

# Eight Office Design Trends for the Next Generation

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Intergraph's walkable landscape encouraging employees to move throughout the workday. All photos: Josh Meister Photo and Cooper Carry.

It's a well-known story in the corporate real estate world. Office developers compete to find the next best project, architects design site plans and renderings, and everyone works together to build the ultimate workspace for the next generation.

So what does this ultimate workspace look like? And who is the next generation?

The next generation of workers doesn't just involve millennials; it encompasses workers of all ages who are attracted to spaces that accommodate technology, mobility, col-

laboration, wellness and the environment.

And as for creating the ultimate workspace for this next generation, here are eight office design trends we'll see more of over the next decade.

1. **Sustainability and High Performance.**

Architects are embracing a holistic view of conservation as they design office buildings that efficiently address land, water and energy use. Sustainable technology and materials will continue to be a top priority. And by advancing sustainable features, we are now designing to optimize durable, high-performance attributes on a life-cycle basis, to create efficient and resilient office structures.

2. **Walkability.**

The next generation does not want to depend on cars. Even in suburban settings, walkable

street retail and dining is highly demanded as well as access to public transit systems.

3. **Wellness.**

Office buildings no longer request taco and burger joints. They now want to offer healthier choices such as salad and juice bars. We're also seeing more standing desks, treadmill desks and corporate campus walking paths that encourage employees to move throughout the workday.

4. **Shared Space.**

Private offices are less popular as today's employees demand shared, collaborative space. They want an open-concept office that fuels creativity and fosters teamwork. In designing the corporate campus for Intergraph, a software engineering giant, we eliminated all enclosed office spaces – even for senior leadership – and created flexible,



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*Mylan's expansive windows and ceiling heights maximize natural light.*



*Intergraph's lobby activated with color and energy.*

open space with various sized nooks throughout the floor plan.

5. **Lobbies** increasingly are meant for true socializing and interactions between tenants. Traditional lobbies with sophisticated concierge desks and quiet, serious atmospheres are being replaced with spaces that are bustling with energy. They are now similar to coffee shops and cafes with strong wireless connections, social spaces and expansive views out to the street that invite people inside. In the design of Park Center, a 580,000-square-foot office building in Atlanta, we strategically moved public transportation traffic through

the lobby to encourage people to stop at the café and coffee shop.

6. **Daylight.** Ceiling heights now average 9'-6" to 10 feet. They previously averaged 8'-6" to 9 feet and windows are expanding to let in more natural light. Workers want to bring nature indoors. Daylight appeals to very basic human needs and tends to increase productivity and overall employee satisfaction.
7. **Sun shading.** Sun shades are becoming more distinctive and personalized. In designing Intergraph, we added sunshades to not only provide energy-efficient shading, but to also add a

sense of dimension.

#### 8. **Enclosure Systems.**

Expectations for the performance of a building's enclosure system continue to increase. Some of these include better thermal performance; sustainability and aesthetic versatility. For example, glass manufacturers are offering more options for fritting to customize windows to fit the office culture. In designing Intergraph, we fritted the windows with computer coding and bitmapping to personalize the look and feel of the office.

Another example is precast concrete's aesthetic versatility, which will prove crucial to designing the next generation of office space. Precast concrete offers the ability to cast in different patterns, shades and shadows. In designing Mylan's corporate campus, we used precast to emphasize the corporate wing of the building. The design includes a frame made of precast to draw attention to the executive entrance of the building. At Intergraph, we used precast in the base of the stair towers because it offered a more durable material. Precast also serves as a great structural system. And when designed as a combined structural/architectural building enclosure, such as with load-bearing insulated sandwich wall panels; it can provide an efficient (thermal, acoustical, etc.), economical and resilient office environment.

These office design trends will continue to play out as the next generations of workers populate the workforce and as technology increasingly transforms the work experience. Businesses are also more in tune than ever with creating a distinct company culture. Architects are carefully choosing color palettes, materials and interior design concepts that best align with the brand and intended office culture.

The bottom line is that people come first. And as architects, it's our job to engage with employees in order to best understand how office design and layout can impact not just culture, but also performance. ▲

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