

Inside OUT

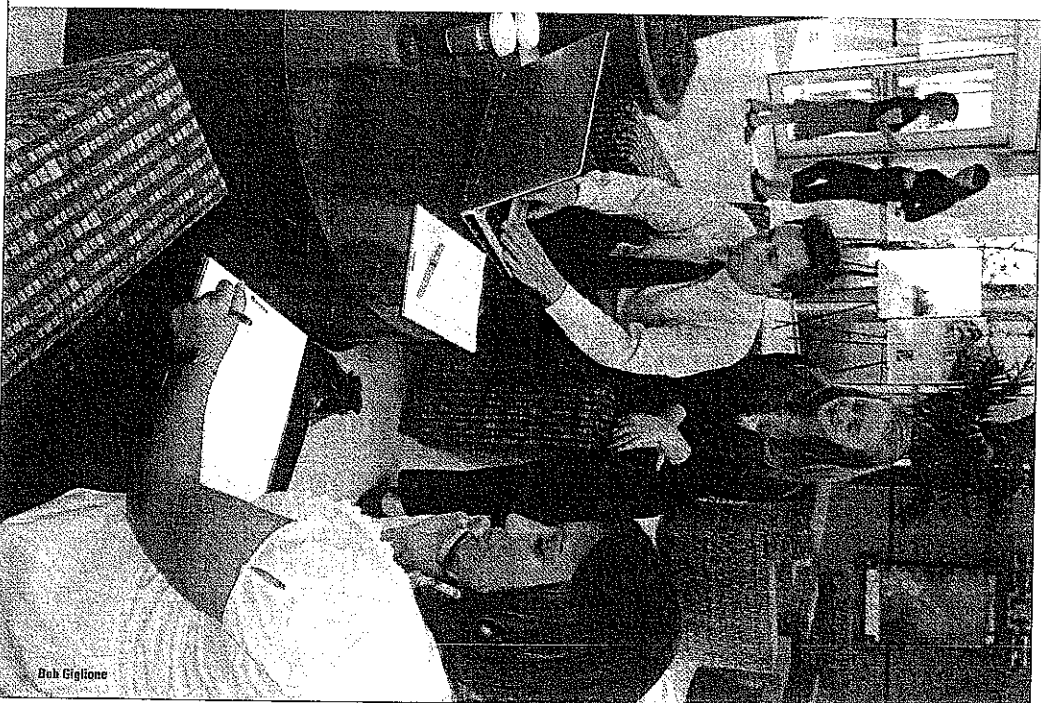
Office workers are the winners in this space race

By DAVID WINZELBERG

More office workers are thinking outside the cube. And they won't have to look too hard to escape their cubicles at some Long Island buildings, where open space has now become office space. The same way wireless technology has enabled the virtual office and un-tethered much of today's workforce, new philosophies in building design and use of space are helping free employees from the same old, same old.

At 1001 Franklin Ave. in Garden City, employees had been using the outdoor plaza to chat or just get some sun. The Albanese

See INSIDE, Page 40A



July 13-19, 2007 / Long Island Business News

Inside: In real estate, it's good to be on the outside

From Page 1A

Mobility, electronic data help free office workers from their cubicles.

Architects, landlords incorporate more common, outdoor spaces.

Non-offices jettis become selling point in tight real estate market.

Organization, owners of the building, reconfigured the opportunity and ordered tables and chairs so people could meet, work and catch a bite away from their offices upstairs. Albanese Executive Vice President Russell Matthews pointed out that office workers in places such as Garden City already have choices that employees in the suburbs usually don't. "They can walk to different places to eat or shop if they want to take a break," Matthews said. "That's something you can't do from an office building on the expressway."

Spaced out

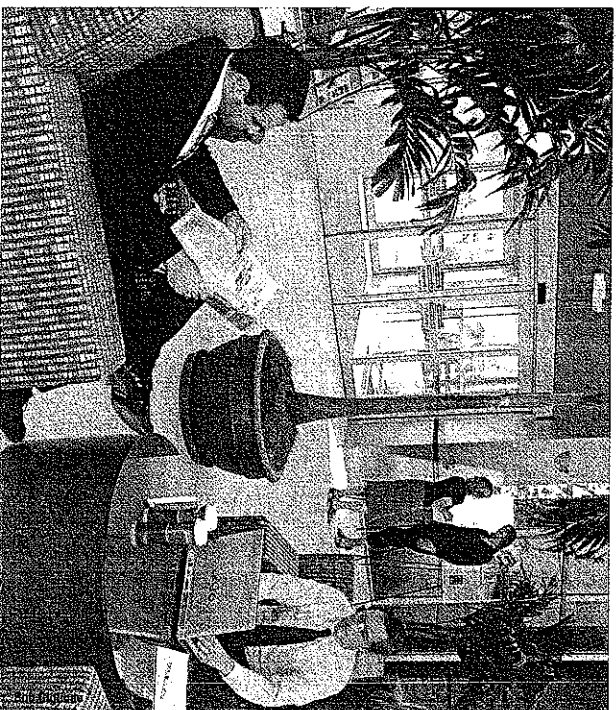
There is little to walk to from buildings on and around the LIE, but a new building at 324 South Service Road in Melville offers more than one escape from the traditional office setting. The comfy couches and chairs in the atrium lobby — which makes it look more like a hotel than an office building — serve as an informal meeting area.

"It's all about interaction and communicating face to face," said Ted Weiss of T. Weiss Realty, which developed the building. "Business is done face to face. Our building was built around that type of environment."

Shayy Giranni of TPG Architecture in Melville, who worked on interiors in Weiss' building, said office design is heading away from outdated ideas about common areas.

"The trend in the design of interiors of office buildings is a new dimension on the use of the public areas, like we did in Ted Weiss' new building," Giranni said. "It allows the tenants to entertain their guests in these open and warm environments without the restrictions and interventions of their offices."

Another architect, Evan Galen, who has offices in Manhattan and Bridgetonhampton, sees the same trend. "Common areas are much more informal," Galen said. "They



Common work areas and outdoor amenities are growing in importance at corporate facilities.

have more of a homey feel rather than a regimented, corporate feel."

Galen, who has also designed several home offices for clients in the Hamptons, said the office of the future may have fewer walls. "It used to be how many cubicles can you fit?" he said. "But now they're trying to make work more fun and encourage collaborative thinking."

Business trends used to start on the East Coast, but the office-as-open-campus style began in California's Silicon Valley, as software and dotcom companies redesigned office environments from the inside out. You still won't see many Frisbees flying through office corridors here, but the ideas of less clutter and more portability are becoming the norm rather than the exception in the design of suburban offices.

Mobility matters

Wireless Internet service is one of the keys that can unchain employees from their desks and it is being offered as an important amenity for prospective tenants of new and redesigned office space. The building at 324 South Service Road has WiFi throughout its common areas, which include a cafe

with indoor and outdoor seating where people can catch a bite, mingle with coworkers and still stay connected to e-mail and the latest stock quotes.

When Metropolitan Realty Associates of Garden City bought the Sunrise Business Center in Great River last fall, company president Joe Parkas added wireless Internet, three 50-inch televisions and a couch to the complex's River Cafe — along with a few other perks to keep existing tenants and attract new ones.

"I think that having open areas and good food services leads to a less stressful work environment," Parkas said, adding that having places for people to get together other than the office can breed more creativity among employees.

At the center's 200 building, there is a patio with tables and chairs just outside the cafe and a canopied courtyard for workers to use their laptops or have a meeting. One company with offices here, an oil spill cleanup group called the National Response Corp., holds periodic working lunches in the outdoor courtyard.

One office worker said she enjoys having the option to move around. "I love it," said

Catherine Rausch, who works for LifeTree Technology in Great River. "It's nice to get out of your office once in a while."

Outside the box

Actually, the cubicle itself was invented to foster equality, communication and collaboration among office workers. According to statistics from the Smithsonian Institution, nearly 60 percent of American white-collar employees work in cubicles. Introduced in the early 1960s, cubicle landscapes were organized to reflect the information flow within an office. But technology has rendered much of that choreography useless, since information now flows electronically, instead of via paper passed over a partition. As companies compete for the best and brightest in the people they hire, amenities that set them apart are essential. No longer limited by a 9-5 schedule, workers are seeking more flexibility and companies are trying to find new ways to increase productivity while enhancing the work experience.

Bill Wilkes, executive vice president with CLK/HIP in Woodbury, agreed that open spaces are "part of what makes a property attractive." The company's building at 7600 Jericho Turnpike in Woodbury is adjacent to a pond, so CLK/HIP cleaned up and landscaped existing outdoor space, installed fountains and is planning to put in seating areas. At its property at 100 Crossways Park West, also in Woodbury, employees are already enjoying an outdoor seating area outside of the building's cafeteria.

The open environment at 324 South Service Road features wider-than-usual hallways and a few stress-busting places to escape, including a health club and a virtual golf course. Workers at the Melville building can also take a stroll through meditation gardens outside — think Dilbert meets the Dalai Lama — for a passive pause to break up their daily routines.

"It certainly is a softer environment and it creates a good first impression," said Bob Tasi, an architect with Young & Young in Riverhead who helped fashion Weiss' building. "This is a competitive market and you have to try to keep people happy."

That added that rentable space is not often sacrificed for the sake of comfort, but is a growing strategy in Class A office development.

"The work day is not getting shorter," Weiss said. "You need to make people enjoy coming to work. It prevents burnout."