

# Case Study: Design Drives Increased Owner Equity



## Granyte™ Stone Veneers deliver a remarkable exterior on this important urban renovation

Recently MRP Realty and the Rockpoint Group LLC unveiled the newly renovated Bethesda Crossing. The two companies purchased the office building complex in January 2013 for approximately \$205 million, and since then have invested almost \$30 million to renovate it.

Formerly known as the Air Rights Building, this prominent three-tower commercial complex was built in the 1960s on busy Wisconsin Ave. in the heart of Bethesda. The recent multi-million dollar renovation has turned the once down-on-its-heels 715,000 square foot office development into a striking example of redevelopment chutzpah.

Project scope called for renovations to Bethesda Crossing's exterior façade, main lobbies, common areas, restrooms and even the parking garage. It also added energy-efficient lighting and several mechanical upgrades. The Wisconsin Towers now feature energy-efficient window systems and HVAC control upgrades, while Montgomery Tower is now home to a 4,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art fitness center and a new cooling tower. Other amenities include a tenant conference center, bike rooms, car charging, a new outdoor patio, child daycare services and more.

Bethesda Crossing is now a literal shining example of urban redevelopment. The vision of the new owners turned once undervalued space with less than 75% occupancy into Class A multi-use space at nearly 100% occupancy, adding economic and social value to the owner and the community. A key component of the redevelopment included exterior façade renovation -- an architectural

finish by Triarch called Granyte® that "shimmers in the sunshine".

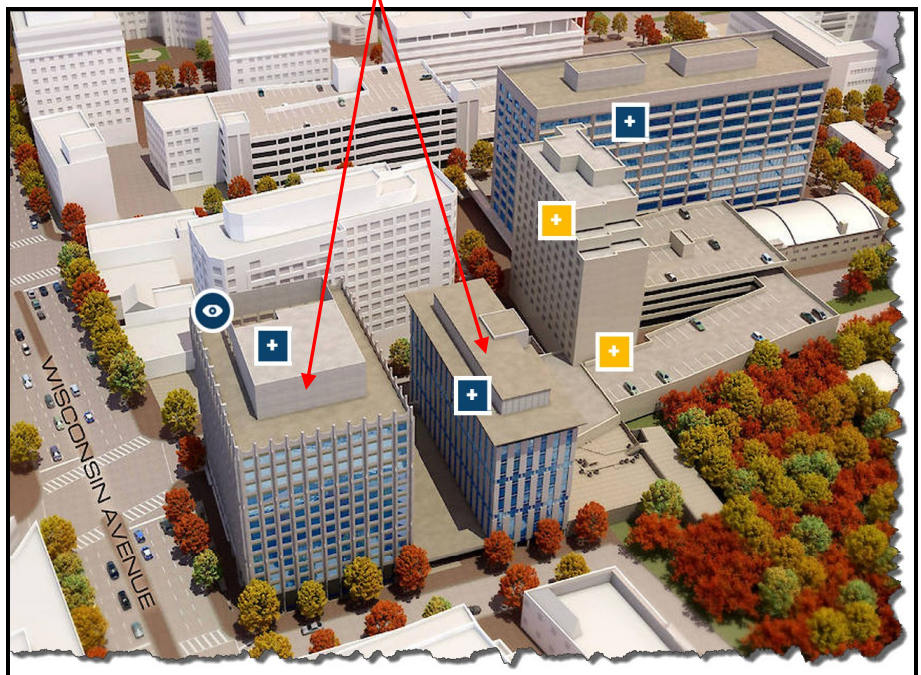
"We transformed what looked like a Soviet-era prison into the jewel of Bethesda," says Robert Aird, president of **Robert A. Aird Inc.**, the coatings sub-contractor for the project. "The white Granyte contains large flakes of mica which make the finish sparkle. It is a dazzling effect."

Granyte was specified for the facades of the 10-story east building and the 14-story west tower, both of which were originally clad in precast concrete panels. From the outset of the redevelopment plan, the objective of the owner/developer MRP Realty and Rockpoint Group Inc. was to turn the 40-something Class B commercial complex with 78 percent occupancy into fully occupied Class A commercial space.

### Project Summary:

- **Exterior façade renovation of 2 buildings— one a ten story and the other a 14 story, approximately 125,000 square feet of vertical exterior walls**
- **Substrate was precast concrete, with exposed aggregate**
- **Coatings work was executed off of swing scaffolding over a 32 week period. The scope consisted of power washing, a leveling coat of Reformit™ followed by Granyte™.**

Wisconsin Tower West (l) and Tower East (r) are shown below from Bethesda Crossing leasing ariel rendering <http://www.bethesdacrossing.com/>



To reach that goal, the owners retained the architectural services of **MGMA**, a Falls Church, VA-based architect. Joaquin Diz, the project's designer and partner at MGMA, says the owner requested larger window openings and a product to recoat the aging precast concrete - - "something striking" -- particularly on the west building because of its high profile on Wisconsin Ave, a major artery running through Bethesda and metropolitan Washington, DC.

Painting the precast concrete facades was ruled out for a number of reasons. "We started searching for a product that looked more like precast but wasn't as flat -- something that had more shine to it," says Diz. That's when he discovered Granyte, attractive for its engrained mica that gives the finish depth and shimmer.

Several mock-ups were done by the subcontractor to compare different colors of Granyte before deciding on Granyte No. 160, Snow White.

While Granyte costs more than paint, Diz says it is like comparing apples to oranges. "I knew Granyte was a really good choice when I saw the sun low and shining on two recently completed faces of the west building. The walls sparkled. It looked great." That is a look which won't age or wear quickly either, according to the manufacturer who said it will perform many years past the 10-year warranty period.

Nick Davis, senior project manager for the general contractor **Vantage Construction Corporation**, is a fan of Granyte. "It allowed this dated looking exterior to be updated to a much sleeker, modern looking building. The mica gave the finish an esthetic that no paint product could do."

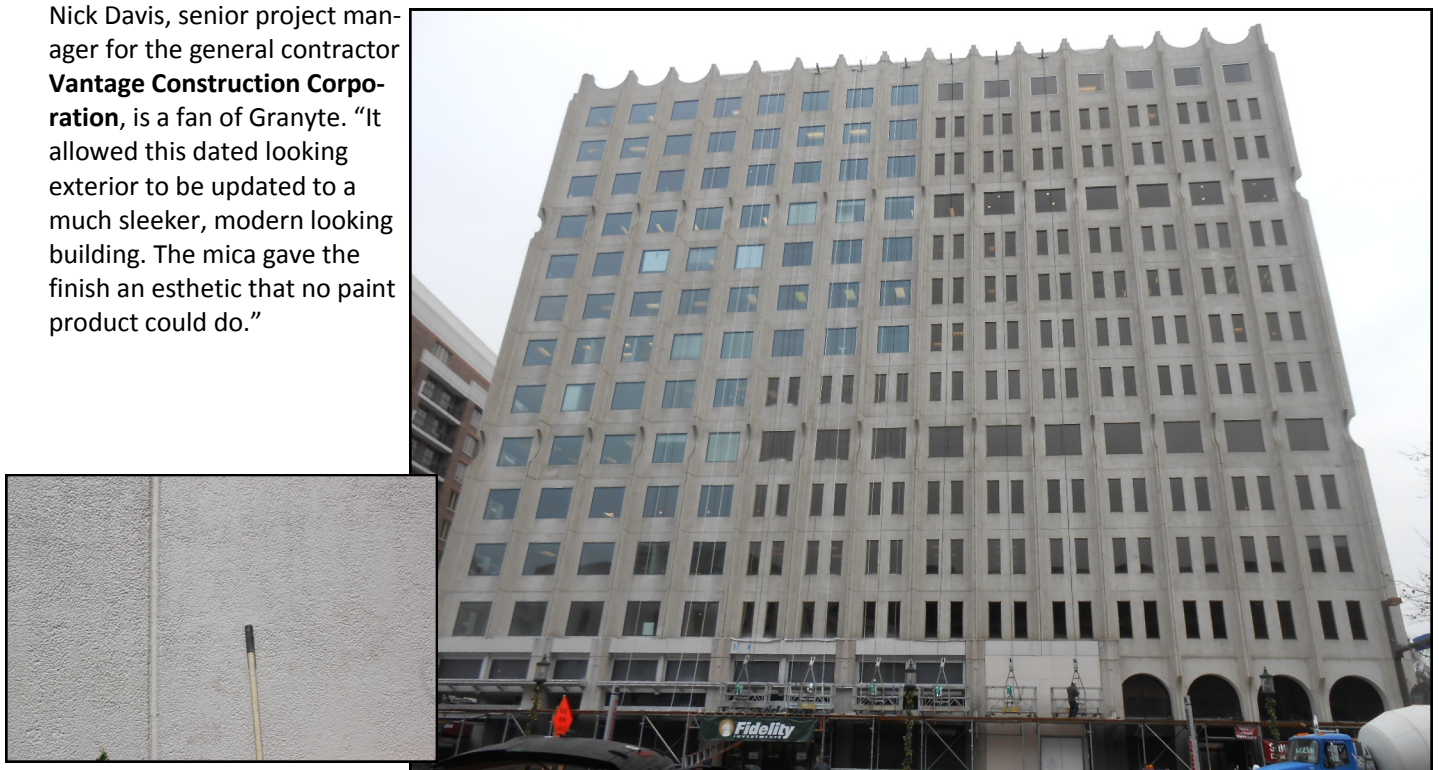
"When you have a complex that stands out that much in a metro area like Bethesda, the esthetic value can't be underestimated," he adds. "There is very heavy traffic driving by the complex so the exposure it gets is very high."

It took about twice as long to complete the finish as it might have to roll on a coating of paint, but Davis points out that the additional time included the application of REFORMIT™, an acrylic modified cementitious leveling base coat by Triarch. It was towelled over the aggregate precast panels prior to a primer coating and finally the Granyte.

#### Interesting project quotes:

- "We transformed what looked like a Soviet-era prison into the jewel of Bethesda,"
- "I knew Granyte was a really good choice when I saw the sun low and shining on two recently completed faces of the west building. The walls sparkled. It looked great."
- "When you have a complex that stands out that much in a metro area like Bethesda, the esthetic value can't be underestimated,"
- When the buildings were completed, occupancy had jumped to 90 percent.

Window replacement in progress with larger and more energy efficient windows. Precast concrete façade pre-Granyte installation, close up of the rough exposed aggregate precast in lower left



Another key part of the exterior renovation was cutting out the 14-inch precast concrete middle sections between the small pairs of windows to make larger openings – adding about 35 percent more light to the interior, says Davis. To accent the verticality of a number of the windows, the construction team turned again to Granyte, essentially trowel-applying “eyebrows” with a color called Smoke Signal. “They created the illusion of even taller window openings, giving the building a more appealing and more current exterior.”

Aird says about 125,000 square feet of Granyte was applied to the buildings – including REFORMIT, primer and Granyte. Some minor sections were painted – including soffits, backsides of parapets and EIFS on the stair tower. The project was completed in just under a year. “We have done similarly sized and even larger projects in our 40 years in business, but this one stands out by virtue of the spectacular appearance of the Granyte.”

Since Bethesda Crossing, Aird’s firm has received numerous calls about Granyte and has gone on to install it on a site wall at a major office building in northern Virginia that was originally intended to be exposed concrete. “The Granyte (a gray and black color combination) transformed bland, splotchy concrete into an esthetically pleasing wall that actually looks like granite. I see this product gaining traction and I wouldn’t hesitate to use it again.”

Diz says Granyte’s esthetic appeal is well-suited to low-rise or midrise developments in highly visible locations. “We’re pleased with the results at Bethesda and hope to use it again.” MRP has reason to be pleased as well. When the buildings were completed, occupancy had jumped to 90 percent. “The renovations have put the buildings back on the map.”



**Project Name:**  
Bethesda Crossing  
Bethesda, MD

**Architects:**  
MGMA  
Falls Church, VA .  
703-538-7100  
[www.mgmadesign.com](http://www.mgmadesign.com)

**General Contractor:**  
Vantage Construction Corp  
Sterling, VA.  
703-752-4200  
[www.vantage-construction.com](http://www.vantage-construction.com)

**Triarch System:**  
Granyte Wall Finish System  
Warwick, RI.  
800-537-6111  
[www.triarchinc.com](http://www.triarchinc.com)

**Installer/subcontractor:**  
Robert A. Aird Inc.  
Frederick, MD.  
301-695-4966  
[www.airdinc.com](http://www.airdinc.com)

Wisconsin Tower West is shown below with new windows and Granyte finish in Show White #160. A close up of Granyte in Snow White is provided at lower left.





## Not Just a Masonry Finish

High up on the penthouse floor of the Ritz Carlton Resort and Residences in lovely Sarasota, Granyte is a local favorite. Granyte is versatile, it works equally well on interiors applied directly to wall board as well as an exterior finish installed on masonry and cement.

**ABUSE RESISTANCE:** The Granyte finish significantly improves the **abuse resistance** of 5/8" drywall with **substantial gains in abrasion, piercing and soft body impact resistance**. Additional performance results are achieved when Granyte is placed over abuse or impact resistant wall board.



Visit our website to view more photos and read about additional completed projects in [Coatings Design](#)



For more information about Granyte, or any of the systems and products sold by Triarch, contact Customer Service at:

1-800-537-6111

[www.triarchinc.com](http://www.triarchinc.com)

E: [sales@triarchinc.com](mailto:sales@triarchinc.com)

Projects on this page utilizing Granyte: Ritz Carlton Residences (top), entrance to Ruth's Chris Steak House (center), The Q Luxury Condos (left and above), exterior of a private residence garage in color Ocean Granyte (right).