

Facebook's new L.A. digs have frozen yogurt, yoga and no privacy



Facebook's new digs in Playa Vista. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

By **David Pierson**

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With its proximity to creative agencies and celebrities, Los Angeles has emerged as a key market for Facebook's advertising business and pop culture cachet.

But space was tight in its Playa Vista offices. When R&B star Miguel visited recently to stream video on Facebook Live, there was nowhere else to do it but in the communal kitchen.

"We had outgrown our space," said Sibyl Goldman, Facebook's head of entertainment partnerships.

On Monday, the social media giant will move into a refurbished office minutes away from its old one at the

so-called Campus development.

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The new Playa Vista location, which the company calls Facebook LA, is three times as big at 35,000 square feet, and with room for 200 employees, it accommodates twice the workforce.

The office offers two studio spaces — separated by a green room — designed for live streaming and 360-degree video. That will allow Facebook to work more closely with Southern California celebrities, brands and networks who want to seize on the company's heavy emphasis on video, particularly Facebook Live.

“It's so important to us to have a big presence here to facilitate the local community,” said Blake Beers, automotive lead for Facebook, who co-runs the L.A. office with Goldman.

Facebook, which is headquartered in Menlo Park, has maintained offices in L.A. for 10 years. Before moving to Playa Vista in 2011, staff members were located in a former Ray and Charles Eames property on Abbot Kinney in Venice.

Since then, Playa Vista has developed into one of Southern California's premier tech hubs, with the likes of YouTube, Yahoo and Google commanding large footprints in the master-planned neighborhood just north of Los Angeles International Airport.

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Tech and media companies, including Fox and Electronic Arts, have so flooded the area that no parcels of land remain for additional commercial development, said real estate broker Carl Muhlstein of JLL.

“The whole market has a no-vacancy sign,” he said.

Facebook's new digs are part of an office campus called Playa Jefferson — located across the street from the \$260-million retail, housing and office complex called the Runway, which is anchored by a Whole Foods market.

Playa Jefferson, built on former farmland, used to be a nondescript collection of concrete office buildings. Previous tenants include Citibank, which housed a research and development team there that came up with the first ATM machine.

In 2011, the complex was sold to Vantage Property Investors for \$35 million. Working with L.A. architecture firm Gensler (designers of the [Ritz-Carlton Hotel](#) and [JW Marriott at L.A. Live](#) and the 128-story [Shanghai Tower](#)), the new owners spruced the property up with bright colors, built open communal spaces and invited food trucks to park curbside during lunch.

Facebook declined to say how long its lease is at Playa Jefferson. The company also declined to say how much it pays in rent, though Muhlstein of JLL said market rates for commercial property in the area are going for about \$4.50 a square foot per month. That would put Facebook's rent at over \$150,000 a month.

Gensler helped Facebook design its interiors, a whimsical two-story space brightened by colorful murals and posters that echo the company's best-known mottos ("Move Fast And Break Things" and "Fail Harder").

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To open up the space and flood it with natural light, a portion of the second floor was removed to make room for a staircase and atrium. That's where a cloud-like paper cut-out installation by local artist Chris Natrop dangles from the ceiling.

"We explored concepts that are integral to the Facebook way of working — agility, flexibility and innovation — and crafted them into a space that evokes L.A.'s culture of arts and entertainment," said Brian Stromquist, design manager at Gensler.

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— Blake Beers, automotive lead for Facebook

In addition to Goldman's entertainment partnerships and Beers' automotive unit, the office will house marketing teams and members of Oculus and Instagram. There's also a room designated for virtual reality demonstrations.

Employees were polled about what kinds of services they wanted at the new site. They chose yoga. That is in addition to standard tech company perks like the free, full-service kitchen equipped with waffle irons and a frozen yogurt machine.

On the first Monday of the month, the office will host an "all hands" meeting — sort of like a happy hour for the L.A. staff to socialize and meet new employees. Birthdays are also a big deal. A badminton tournament was once organized in honor of a celebrant who had been an accomplished player in school.

There are no private offices, just conference rooms with names such as "In-N-Out" and "Straight Outta Playa Vista" — lest anyone forget they're not in Menlo Park. To encourage collaboration, Facebook opts for open floor plans and adjoined desks. That means Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg or Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg must pull up any one of the dozens of gray Aeron chairs that dot the main workspace should they visit and want to work.

“We open doors,” Beers said. “We don’t build a hierarchical structure.”

But what if someone doesn’t want to be disturbed?

“There’s always the universal symbol for ‘I want to be left alone,’ ” Beers said. “Headphones.”

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david.pierson@latimes.com

Twitter: @dhpierson

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