



Advance Your Career.
PLANETIZEN Courses

**AN NEWS
IN YOUR INBOX!**
YOUR E.MAIL HERE

THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

Google™ Custom Search x

- [HOME](#)
 - [NEWS](#)
 - [BLOG](#)
 - [FABRIKATOR](#)
 - [CALENDAR](#)
 - [COMPETITIONS](#)
 - [ARCHITECT'S LIBRARY](#)
 - [JOBS](#)
 - [PRINT ISSUES](#)
- [FACADES+](#)
 - [DESIGN X](#)
 - [ABOUT](#)
 - [SUBSCRIBE](#)
 - [ADVERTISE](#)
 - [CONTACT](#)

NEWS

12.11.2012

DIGITAL DREAMS

LA's emerging "Silicon Beach" boosts architects.



ERIC HAUGAARD
CREE

-
-
-



GENSLER'S ELECTRONIC ARTS OFFICES IN PLAYA VISTA.
COURTESY GENSLER

Tech companies from Silicon Valley are invading Los Angeles. Big ones. And because most are heading for the city's western coastline, the area has a new nickname: Silicon Beach.

[Google recently purchased the Frank Gehry-designed "binoculars" building in Venice](#) and installed a whimsical, 100,000-square-foot redesign by Google site director Thomas Williams. YouTube moved a new division into the Howard Hughes complex in Playa Vista. And the [Hayden Tract in Culver City](#) is one of the hottest spots in the country for tech and media to lease creative office space.

Most of the prime space—funky, adaptively re-used older buildings in cool coastal neighborhoods—has already been leased, creating a demand for more and larger offices. This is good news for local architecture firms, which are redesigning the spaces for tech employees and landlords.

"It's a remarkable age we are in. While the real estate market across the country is otherwise fairly quiet, this market is highly dynamic," said Wayne Ratkovich, founder of The Ratkovich Company. Ratkovich purchased and rehabilitated 11 landmark buildings in Playa Vista once used by Howard Hughes. He markets them as creative space and has dubbed the complex The Hercules Campus. "We've hit a hot spot," he added.

Ratkovich hired LA firm Levin & Associates Architects to create the \$50 million campus renovation of 11 buildings totaling 537,130 square feet on 28 acres. Still under renovation, the project includes the "Mahogany Row" offices that once housed Hughes and his top executives. This component is being restored to its original 1950s wood-on-steel-structure. The campus also includes Hughes' legendary

REGISTER NOW

sept 11

atlanta

ARCHITECTS
FORUM

Glass + Performance

NGA

PRESENTED BY **glass** magazine
THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

Spruce Goose hangar, which is being used for film production. Levin's campus plan combines new outdoor communal spaces with 100-year-old sycamore trees.



LATITUDE 34'S NEW COURTYARD DESIGN.

COURTESY GENSLER

YouTube recently joined The Hercules Campus as an occupant of building 17, hiring HLW to design the interior of an extension for its YouTube Next Lab facility. The main floor is focused on production studios, and the second level is being designed for open, creative office space. For fun, YouTube placed a refurbished helicopter out front and installed a working fire pole that extends through all levels. Advertising firm 72andSunny also relocated its U.S. headquarters to the Hercules Campus (from Culver City) and hired local firm LeanArch for its build-out and renovation.

The 1940s Hughes buildings express the cachet that tech firms covet: buildings with “good bones” drenched in history and character. But such structures are hard to come by these days, especially with the large floor plates tech firms need. Consequently, one “traditional” office space owner is redesigning its property into creative space. Practically next door to The Hercules Campus at Playa Vista is Latitude 34, developed by Lincoln Property Company. These two buildings have remained empty since opening in 2009. So Lincoln Property Company has hired Gensler to reconfigure them and two adjacent buildings into more tech-attractive spaces.

“We are approaching the office building of the future in a completely different way today,” said Gensler principal Michael White. “We’re renovating, repositioning, and frankly ‘hacking’ existing buildings that were designed under the old paradigm, in order for them to satisfy the demands of the new creative workplace.”



GENSLER'S IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PLAYA JEFFERSON OFFICES IN MAR VISTA.

COURTESY GENSLER

White designed the Animation Campus for video gaming company Electronic Arts (also in Playa Vista), and worked recently with Activision Blizzard on its headquarters, as well as with IMAX and Red Bull, all in Santa Monica. The firm is also undertaking significant office improvements at Playa

Jefferson, a conglomeration of creative offices in Mar Vista that includes a thorough revamping of public spaces. For the Latitude 34 makeover, White and his team created individual entryways and addresses for businesses, instead of the current design, which funnels all tenants through a single common public lobby.

“Tenants want the individualized, branded feeling, where they can hang their sign over the door,” said White. They also want architects “to break down the size of the facade to make it feel like separate row houses.”

Gensler will also punch through levels to create two connecting floors; a common practice in new tech offices. Connections between the tenant suite and the exterior landscaping will be added at all levels, and outdoor spaces will become more individualized.

“Instead of one long linear park, it should be six or seven pocket parks that are each unique,” said White. “One area is for checking email outdoors. Another is a community spot with an amphitheater. Instead of concrete, the materials will be loose, organic, and natural, with woods and fabric canopies and trellises.”

If Playa Vista and the rest of Silicon Beach take off, look for other markets to follow suit. Recently, the city of El Segundo launched its own “incubator district,” Smoky Hollow, to attract tech and creative tenants to the old warehouses and bow-truss buildings near LAX.

Jack Skelley


 Post to Facebook Posting as Deni Lampe Mileski (Change) [Comment](#)



Carl Muhlstein

Nice article Jack. Too bad you missed the Magnum Opus thereservela.com.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · April 9 at 10:56pm



Curtis B. Wayne · [Follow](#)

Man, oh man, these images are just – decorating schemes. Sad that this is somehow architectural news. “woods and fabric canopies and trellises” do not architecture make. You can quote me.

[Reply](#) · [1](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · December 11, 2012 at 9:19am



Mark Lundberg · Architect/Partner at YHR Partners

No substance here!

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · [Follow Post](#) · December 17, 2012 at 6:33am

 Facebook social plugin

ARCHITECTS FORUM
Glass + Performance NGA

sept 11
atlanta

REGISTER NOW

PRESENTED BY
glass
magazine
THE ARCHITECTS
NEWSPAPER

- [HOME](#)
- [NEWS](#)
- [BLOG](#)
- [FABRIKATOR](#)
- [CALENDAR](#)
- [COMPETITIONS](#)
- [ARCHITECT'S LIBRARY](#)
- [JOBS](#)
- [PRINT ISSUES](#)
- [FACADES+](#)
- [DESIGN X](#)
- [ABOUT](#)
- [SUBSCRIBE](#)
- [ADVERTISE](#)
- [CONTACT](#)

Copyright © 2003-2011 | [The Architect's Newspaper](#), LLC | All rights reserved. | [about us](#) | [contact us](#) | [privacy policy](#)

The Architect's Newspaper, LLC | 21 Murray Street, 5th Floor | New York, NY 10007 | tel. 212.966.0630

