

OFFICE — LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

4 corporate headquarters trends here to stay

The debate over how and where employees work will likely continue for some time. We've seen both positive and negative impacts on company culture, recruitment and retention of employees. There is one outcome through all of this cultural shift that we believe adds great value for all – new investment in corporate workplace environments. Employees are searching for a stronger, more meaningful connection to their work and their work environment, so companies are rethinking the interior and exterior design of their corporate headquarters to fit these needs.

Prior to 2020, the burden of proving the value of expanded workplace options seemed to be solely on the design team. Architects and landscape architects would give the hard sell, followed quickly by education to decision-makers the immense benefits of including exterior spaces as part of their staff's daily experience. Perspectives have shifted with a new focus on providing employees with an experiential atmosphere and even more meaningful connections to nature. Today's office developers and business owners are now asking for ways to design or redesign office towers and business parks with access to useable exterior space. These spaces are becoming as important as interior amenity rooms – the common spaces we've seen in the last decade filled with games, snacks and even beer taps. Here are four corporate headquarters trends that are not only here to stay but also add great value in building a strong corporate culture.

1. Biophilia. In an effort to cre-



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ate more space between colleagues, biophilia (the connection to plant material and natural elements) is now a common design decision being incorporated more frequently. Scientific research demonstrates the positive mental health benefits it provides

employees. As we incorporate biophilia into our design for clients, it gives us the opportunity to ground people in their local environment. Our designs are hyper-local and include plant species native to each location so the user of those spaces gets to know what a natural and native landscape should look like.

2. Human comfort. When designing, it's important to create comfortable places for people. Each space should have a set of solutions depending on the specific climatic conditions of its location; we refer to these as microclimates. Providing access to the sun in the winter and shelter from the sun in the summer is imperative on the Front Range. Understanding where the prevailing winds are coming from and how the architecture will manipulate those winds can increase the usability of spaces well into the shoulder seasons in Colorado. We do special technical analysis now, including wind tunnel modeling to predict wind flow to avoid any issues with accelerating those strong northwest winds we get in the winter. You can design a beautiful place, but if it's too hot in the summer or in a



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Corporate environments are designed to connect employees to nature, with quiet moments for reflection, outdoor meetings, public receptions, lunch gatherings and small conversations

wind tunnel in the winter, it won't be used.

3. Design fluid space for programming.

When designing outdoor spaces for corporate headquarters, it's vital to have the space be flexible for small group meetings or for one person to take a phone call, while still being able to accommodate larger office-wide events. We are seeing many advancements in outdoor technology to aid in the ability to utilize these spaces as real conference or team-work spaces. For many companies, these spaces have become so popular that they are now making them reservable in the same way indoor conference rooms are reserved.

4. Leasable space. In 2017, the Building Owners and Managers Association updated its guidelines to count useable outdoor space toward a building's rentable area calculation. This means that developers can charge for these outdoor spaces. This

shift in priority has made our value proposition argument much easier. No longer are these simply extra or "nice to have" spaces. These outdoor workplace environments are now revenue generating and can pay for themselves. This change shows an acknowledgment from the workforce with regards to how and where people do their work.

Times are changing, and the exterior space is no longer isolated to a break area or pass through on the way to and from work. These exterior spaces can become a way to differentiate your corporate workspace from your competition. These spaces, when implemented thoughtfully and carefully, can become a meaningful part of your employees' daily experience, increasing productivity and improving overall mental health throughout the office. ▲

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