

Reviving a 1980s Skyscraper Lobby in Chicago's West Loop

CME CENTER – CHICAGO, IL

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Richard Losch,
Door Service, Inc.



Chicago is home to some of the most world-renowned architecture and famous corporate addresses. In fact, there is even a “Chicago School” style of commercial building that originated in the late-19th century and a “Second Chicago School” with origins from the 1940s. The architecture of Chicago is always evolving, and the hustle and bustle of its downtown citizens and business community never stops. That led owners of the CME Center in Chicago’s West Loop business district to seek a complete redesign of the ground floor lobby, which was originally constructed more than three decades ago.

The CME Center is a 2.3-million-square-foot, LEED Gold, Class A office skyscraper and one of the hubs for Chicago’s business community. In addition to offices, the building provides a wide range of amenities, including state-of-the-art lounges, fitness facilities, restaurants, retail, and more. However, the lobby space where citizens can access the CME Center was stuck in the 1980s. When architects at Gensler were tasked with redesigning the ground floor of the building, they knew they needed to create an inviting, one-of-a-kind lobby space that meshed with 21st-century design. Ellison Bronze played a key role in fulfilling their design vision.

The entire ground floor exterior on all four sides of the building needed to be completely revamped. The first-floor lobbies and retail corridor were wrapped in a 24-foot-high curved glass curtainwall, and the project team needed doors that could be customized to fit the unique curvature of the wall. They partnered with Ellison to design-build the entrances, which included custom portal framing using stainless steel bar and plate assemblies embedded into the floor.

“The beauty of this project is the way the Ellison doors could be slightly curved to match the waves in the glass,” said Richard Losch of Door Service, Inc., installer of the doors. “Ellison’s materials, workmanship, and design flexibility to help us create custom-curved doors was a tremendous benefit.”

Ellison provided 16 custom-crafted curved stainless steel narrow stile balanced doors for the project. The stainless steel lends a modern appearance to the otherwise all-glass ground floor lobby space. The glass infills in the stainless steel door frames provide additional transparency into the space as pedestrians approach the entrances.

The undulating design of the glass wall presented a challenge when searching for a door manufacturer because doors typically lay at a flat 180° when in a closed position within the door frame. Door Service, Inc. selected Ellison Bronze for their ability to custom-craft a series of balanced doors to fit the precise custom curvatures of CME Center’s new glass curtainwall.

The doors also helped the project meet ADA requirements for commercial entryways.

“One of the Ellison doors at each entryway is equipped with power operators and is ADA-compliant,” added Losch. “The project also features revolving doors, which aren’t nearly as efficient at getting people out of buildings, so including Ellison balanced doors next to them allowed us to implement additional entry and exit points and keep up with ADA requirements.”



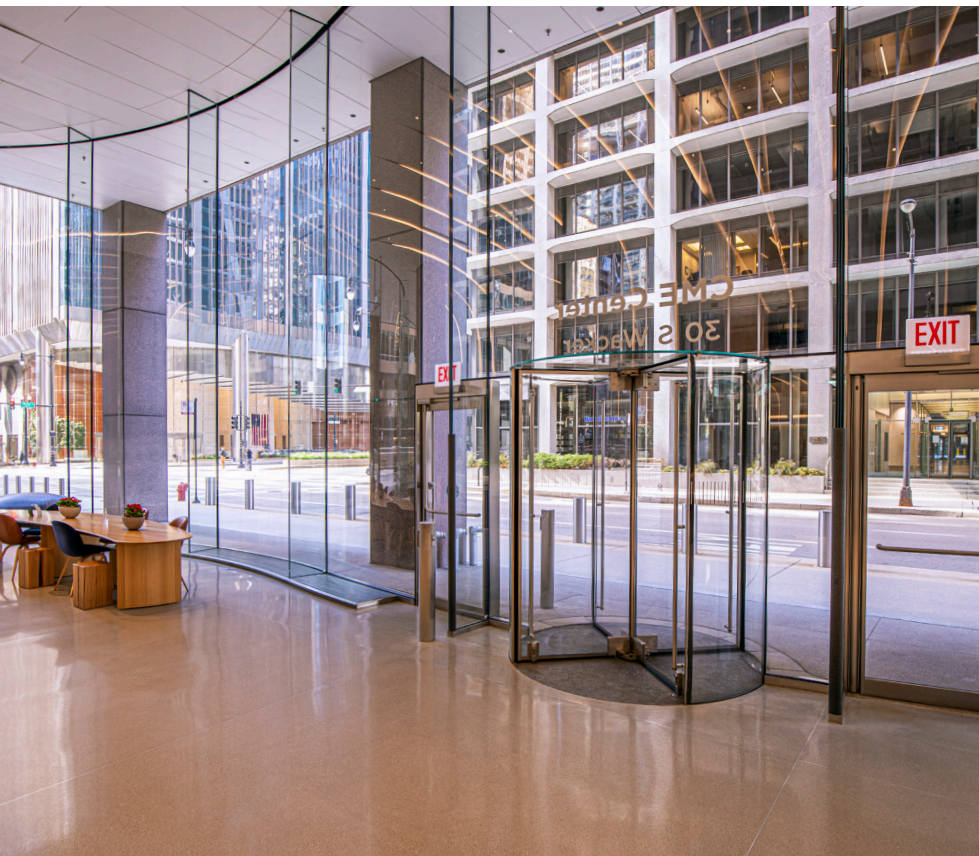


Losch added that the doors' balanced design was a major design feature. "Because they are balanced doors, they are so much easier to open than a standard hinge door."

The innovative balanced hardware and inset pivot point at two-thirds width of every balanced door imparts effortless operation suitable for high-traffic spaces. Balanced doors effectively reduce opening force and door leaf projection and relieve air pressure at both sides as it's opened. Due to the inset pivot point, the doors require less space to swing open, which is especially vital in busy cities such as Chicago, or in New York City where strict sidewalk codes have been established. The reduced door leaf projection frees up valuable space on the pavement, decreasing the risk for interference with pedestrians.

The redevelopment of the CME Center lobby is designed to showcase what it means to work in a major metropolitan city such as Chicago today. Delivering a bright, vibrant lobby space was important to the owners and designers. Choosing Ellison Bronze balanced doors allowed them to deliver a unique, wavy glass wall with the ability to incorporate multiple custom access points on each side of the building.

CME Center was completed in summer 2020. In addition to Ellison Bronze, the project team included door installer Door Service, Inc.; project manager the Roschmann Group; construction manager Lendlease; and developer and owner Tishman Speyer.



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