

SPECIAL REPORT: COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

A New Day at the Office

Design and Construction Moves to Meet Millennials By Providing Open Space, Amenities And Office Options Rather Than a Set Space

BY RAY HUARD

Millennials, those younger workers between the ages of 18 and 34 who are seeking a different kind of workspace, are having a profound effect on the way offices are designed and built in San Diego County and elsewhere.

And since millennials constitute a large percentage of the San Diego population, designers and builders are stepping up to accommodate their preferences.

Millennials were very much on the mind of **Chris Veum**, president of **AVRP Skypoint Studios**, when his firm designed new offices for the marketing technology company **Amobee** in Sorrento Mesa.

"It was definitely the target of conversation," Veum said. "Social space was big for them, which it is for most millennials. Collaboration space also was very big, and food."

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Photo by Jasper Sanidad, courtesy of BNIM

Rivo Holdings office downtown has multiple options for employees to work or relax.

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Photo courtesy of Martin Mann

It is definitely not all fun and games at work, but companies like Amobee recognize that rest and rejuvenation are now part of the blend of the work/life mix.

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About 80 percent of the space at Amobee's new offices is open. There's also a large kitchen, an amphitheater which can be used by a group or by someone who wants to work in a quiet space, phone rooms for up to four people which can be used as private spaces or small meeting areas, a courtyard park in the middle, a deli, a large gym and plenty of natural light.

Architects also point to **WeWork**, the coworking space giant with two locations in San Diego, as an example of the kind of work environment millennials want.

"Building and office construction has definitely been affected by the millennial workforce," said **Mark Kuske**, asset manager for **EMMES Realty Services of California** — a major player in the downtown San Diego commercial real estate market.

Well-Rounded Work Environment

"We've seen a design focus on collaboration, technology and wellness, driven by the culture and preference of millennials," Kuske said. "Open work environments with exposed ceilings, less private offices and more spaces to collaborate are becoming more and more prevalent. Ping-Pong tables, kegs and wine bars seem to be a standard in today's tenant improvements for creative companies."

Julie Kilpatrick, JLL vice president and market lead of project and development services, said that to accommodate the amenities millennials want, less office space is being devoted to work.

"We're moving toward lower square footage per employee," Kilpatrick said.

The standard of more than 200 square feet per worker, is shrinking to 150 square feet or even 125 square feet, she said.

"You want to make sure you're allowing open floor plates with open views and access to the outdoors wherever possible," Kilpatrick said. "Millennials are not sitting in private offices with closed doors. That's not something they're interested in doing."

San Diego has more of them as a percentage of population — 27 percent — than any other metropolitan area in the country, according to an analysis of U.S. Census figures by **JLL**, a real estate brokerage firm.

They're the ones with the skills high-tech, biotech and information technology companies want to attract.

Gone are the walled-in cubicles and private offices of older generations.

These workers want open space where they can work collaboratively, but they also want private space where they can work alone without interruption.

Fitness and Food

They want places set aside in the workplace where they can go to de-stress. They crave amenities — things like gyms staffed by fitness trainers, and coffee shops, and trendy places to eat in the building where they work or nearby, and a wine bar or maybe even a beer tasting room where they can socialize after work.

Those are among changes that architects and real estate brokers said they're looking at as they try to accommodate the workforce that will replace aging baby boomers — those between the ages of 50 and 69.

Founded in 2007 in New York, **WeWork** has capitalized on that trend, growing to become a \$20 billion company with offices in 23 U.S. cities and 18 countries, according to its website.

WeWork came to San Diego in December 2016, leasing 85,000 square feet at 600 B St. downtown, and has since leased an additional 54,000 square feet at The Aventure office tower in University City.

Architect **Kevin Heinly**, principal at **Gensler** in San Diego, said discussions among his colleagues often focus on how to tailor office design to attract millennials.

"One of the things we talk about a lot is the activity-based work environment and having choice," Heinly said. "What we're seeing is everybody doesn't work like their dads did in an office or a cubicle. They want choice in their work environment."

Choice can mean incorporating many meeting rooms of various sized and what Heinly called "focus rooms" where workers can do heads-down work without interruption but with plenty of open space when they want to share ideas and work collaboratively on a project.

It also means having those spaces on site that are more akin to activities people used to do away from the workplace.

Flexibility a Must

"The millennial generation is the one that's most accustomed to this blurring of the lines between work, play and live," Heinly said. "That doesn't mean working 12 hours a day or 14 hours a day, it means having the flexibility to go into a work setting, maybe do a seminar, go into a workshop setting, maybe take two hours to go exercise or to a coffee shop on campus."

Fitness centers have been around for a while, but the ones millennials expect aren't tucked away dungeonlike in building basements with a few pieces of battered equipment and no windows.

These better be state-of-the-art, maybe with personal trainers and operated as a franchise by a third party.

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CUSTOM CONTENT

Consider the Context



Combination of native and naturalized plants provide plenty of color and nectar for pollinators.


Every green space in the city, no matter how small, is part of a greater picture. Despite all the stuff we’ve bulldozed and paved over, the city is a habitat with an ecology of its own. We share the places where we eat, gather, and relax, with animals that are also doing those same things. When designing these places, we should keep in mind we are doing our part in shaping a habitat - one with a network of relationships that spreads across the city unseen. Predators, prey, and pollinators live out an epic daily drama that passes by largely unnoticed. The green spaces of a city stitch together to create a variety of stages where these roving actors inhabit and perform throughout the cycles of the seasons. This quilt of parks, plazas, gardens, and even balconies of the city, is not a patchwork isolated in space. It is yet part of an even larger picture that includes rural areas and wild lands.

As designers, we can make decisions to strengthen this interconnectedness. We can plant native plants; which provide familiar food, shelter, and nest material for a variety of wild life. We can use pervious paving, to ensure rainwater sinks into the ground to replenish it. We can even use water captured from HVAC (literally from thin air) to provide water to a parched landscape. As we learn more about the relationships around us, we discover more ways to make design interact in a positive way with nature.



The Campus on Village La Jolla, a recently renovated mixed-use property with hospitality, medical, office, and education space near the UCSD campus.

Let’s embrace the connection that our urban spaces have with our wild lands. Let’s envision a city where the plants that we use and the materials we choose respond and interact with our biome. Let’s blur the dividing line between native landscape and urban landscape, so that we no longer fixate on the division, but instead the interconnectedness of the land.



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“On large campuses, you’re seeing things like care doctor suites for check-ups or quick diagnoses of flu,” Heinly said. Bike repair shops and dry-cleaning services on the campus in suburban locations are something to consider.

After the Millennials

Even as architects and developers struggle to accommodate millennials, **Robin Weckesser**, president and founder of **a3 Workplace Strategies** in San Jose, said it’s not too soon to start thinking about the people who will replace millennials in the workplace — Generation Z, or GenZers. “They’re digital natives. They’ve

been born into a digital world, and as a result, they’re at ease with technology, with interacting with technology. They’re not afraid of it. Everything they do revolves around it,” Weckesser said.

Flexible space is what they’re probably going to want, and they’re not likely to be as keen to work in collaborative groups as millennials, Weckesser said, adding that GenZers value “a space that fits the task at hand.”

“They’re going to look to be given a task and let them go off and do it,” Weckesser said. “It’s now about flexibility of work settings with the appropriate technology built in and available throughout the day.”

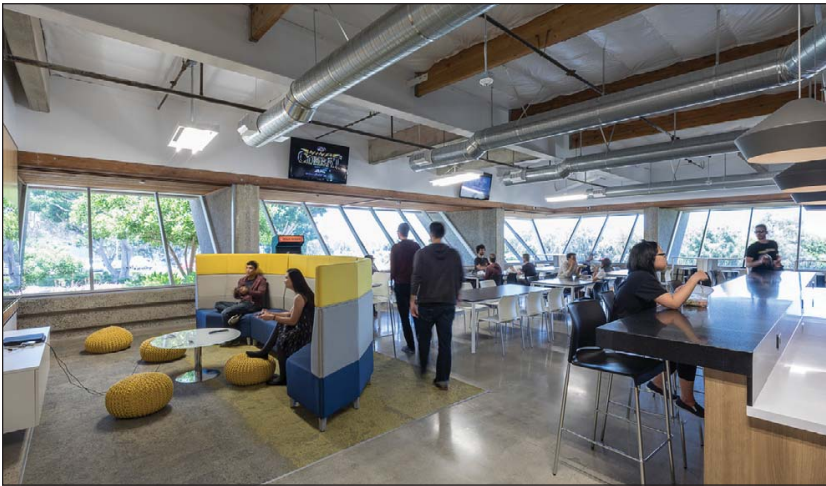


Photo courtesy of LPA/CoStea Photography Inc.
Video game developer High Moon Studios in Carlsbad provides a very social atmosphere. Designers see more changes coming as Generation Z enters the workforce.



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