



Today's workplace amenities can meet new needs for all

BY MARLYN ZUCOSKY | JANUARY 2023

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered many people's work lives since March 2020. Remote and hybrid work became the new normal during the last two and a half years, and it is widely anticipated that it is here to stay. In fact, according to [a recent Gallup survey](#), more than half of remote-capable employees state that they anticipate a remote or hybrid working arrangement moving forward with their current company. For tenants in commercial office spaces and building landlords alike, designing amenities to accommodate the new norms of work life is extremely beneficial.

Many companies value the idea of having employees return to the office, even if only for a day or two

per week. The challenge they face is adapting the workplace to fit employees' needs that have become apparent since COVID began. Companies are realizing they need to inhabit commercial buildings with residential attributes, and craft an office area that includes an abundance of thoughtful amenities in and around the space.

There was a time in the not-too-distant past that office amenities meant coffee machines and ping-pong tables in the break room. Nowadays, employees are looking for much more. Employees required to go into an office full time have lost their ability to run a quick errand, do laundry, walk their dog, or pick up their children during the workday. It means extra time spent

off the clock to do these things and, for some, more money spent on pet or childcare.

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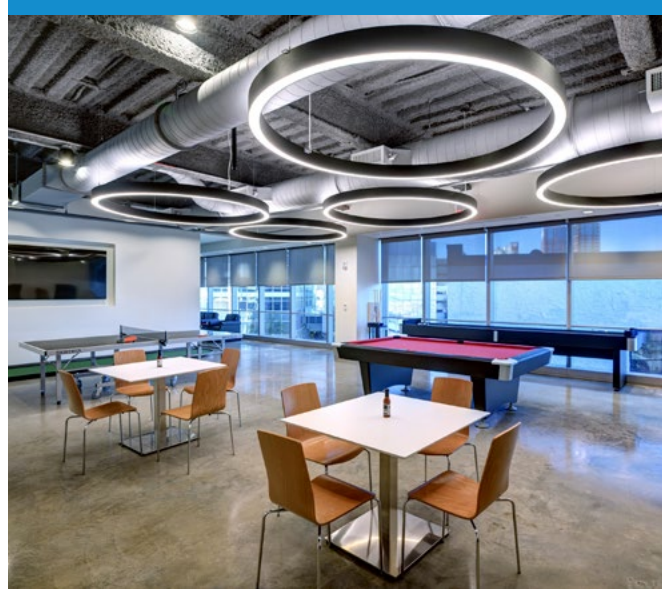
A lot of companies have taken note of this shift and, in an effort to encourage employees back into the office, revamped their office spaces or moved into new settings that better cater to their staff's needs. Workplaces are much more apt to provide services like dry-cleaning, on-site car wash, oil change and possibly even pet and/or childcare services to provide extra convenience for their team members and tenants.

The office "fun factor" has extrapolated to include features like golf simulators, fitness centers, cafés with baristas, and revamped collaboration spaces with a focus on employee socialization, team-building, ideation, and culture rather than heads-down workstations we've known in the past.

Ideas in action

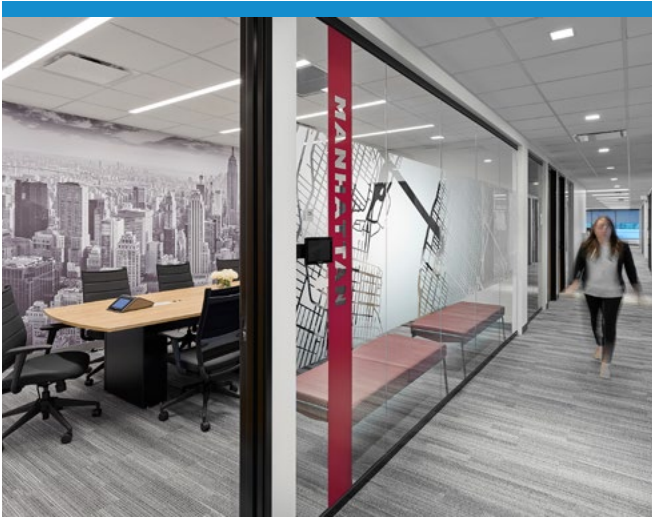
Our firm has worked with numerous landlords and corporate clients to renovate their building portfolios and workplaces to fit today's tenant and employee requirements.

We recently completed a project in Newark, New Jersey, for KS Engineers' new office space. The 30,000-square-foot (2,787-sq.-m.) project was designed to provide a welcoming, hospitable environment for clients and consultants, unify KSE employees, and enable streamlined communication. A significant objective of the project was to help KSE bridge the gap between different levels of staff and help diverse departments work seamlessly together. The design also focused on appealing to a multi-generational workforce to help recruit and retain talent.



The space includes a board room and reception area at the entry, huddle rooms, phone booths, a café with a virtual golf and gaming area, a wellness/meditation room, and a library/lounge. To allow for better cross-training of divisions, select departments were positioned adjacent to one another. All interior offices have adjacent huddle rooms to enable collaboration. The open-office areas are interspersed with plan tables with storage that can be used for heads-down, plan-review sessions and impromptu collaboration. The fresh aesthetic includes graphics based on images of past projects, designed by KSE's in-house graphics team, and a color palette that represents the blues in the KSE branding and other complementing colors throughout the space to deliver a very modern and inviting vibe.

Another tenant we've worked with is Key Food in designing its corporate headquarters in Old Bridge,



New Jersey. The more than 38,000-square-foot (3,530-sq.-m.) space includes a reception area, open and private offices, conference rooms, fitness center, wellness room and multiple break rooms featuring custom millwork. Since this was a relocation from New York, our Branding team used this fact as inspiration when designing the environmental graphics. The project also features a dedicated executive suite and a test-kitchen facility. The space was designed to promote Key Food's company culture and tell a story throughout the space.

Another type of client

In addition to working with corporate clients, we have numerous landlord clients across the firm. Ware Malcomb is currently contracted for over 72,000,000 square feet (6,689,019 sq. m.) of landlord architect services company-wide.

We worked with Trawler Capital Management in the design of 777 Scudders Mill Rd. in Plainsboro, New Jersey, a 675,000-square-foot (62,710-sq.-m.), three-building complex. The buildings feature a fitness area, full café, foosball table, media-ready auditorium, and

collaboration areas in the lobby with TVs, all on the main concourse level. We utilized a below-grade, non-rentable space and transformed it to a major asset.

Our team is working with Onyx Equities, LLC, on the renovations in eight separate buildings within its recently acquired Parsippany portfolio that will incorporate amenities such as employee lounges, outdoor dining areas, wellness paths, fitness centers, and on-site cafes.

Landlords, like tenants, reap the benefits of employees coming into an office space. Maintaining a Class-A building with innovative amenities increases leasing velocity, stabilizes assets, and ultimately delivers a greater return on the investment.

"We are finding that the landlords who are adding amenities, renovating properties, and creating an overall better tenant experience have the ability to lease faster, drive demand, and generate more rent growth for their properties with higher-quality tenants than those who sit idle," stated Todd Elfand of Cushman & Wakefield.

With the surge in remote and hybrid work since early 2020, along with the gradual increase in employees [voluntarily leaving positions](#) altogether, it has become imperative that both landlords and companies evolve the design of their workplace environments to fit the current mindsets of the millennial and Gen-Z generations that dominate the workforce.



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