

CASE STUDY

WALTER E. WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER

WITH SKYFOLD, A CONVENTION CENTER CREATES NEW SPACE – WITHOUT EXPANDING.

CAN A CONVENTION CENTER EXPAND ITS MEETING AREA WITHOUT ACTUALLY ADDING NEW SQUARE FOOTAGE? THE ANSWER WAS A RESOUNDING YES FOR WALTER E. WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER, WHERE A CLEVER DESIGN IDEA AND 17 SKYFOLD CLASSIC ACOUSTICAL POWERLIFT PARTITIONING SYSTEMS CAPTURED 48,000 SQUARE FEET OF NEW FLEXIBLE MEETING SPACE WITHIN THE ORIGINAL BUILDING'S FOOTPRINT.

PROJECT FACTS

WALTER E. WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER

Washington, D.C. January 2010

Meeting space (renovation)

Design challenge:

Create like-new convertible lobbies / meeting rooms

Design-build team: Forrester Construction / Group Goetz Architects

SKYFOLD SPECS

Installation: 17 Skyfold Classic walls

Finish: Fabric, metal and wood veneer



Custom powerlift partitions



QUICKLY DEPLOYS AND RETRACTS

The Skyfold walls move 1 foot per 10 seconds, allowing quick event changes.

ATTRACTIVE CUSTOM FINISHES

The architects used a variety of finishes, including custom fabric and wood veneer.

ULTIMATE FLEXIBILITY

Registration areas quickly become usable meeting rooms, at the turn of a key.

The retrofit and renovation was the ideal alternative to a costly scheme to build an expansion facility across the street alongside a new hotel project, where estimates came in at many times the convention center's final budget of \$14 million. The secret to success? Making two large registration areas convertible as part-time meeting rooms, a gain of about 20,000 square feet each, whenever needed.

"We saved millions of dollars by retrofitting within our existing center instead of building new, additional meeting space," says Gregory O'Dell, president and CEO of the Washington Convention and Sports Authority (WCSA). "This also improves our ability to host larger simultaneous or overlapping events." When the ribbon was cut, WCSA proudly announced, "Skyfold partitions provide a unique and dramatic approach to subdividing space, fully automated and folding vertically into the ceiling."

On top of that, the resulting transformation has been hailed by event planners and the media alike for its bright, glass-walled meeting rooms overlooking the grand lobby and the 17 innovative vertical "sky walls." Wrote Washington Business Journal reporter Tierney Plumb, "With the turn of a key, the walls retract down from the ceiling to transform the area within two minutes into nine different meeting room configurations."

REPOSITIONING A CONVENTION CENTER

The Skyfold installation accompanied the conversion of offices into meeting space outfitted with custom carpeting, upgraded lighting, and state-of-the-art electrical and sound systems. "We call it building repositioning," says Al Gooden, principal in charge of Group Goetz Architects

(GGA), Washington, D.C. "For this massive endeavor, Skyfold gave us the opportunity to create a much more flexible interior to appeal to a whole new genre of conventioners."

"A lot of our groups, such as medical associations, want more breakout and meeting space, and they are willing to pay more to get it," says John Collins, vice president of facility operations for the Washington Convention Center.

Working with the design-build partners Forrester Construction and GGA, Collins oversaw a reworked space plan, ceiling replacement, and acoustical upgrades in renovated spaces. Selective demolition was needed to accommodate the retractable wall mechanisms, says Amber Kwasniewski, GGA project designer. "The Skyfold walls actually have better acoustical properties than the conventional walls," she explains, "because it's 11 inches thick with an air chamber and acoustical panels on both sides."

The two sides of the Skyfold partitions faced very different spaces, Gooden recalls, calling for two distinct finish palettes. For the grand lobby side, the team selected a honey-colored wood veneer for lower panels and polished chrome steel above, to help reflect light and brighten the space. On the opposite side, where the Skyfold walls face meeting rooms, three patterns of a Knoll wall covering series, in a color matching the walls and soffits, exude a soft moiré pattern. When retracted, the wall panels blend seamlessly with the drywall soffits, appearing as monolithic ceiling beams. "The image that people have is, 'Oh, it's an accordion system going up into the ceiling, so it must be like a garage door,'" says Gooden. "In reality, the sky's the limit on how we finish it."



“THIS IMPROVES OUR ABILITY TO HOST LARGER AND OVERLAPPING EVENTS.”

GREGORY O'DELL, PRESIDENT/CEO, WASH. CONVENTION & SPORTS AUTH.

ADVANTAGES OVER STANDARD FOLDING WALLS

Collins was already familiar with the Skyfold partitions from his years in the hospitality industry. “We’ve had movable walls before, the kind that folded sideways from the space, but those took up a lot of floor space, which is at a premium, and were difficult to operate,” Collins explains, adding that the Skyfold partitions use a simple key start and tuck neatly overhead. Now, with the convertible registration zones and space savings from wall storage, “our customers have more square footage that can be better utilized,” says Collins, with 198,000 square feet of meeting space and more than 750,000 square feet of exhibition and ballroom area.

For a recent conference, says Peter Shogren, deputy director for facility operations, Washington Convention Center hosted breakfast in three different sections and then flipped the spaces to two sections for lunch, followed

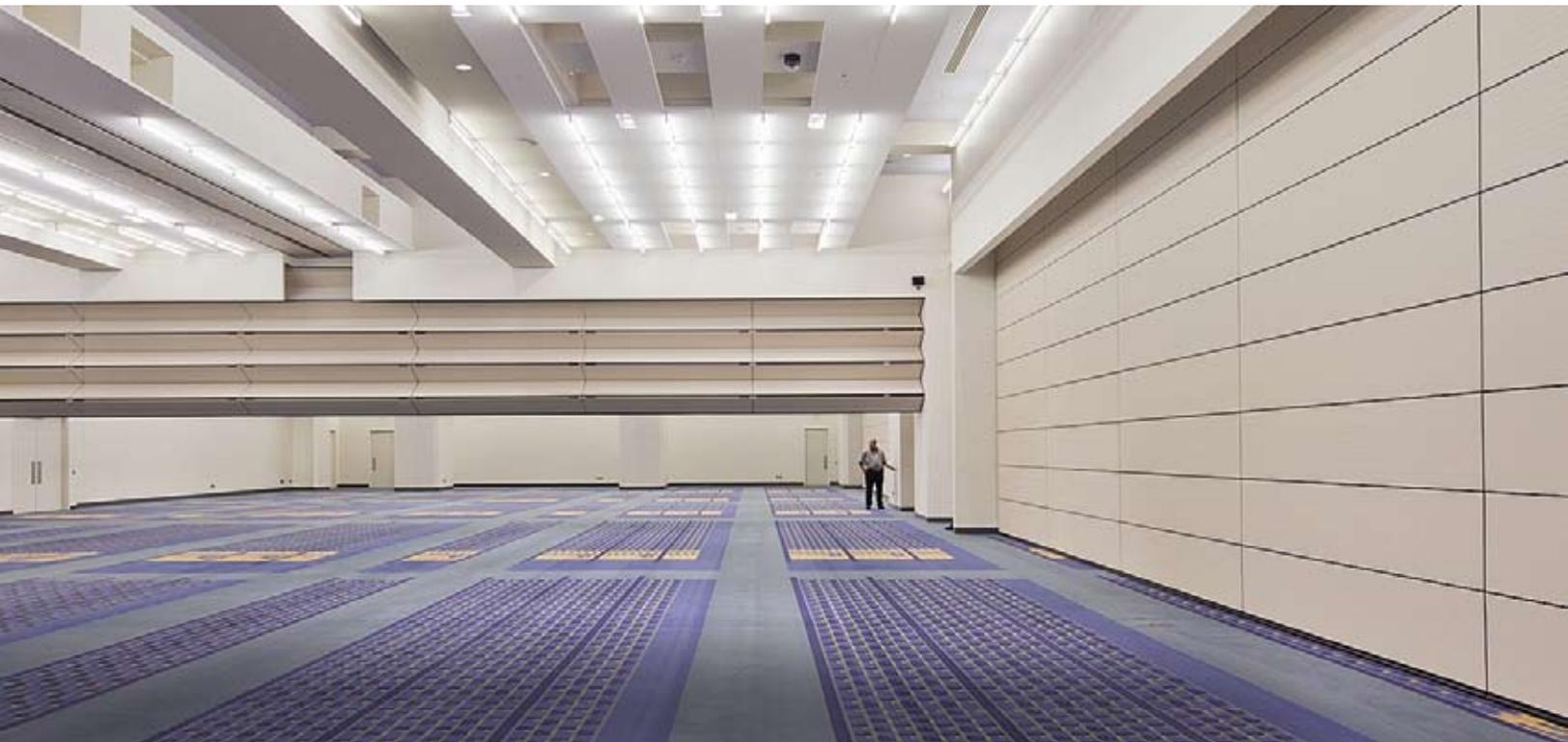
by an evening reception and dinner-dance for 1,000 using two large spaces. “It’s like having twice as much space, and our customers sometimes come up with new ideas on how to use the facility,” says Shogren. “We’re really excited about the product. It’s given us a lot of flexibility.”

The design-build team has the special pleasure of seeing their project solution turn into a business boon for the client. “The great thing about this project was that they turned unrentable space into rentable space,” says Forrester Construction’s senior project manager, Byron Howard, adding that Skyfold is uniquely suited to today’s retrofit situations.

And what of the hotel project across the street? It’s still going forward, says Collins – and there’s a rumor that Skyfold custom powerlift partitions might be specified for their meeting areas, too.

AN ECONOMICAL SOLUTION

RATHER THAN BUILD A NEW WING ACROSS THE STREET FOR MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, THE WASHINGTON CONVENTION CENTER INSTEAD USED 17 SKYFOLD CLASSIC POWERLIFT PARTITIONS TO CONVERT REGISTRATION AREAS ON AN AS-NEEDED BASIS INTO MEETING AREAS. THE WALLS, WHICH ARE KEY-OPERATED BY THE MEETINGS STAFF, CAN BE QUICKLY DEPLOYED TO CHANGE FACILITY CONFIGURATIONS IN BETWEEN EVENTS.





SKYFOLD'S EXCLUSIVE LINE OF POWERLIFT WALL SYSTEMS PROVIDES A UNIQUE WAY TO SUBDIVIDE SPACE. OUR CUSTOM BUILT SYSTEMS ARE COMPLETELY AUTOMATIC AND RETRACT INTO A CEILING CAVITY WITH A SIMPLE TURNKEY OPERATION.

- ❖ **CLASSIC** Offers privacy with exceptional acoustics
- ❖ **MIRAGE** Brings in the light with your choice of transparent panels
- ❖ **MIRAGE XT** A weatherproof glass-partitioning system for exterior use
- ❖ **ECLIPSE** A featherweight solution that simplifies space division

Skyfold is pleased to be an official member of the U.S. Green Building Council. The Green Council is committed to promoting better designed buildings that are not only more environmentally and socially responsible, but also help improve the quality of life for those who occupy them and the communities in which they are built. The Council has developed a benchmarking system known as LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design). When it comes to recycled materials, architects and owners who choose a Skyfold Custom Powerlift Partition system can calculate the following toward LEED accreditation on their projects.



- Recycled materials Up to 97%
- Post-consumer Up to 27%
- Pre-consumer Up to 50%

In order to continue protecting our environment, it is essential that we all do our part by using recycled materials whenever possible. Skyfold is proud to help.

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