

BY STEVE FREEMAN

Beck Group Fine Tuning **RadioShack's** Fast-Track Project

While the majority of business campuses are found outside center-city limits, the Fort Worth-based consumer electronics giant's new corporate campus is on an approximately 31-acre site in downtown Fort Worth.



Fort Worth Redefines Urban Sprawl With \$200 Million Downtown Campus



TOP: Two of the three office buildings will overlook green space on three sides and exhibit the traditional masonry design that complements other buildings in nearby downtown Fort Worth.

BOTTOM: The 450-seat dining room lets in natural light via the expansive glass wall.

ABOUT 2,400 EMPLOYEES will move into the new \$200 million RadioShack corporate headquarters in downtown Fort Worth by early next year.

The consumer electronics retailer's six-building urban campus sprawls over a 31-acre hill, sloping down to the Trinity River.

Most business campuses are found in suburbs, but RadioShack desired to keep a downtown address as a good corporate citizen in Fort Worth, said Bill Knotts, senior director of corporate real estate for RadioShack. The parent company started there in 1919.

Deciding to stay, however, didn't mean construction as usual. The 900,000-sq.-ft. project involved a 30-person group from Dallas-based general contractors The Beck Group alone. The 70 subcontractors often managed several crews, totaling 1,000 workers onsite some days. It was a project equally complex in terms of materials, earth-friendly

techniques and architectural styles.

To accomplish the desired 23-month project, Beck made some key management decisions early on. The firm outsourced document management so plans could be viewed online the same day and paper copies delivered in 24 hours. The Staubach Co. of Dallas, project manager, also contracted for a Web-based intranet service. Dennis Sewell of Staubach said the service aided in integrated decision-making by the 160-person management team, which included subcontractors.

"We needed new solutions constantly," said Drew Thigpen, senior project manager for The Beck Group.

The project was fast-tracked due to RadioShack's readiness for occupancy. Speedy delivery also saved the company in utility bills, insurance and overhead costs of construction. Beck worked with architect HKS Inc. of Dallas



senior vice president of HKS, said the exteriors facing downtown resemble traditional early 20th Century masonry buildings. Sides of buildings facing the river are more "suburban," with expansive views for all occupants. The mirror-like glass reflects the canopied Texas sky.

Three six- and seven-story buildings are for office use. Each floor measures 30,000 sq. ft. A four-story jackknife-shaped commons building connects the entire campus. It houses a four-story rotunda, two-story entrance lobby, conference and training rooms, 450-seat dining room, employee fitness center, three prototype retail stores and a 40,000-sq.-ft. broadcast/advertising studio.

The major thoroughfare through the building is a two-story corridor called "Main Street" running longer than a football field.

Branching off the commons building is a seven-story 2,400-car parking garage with below-grade service tunnel and a three-truck loading dock.

The sixth building is a showcase retail store and interactive electronics museum. The building is topped with a ringed metal sculpture bearing the company's "R" logo.

A grassy park separates the flagship store

LEFT: The jackknife edge of the commons building features an employee dining room and, above, a conference room, both with a panoramic view of the Trinity River. (Photo © John W. Davis, ASMP Dallas Visual Design)

RIGHT: A distinguishing trait of each office building is the atrium or "top hat," part of the numerous open areas for collaborative meeting space for future employees occupying the building. (Photo © John W. Davis, ASMP Dallas Visual Design)

to structure a four-package bidding process, divided by pier and site work, core and shell, parking garage and interior. Subcontractors were required to show proof that they were capable of working large projects with multiple crews and tight time frames.

STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

The architectural drawings show a six-building mid-rise office park. Kirk Teske,



TOP: Views from the Trinity River reveal a different design than the masonry used on the building sides facing the central business district. These curtain walls of glass optimize employee views of the river and landscaped greenway.

BOTTOM: A screen wall of metal panels hide chiller pipes and exhaust fans on the roof of the commons building. (Photo © John W. Davis, ASMP Dallas Visual Design)

from the main buildings and front entrance. It features an amphitheater of layered levels for outdoor gatherings and a 300-ft. semicircular waterfall, dropping from 15 ft. to 2 ft.

Teske said RadioShack wanted a headquarters that encouraged free flow of people and collaboration among its employees. HKS created a structure with 70 percent open spaces, compared to 30 percent at the previous headquarters. Connector walkways run perpendicular to the length of the three office buildings. Prominent open stairways accommodate vertical people movement, as do three passenger elevators in each building.

Each office building has a prominent two-story atrium-like meeting room facing the river that rises above the roofline and features an outdoor balcony and latticed overhang of

composite panels.

RadioShack already owned a 13-acre parcel of land at the new site, which was used for parking for its previous headquarters a few blocks away. Adding to that, the company purchased a 23-acre 42-building federal public housing project, which it demolished.

RadioShack committed to an environment-friendly building program by seeking Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. Much of the materials resulting from demolition were recycled or donated to Habitat for Humanity.

The indoor air-quality component required maintaining a weather-tight building during construction by using temporary roofs, finalizing the exterior skin early and installing only sealed ductwork.