

An INTERTEC®/PRIMEDIA Publication

# SHOPPING CENTER WORLD®

25<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
1972-1997

DECEMBER 1997

*EXCLUSIVE SURVEY*  
**Retailers  
Gear Up  
For Zealous  
Expansion**

**Developers  
Are Mining  
The Populous  
Northeast**

**New England  
Confronts  
Change**

**What's In,  
What's Out  
For Store  
Design In 1998**

The Disney Store  
Fifth Avenue, New York

# Spa Thira **pampers patrons** with European design



*Spa Thira sets a soothing retail stage for its SoftLight hair removal system.*



Stores have an average of 10 employees, including a medical director.

Achieving the right mix of clinical luxury proved to be a significant challenge for designer Geoffrey Butler, principal with San Francisco-based Geoffrey E. Butler Architects and Planners. He and his team opted to use plaster veneers, mahogany woodwork and other materials to convey a measure of traditional elegance. Spa Thira's lobby received the most elaborate appointments, including a small fountain, while the treatment and changing rooms were kept fairly simple and not overly sanitized.

Mechanical and code issues proved an even bigger challenge, says Butler, noting that retail environments typically are not made to be divided into multiple smaller rooms. ADA mandates, layout problems and equipment installation provided additional complications, he notes, as did requirements for fire dampers between walls and two means of egress. According to Butler, the last criterion eliminated several malls from consideration because available spaces could not accommodate a second exit.

Since its inception in 1995, Spa Thira has opened 14 locations, with three currently in development. The retailer plans to open approximately 50 spas, but Worth reports that the rollout will proceed slowly. "We want a chance to digest what we've done and make sure we've got the concept right," he says. ■

• By John McCloud, a contributing editor to Shopping Center World and INStore.



**H**ow does one create a retail environment that offers clinical-level medical services but avoids the sterility of a clinic-like setting? For La Jolla, Calif.-based ThermoLase Inc., the solution lay in a design based upon the soothing confines of a European spa. The result is Spa Thira, a chain of clinics focused around the company's innovative SoftLight laser hair removal system.

"The concept was intended to place our SoftLight system in an elegant, relaxing setting," says Mark Worth, vice president of ThermoLase. "Our patrons enjoy the credibility and sense of safety in a medical environment, and the European spas had elements of both."

In addition to hair removal, Spa Thira (the name is derived from the Greek island of Thira, also known as Santorini) offers facials and related services, as well as a small selection of body care products for home use. Facilities range from 4,000 sq. ft. to 6,500 sq. ft. and include treatment and changing rooms, a spacious lobby, offices, two bathrooms and a laundry room.

Spa Thira shops are primarily found in top regional malls but are located occasionally in upscale downtown districts.

Photos courtesy of Mark Darley/Esto  
Geoffrey E. Butler's San Francisco-based design team opted for plaster veneers, mahogany woodwork and other materials to help Spa Thira convey a healthy measure of traditional elegance.