's Program** Covance, one of the world's largest contract testing laboratories, occupies a building that originally was constructed by the Department of Defense in the 1950s. Since purchasing the building in the '70s, Covance incrementally expanded and remodeled the original structure to a total of 394,520 square feet. In 2001, the firm started planning another 136,000-s.f. expansion and renovation. The program was driven by Covance's commitment to enhance performance, service and quality for a rapidly expanding customer base. The key design objectives were to:

- Create an exciting, new corporate image in front of the original concrete, bunker-like structure
- Provide a more comfortable, productive work environment in the laboratories and offices
- Improve existing circulation systems to enhance work flow
- Increase laboratory capacity and quality to better serve its expanding client base's demands.
- Establish a new entry specifically for clients, and provide additional security for the entire facility

This project created 70,000 square feet of new laboratory space and associated support facilities. The southern section of the expansion includes administrative offices, marketing, client services and additional conference capacity, as well as a high-tech training room with state-of-the-art technology. The expansion also provides 35,000 square feet of shelled space for future growth.

The building is divided in two components: an open office wing and a laboratory wing. The new, elongated office area stretches across the front of the existing structure, creating an entirely new image for the building and establishing a north-south circulation spine. The organization of the expansive facade pulls daylight through glass into the building, while the solid pre-cast concrete elements unify the entire composition and create a solid, world-class image. The design incorporates a subtle curve to address the length of this building component and breathe life into the structure. Metal panels showcase that curve; create a seamless, sleek exterior image; and establish a clean line that seems to disappear.

The dramatic two-story entry lobby is comprised of two nesting, concentric ovals that embrace the area and provide horizontal and vertical circulation and security. The narrower outer circle is interrupted by the vestibule and spiral stairs. Light pours into the lobby through glazing that encloses the top

of the ellipse. The inventive elliptical lobby is set on an axis with two of the original main structures that connect it to the new circulation corridor.

Light and shadows change throughout the day, making one aware of the passage of time, while wood elements in the form of planes help layer the space. The overall interior architecture incorporates a variety of subtle, warm textures and colors that create a timeless, yet sophisticated environment.

On a functional level, the program organizes the space and boosts user performance. Sizeable new laboratory space is conveniently located near existing labs and is rectangular for maximum flexibility. Laboratories are organized around a shared service core with direct access to storage and loading dock functions. An open laboratory environment accommodates growth and supports collaboration. Because the open laboratory office zone is located at the perimeter of the facility, scientists enjoy ample natural daylighting in offices and laboratories.

The office area consolidates client support services around the welcoming lobby space. Interdepartmental collaboration is reinforced by surrounding centrally located offices with administrative staff.

The Covance project demonstrates how imagination and creativity completely transform a building and resolve programmatic challenges. This addition completely replaces the Cold War image of the building, unifies the site, and resolves circulation problems that were inherent to the site.

Discovery is a recurring theme throughout the space. For example, the spiral stair concept in the lobby replaces the original earth berm that brought clients to the second floor executive offices. As one glances up these stairs from the first floor, the stairs seem to disappear, creating a sense of movement and mystery. From the second floor vantage point, one grasps the subtleties of the lobby's terrazzo floor design and the interior finish colors, which are an extension of the outside. The subtle curve of the building's east side reinforces the concept of discovery as one walks along the length of the outside-facing corridor.