
BetterBricks Industry Voices: David Berg

A discussion with David Berg, Hurley Development's Property Management Vice President, on the transformative, year-round value of commercial secondary windows, their reliability during extreme weather events, and their surprisingly easy installation process.



What led you to discover commercial secondary windows?

We had explored a number of energy-saving measures for our 915 Broadway building in downtown Vancouver, Wash. It's 33,000 square feet and about 45 years old, so we had to start making decisions to save money on energy costs and to make sure everyone was comfortable inside. We were looking at our boilers, our cooling tower, our elevators and windows trying to find ways to save money with energy efficiency.

Some of our equipment was getting older and we wanted to find approaches that were cost-effective and would result in long-term energy savings. Our executive vice president had heard about commercial secondary windows and asked me to investigate. When I started looking into it, it really seemed like a good fit because we would improve tenant comfort and start saving money immediately, all without having to invest a humungous amount in the building.

How much did improving tenant comfort play a role in your decision-making?

The previous single-pane windows really created an environment in the exterior offices that wasn't very comfortable and that resulted in a lot of heat lost in the winter and heat gained in the summer. We had requests from several tenants who asked if we could do something to improve the windows. Some tenants requested solar blinds, but we didn't want to negatively affect the building from an aesthetic perspective. For example, if we put solar blinds on a single window, we would have to do so for every window for the building to match. While this building isn't quite an antique yet, it still has a classic look of 1970s architecture that we would prefer to maintain. Commercial secondary windows provided the perfect opportunity to solve our comfort issues, save energy, and avoid compromising on the building's aesthetic.

Did you consider any additional solutions?

We talked to a couple of window manufacturers to request cost quotes on pulling out the hundreds of existing windows and installing new ones. The quotes we received were in the \$2-3 million range, which is a significant percentage of what the building is actually worth. Even with expected energy savings, we wouldn't expect to pay back the investment for at least a decade, if not much longer.

After the installation of secondary windows, did the tenants report increased comfort?

The tenants are very happy with the secondary windows. They've let us know that they aren't experiencing draftiness in cooler weather, nor an increase in temperature on hot summer afternoons. All of the tenants are extremely happy, even those

in offices on the south and west sides of the building, where the sun really comes in. With the single-pane windows, we would receive frequent comfort complaints, but we haven't had a single complaint since the secondary windows were installed.

You had your commercial secondary windows installed right before a record-breaking heatwave in the summer of 2021. How did they perform under those unprecedented conditions?

When we heard that the temperature would reach 116 degrees, we were very worried. With single-pane windows, we would receive complaints when the temperature reached the nineties, and this was going to be much hotter than that. So, all day we watched the digital control system to make sure the building maintained a comfortable internal temperature. And incredibly, almost all of the offices maintained the intended temperature of 72 degrees. The highest indoor temperature we saw all day was 74 degrees, but by and large, the indoor temperature was unaffected by the extreme weather outside. We were really surprised – we knew that commercial secondary windows were efficient, but we didn't expect them to perform this well.

Have commercial secondary windows reduced your building's maintenance costs?

Yes, for sure. To maintain an older building with older equipment, we have upgraded systems over the years, but even with upgrades, the system generally had to work very hard to achieve comfortable temperatures on hot and cold days. We experienced equipment breakdowns requiring major repairs because the fans or the chiller were working much harder than they needed to. Since we've installed commercial secondary windows, our repair costs and required maintenance time have already dropped. We haven't had to undergo any major repairs even though we experienced the hottest summer on record. We're very optimistic with how the equipment has performed since the installation.



How was the installation process? Did your tenants find it disruptive?

The installation went very well with very little disruption. Our building was a hundred percent occupied during installation, so the installers worked around their schedules. They had to move some desks and furniture to access the windows, but that wasn't too much of a problem. They planned ahead and did a thorough inventory of the building to map out every single unit, so they knew the best way to unload the truck to get the right-sized windows to the right location of the building. There was no mess and it all happened very efficiently without any delays. In fact, they were able to finish ahead of schedule. All in all, it only took about an hour or two per unit to complete the installation. Compared to a full window replacement, which would take place outside the building with large cranes, everything was very easy and clean and quick. We were actually all very surprised with how fast the installation was, considering there were hundreds of commercial secondary windows to install.

Would you recommend commercial secondary windows to other property managers?

I would recommend them, one hundred percent. We all noticed a huge change right off the bat, including building staff and tenants. The installation was painless, and everything unfolded just as we were told. I'd recommend commercial secondary windows for any older building, especially one with a single-pane window system.