



BY MEGAN MAZZOCCO, associate editor

the end of



3 in 1

2 business offices +
1 manufacturing facility

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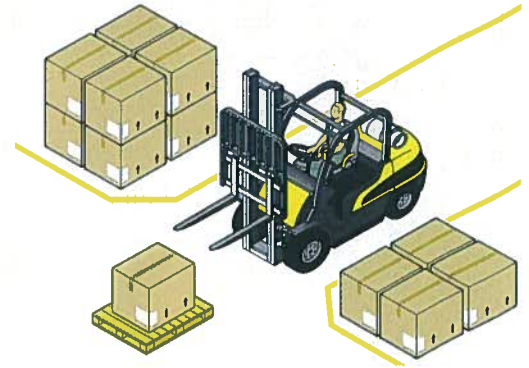


ABOVE: In the case of the new combined headquarters and manufacturing operations of Technical Glass Products outside Seattle, consolidating the manufacturing workplace with office space, according to Naomi Mason, an associate with Callison Architects, the project's designer, simplified logistics and reduced operations costs. A single location, she adds, also fosters better communication among employees, creates a more unified corporate culture, and, in turn, a more efficient workforce.

ABOVE: Reused furniture from existing locations helped earn LEED-CI Gold certification.

MID-RISE MAKEOVER: The Rise of Mid-Rise Construction

Manufacturing and warehousing are domains often out of the architect's wheelhouse. But in the face of a new American economy that will have to employ new paradigms, owners may consider multitasking, hybrid facilities. It will be up to the architectural community to creatively apply materials that bridge business processes.



the office? (as we know it)



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"I don't think the office will completely disappear," says Chris Nieto, a developer and CEO of Phoenix-based [merz] project. "Too many companies will always rely on the traditional office as a center that houses resources and maintains productivity through peer pressure and managers. I firmly believe the office is going to change for the better."

According to Naomi Mason, an associate with Callison Architects, the Seattle-based firm is seeing more consolidation, but not in the traditional workplace as we've known it. Many typical office spaces come in the form of low- to mid-rise buildings—the too-often ugly ducklings of architecture. Traditionally associated with inefficiency and suburban sprawl, mid- to low-rise developments make many architects recoil. "In my opinion, low-rise suburban = low density = sprawl = bad," says Jack Robbins, an associate in the New York office of Perkins+Will. "Personally, my fondest hope for the future of low-rise suburban construction is that it is dwindles to nothing."

However, the term low-rise is relative; take, for instance, the nation's capitol. "Being located in Washington, D.C., most of our buildings are considered low-rise because of the height restrictions," reminds Lewis Goetz, president and CEO of Group Goetz Architects.

Whether a product of suburban sprawl or municipal ordinances, mid-rise construction is constant, but good architecture is not necessarily a given, as too many projects are often slapped up by developers as quickly and cheaply as possible, creating a glut of commercial real estate that just will not disappear. There is a silver lining. This overabundance has driven prices down, and competition among building owners for new tenants is fierce, forcing the transformation of ugly ducklings into swans of sorts. "The commercial real estate market hasn't reached its bottom," says Nieto. "In order for property owners to maintain their marketability, they need to provide more attractive spaces, so people are investing in design. It's the only advantage that developers have right now."

When Nieto set out to build a new location for his business, he envisioned a greenfield project, but at the time, materials and construction prices made it cost prohibitive, so he decided to go the renovation route, stumbling upon what he considers a new real-estate star: "There is a lot on the market right now, so it makes more sense that there will be more and more adaptive re-use, mixed-use projects," Nieto says. "I absolutely, 100% think it is a new archetype and paradigm [of the low-rise]. It won't make sense to build ground up for a long time."

For example, Nieto came across a well-built 1940s-era building in Phoenix and acquired it for below its replacement value. When he started construction, there were no other tenants, so Nieto knew he could put his architecture firm on the second floor. Each of the floor's build-outs were phased in according to tenants, and by this happenstance, Nieto ended up with one of the most attractive buildings in town and a great mixed-use, adaptive re-use project.

"I had no idea it was going to turn out the way it turned out," he says. "When we started talking to people, it turned into what it is—a really cool work environment." Currently, the building has three tenants: a restaurant, the architectural firm and an art gallery. The building received the 2009 Southwest Contractor Best of Award for tenant improvement—interiors.

ABOVE: Callison creatively incorporated the products of its client, TGP, a fabricator of glazing, including fire-rated safety glass, in an open-plenum design that showcased the company's strengths.

mixed use

To build from the ground up was quite expensive at the time so, [meq] project switched gears and started to look for existing buildings that were built well and could be acquired for below their replacement value.

Currently the LINK building has three tenants: an architectural firm, an art gallery and a restaurant. "It's a very cool place to work," says owner Niemi.

architecture firm

art gallery

restaurant



co-eds

Not only will a crowded real estate market determine whether massive renovations to the built environment occur, stricter energy codes and environmental certifications are playing a role as well. "Energy costs, the law and educated consumers are driving these enhancements," says Goetz. And as Ed Mazria pointed out in the October 2009 issue, over the next 20-30 years, the renovation market will be transforming the existing building stock in terms of density and efficiency.

To achieve this efficiency, the successful mixed-use makeover of a single building could be performed on a larger scale, for instance, on a corporate campus or even a drastic transformation from business-park to mixed-use community. "If the community that those buildings are in become more mixed-use—city-like—so that [workers] don't have to get back into their cars to go to lunch," says Robbins, "it's better for employees and the environment."

A model for that transformation—college campus living—creates convenience: live, work, study and socialize within walking distance. Ideally, campus buildings share utility and heating expenses and are located near

long-term investment.

On the other hand, the corporate campus offers flexibility in uncertain economic times. "The idea of building smaller buildings as a cluster to meet a bigger demand gives the corporation flexibility in reducing or increasing space incrementally," adds Lewis Goetz.

A corporate campus can introduce pleasant views of surrounding landscapes and, as the built environment becomes denser, the spaces in between become even more important. According to Robbins, "borrowing" views and space from the outdoors is a great way to create smaller, more efficient spaces that still feel good to be in. "In terms of creating a better environment, more glass, more connections to the outdoors and natural daylight make a difference," says Robbins. "It's a trade-off for smaller spaces to visually borrow from light and air outdoors."

Looking at something green and having access to it can be just as much of a relief as using it. "People are comforted by those things just being there, even if they don't get used," says Robbins. "Just the fact of their existence somehow makes it a better environment."



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headquarters/manufacturing operations facility for glass manufacturer Technical Glass Products (TGP), suggests creating outdoor spaces for people, such as places to park bicycles or park n'ride areas enhanced with public art. Communal spaces, like balconies, rooftops and picnic areas, are also important. The new TGP headquarters could be considered a communal space in its entirety, as the company combined three facilities, two business offices and a manufacturing facility, under one very stylish roof.

A grand departure from a typical industrial park building (plain surfaces and flat roofs, minimal windows and unappealing landscape), Callison planned a building full of light and glass with an open plenum. The firm specified a more creative design with tilt-up concrete by going with a form that created an undulating finish with shadow lines that make the building look slightly different as the daylight changes. "[Tilt-up concrete construction] is inexpensive and quick, but how you deal with it makes it interesting," Mason says. "It doesn't take a lot to make it so much more appealing than walking up to building that looks like a concrete shoebox."

The open-plenum design allows natural daylighting and creates an interesting exhibit of the company's glass products in action; however, the open-office environment was an acoustic concern for the management and sales department. "The sales guys are a young, energetic bunch; worried they would disrupt each other, they insisted they needed private offices," reports Mason. Callison discovered a 'pink noise' product that is music to everyone's ears. Soothing sound waves of variable lengths muffle sound and render conversations inaudible. Installed above the ceiling and zoned, a facility manager can program it or use it as PA system. "In terms of employee satisfaction, it's been huge," reports Mason. "People complain when they turn it off."



GCA RENDERINGS IMAGES COURTESY GCA GRAPHICS

new york state of mind

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—JACK ROBBINS, associate Perkins+Will

As seen with the new TGP building, consolidating the manufacturing workplace with office space simplifies logistics and reduces operations costs. A single location fosters better communication among employees, creates a more unified corporate culture and, in turn, a more efficient workforce. "That is one of those nebulous things that are very difficult to quantify," says Mason, who points to statistics being collected by the USGBC about employee productivity.

Perkins+Will's Robbins explains that staff is usually the largest cost to a company, so anything that makes the workplace more pleasant will increase the efficiency. As little as a 1% increase in productivity (five minutes in a workday) will act as a credit toward reducing a company's greatest cost.

Robbins adds that the ultimate competition for employee productivity in the built environment comes from the Internet. How can the office park compete with the virtual environment? "I'm not suggesting Times Square," says Robbins. "People do want some kind of calm." That said, the high-density spaces created through mixed-use and reuse renovation projects will have to compete in the existing market, live up to new environmental standards and provide tenants the solace and stimulation to make them content to look out a real window, rather than a virtual one.

ABOVE: Hartland Commons, designed by Group Goetz Architects is a mixed-use hotel/retail/restaurant/spa development planned for the heart of Washington, D.C.

ABOVE: GCA's Sustainable Urban Design team champions the paradigm shift from urban sprawl to compact, walkable mixed-use communities.