



Bringing home to work: New amenities projects make the workplace livable

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The last decade has seen big changes in interior office design. New ideas about open, shared office space – and how it can be more reflective of how teams work and create – have resulted in radically different designs from the cube farms of yesteryear.

Now, developers and architects are doing the same with old office buildings. There is a new market for commercial tenants who want amenities available without having to drive off site for them, or build them within their own spaces.

Eric Gould,
Helicon Design Group

And owners are accommodating. There is a current movement to provide these benefits in order to stay competitive in tenant markets. What were once thought of as luxuries, or things to be pursued away from the office, are now considered essential to the quality of daily office life – and for attracting and retaining new talent.

Responding to these amenity trends in the suburban real estate office market, Helicon Design Group, Inc., recently completed a renovation for FoxRock Properties at their 200,000 s/f Longwater Place complex in Norwell, Mass. Following a 10,000 s/f gut renovation, the project resulted in a brand new conference center open to all tenants, a full-service café operated by Sebastian's, and ZoneWellness, a new wellness and fitness enterprise being rolled out by the YMCA.

FoxRock is also continuing this development strategy with another 10,000 s/f at their recently acquired property at 350 Granite St. in Braintree. That project, also design by Helicon, will include similarly programmed café, fitness, conferencing amenities, as well as extended lobby areas for out-of-the-office work places.

The \$2 million Norwell project, located in the Assinippi Office Park, was six months in planning and four months under construction, requiring structural alterations to the base

building for the open areas needed. Helicon met extensively with the FoxRock, YMCA and Sebastian's teams to coordinate extensive equipment requirements as well as to develop new palettes of finishes and furnishings.

Deep tones and exposed ceilings were used in the lobby and dining areas to evoke the modern and casual sensibilities of urban coffee shops and retail spaces.

Helicon also provided extensive acoustical design to accommodate the two ZoneWellness studios geared to provide group yoga and exercise classes, isolating them from abutting tenant offices.

New amenity packages allow FoxRock and other developers to position their properties in the market ahead of other conventional facilities with standard vending and fitness rooms installed as small necessities, usually in leftover spaces.

While high-tech companies and other tenants are also providing personal services like dry-cleaning pick-up, landlords and developers now consider fitness and healthy food options as part of their base building concept.

Tenant reaction to the Norwell project was immediate and positive after opening in January of this year. ZoneWellness and Sebastian's reported brisk new business from the complex at Longwater Place, as well as drawing new customers from other nearby office developments.

Helicon and FoxRock are anticipating similar successful results in Braintree after that project completes construction in the fall.

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