

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT REIMAGINED

By Susan Ciaverelli

Saving high design by digging a deeper hole

Architects are often thought of as ivory tower thinkers, design-

ing glass skyscrapers and high end neo-traditional communities. But saving money? Not often.



Susan Ciaverelli

“Anyone can come up with high design. Getting it built for the right price. That’s a trick,” says Dan McCauley, partner and principal at The Martin Architectural Group.

Working with design archi-



Courtesy of Bozzuto Construction Co.

Chevy Chase Lake

tect David M. Schwarz, Martin came on as architect of record, responsible for documentation

and completion of the high end, mixed-use Chevy Chase Lake project in suburban Washing-

ton, DC. The project consists of 530 residential units in three buildings above retail and subterranean parking.

“It’s nice to work on a project from design to completion, but this one presented us with a unique challenge: to bring the project to fruition on budget without changing the original design,” says Martin’s project manager Scott Hartner.

The Martin team was brought on board after years of initial designs and planning with the developer, its partner, and the municipality. As designs progressed, the project was \$20 million over its \$120

million budget. No one wanted to change the original concept, least of all the owners and developer The Bozzuto Group.

“Projects of this scale and complexity will always face challenges,” says Steve Knight, principal of David M. Schwarz Architects. “Design and construction for Chevy Chase Lake have taken place during a period of notable cost escalation, so creative cost control was an important part of the process throughout.”

Among the project’s design complexities was its trapezoidal footprint and underground garage. The original garage design averaged 471 feet per parking space, because of its unconventional shape. The weight of landscaping and emergency vehicle traffic above the garage outside of the building footprints required additional structural components and waterproofing.

While the three building designs couldn’t be altered, the garage was fair game, so Martin’s team “blew it up,” earning it the nickname “The Nuclear Garage.” They started from scratch, simplifying the shape into a rectangle and adding a third subterranean level to recoup lost space. Then they did the hard work of getting approval from the original designer, and geotechnical, civil and structural engineers. With the team’s buy-in, Martin presented the new garage design to the owner, developer, and contractor.

By changing to a more efficient grid design, reducing the need for waterproofing, and lessening the structural loads, the new garage saved \$4.5 million. Overall, the entire design team along with Martin’s value engineering saved nine to ten million dollars in construction costs.

President of Bozzuto Construction Mark Weisner says, “It is creative thinking like this and a lack of staunch ego that allows for a true team approach to the design process.”

Bozzuto’s Weisner adds, “When I think about Martin Architectural, it is their willingness, and I would even say eagerness to be challenged that comes to mind. Throughout their design process they want to know if what they are providing makes the most sense for the client in regard to design aesthetic, function, maintainability, and overall upfront and long-term cost.”

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