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MARKET HIGHLIGHT: CHARLOTTE

CHARLOTTE COMPANIES GETTING IN ON AMENITIES ARMS RACE TO ATTRACT TOP OFFICE USERS



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Companies looking to attract and retain talent are now offering top amenities, a modern office space and a healthy work environment with a sense of community. Employees are a company's most vital asset, and firms are willing to pay a higher rate for office space if it provides a place that employees want to work. One of the trends this year in commercial office space is enhancing the work environment.

According to a recent Pew Research Center analysis, millennials have become the largest generation in the U.S. workforce. To attract today's workers, office users must offer an overabundance of amenities. Companies are now providing gaming lounges that include video games, foosball, air hockey and darts. They are also offering napping rooms, coffee shops with baristas and even onsite bars with wine and craft beer on tap. This type of atmosphere enhances employee interaction and provides the employee a place to relax while at work.

Technology allows employees to be more efficient, but it will never replace the connection that happens with face-to-face conversations. Companies are looking to create an atmosphere where employees can collaborate throughout the workday, which in turn has a positive effect on worker productivity.

The key to a productive atmosphere is flexibility in the workspace. Gone are the days of private offices and high-wall workstations. There has been a shift toward a more open office layout with collaborative break-out areas. With this shift, companies must also offer phone rooms for private calls and quiet rooms with bean bag chairs or comfortable couches where employees can de-stress and unplug from the highly productive work area.

Employees are more health conscious today and typically prefer standing desks, adjustable seats, bike storage, on-site gyms with showers and healthy snacks in the break room. Today's workers are more en-

vironmentally minded and want the place they work to have recycling programs along with an energy-efficient workplace design that promotes sustainability and employee wellbeing. Companies are interested in taking a holistic approach to sustainability.

Developers recognize these trends and are building new office space in Charlotte loaded with amenities such as rooftop patios with gardens, collaborative work areas in common areas of the building, food delivery services, outdoor walking trails and convenience services such as a concierge, dry cleaning and personal package drop-off areas. A newly constructed, Class A office tower offers a concierge, an expansive fitness center, urban garden and an on-site French brasserie and coffee shop. RailYards, a mixed-use project underway in South End, will feature a bike-share program, fitness center, outdoor plaza and sky terrace.

Northwood Office is incorporating these trends into both existing and future product in Ballantyne.

Recently, Northwood invested in a modern amenity space at Ballantyne One, the first building constructed in Ballantyne in 1997. The space will be complete with a big screen TV, video gaming station, foosball table and upgraded vending machines. The amenity space will be ready for the building's tenants to enjoy by the end of the second quarter of this year.

For the next project in the pipeline, Northwood is considering elements such as a top-floor amenity concept with a rooftop terrace, conferencing facility and coworking collaborative work area. In addition, Ballantyne introduced bike-sharing earlier this year, and tenants continue to enjoy access to the community's numerous parks and walking trails.

While design and physical amenities are important, employees also want access to programming. For example, 300 South Tryon in Uptown hosts an Earth Day Fair for tenants that included trivia, ice cream and an e-waste drive.

Amenity-rich, open work environments, complemented by innovative programming, will soon become the new standard for the best in Class A office space. Offering inspiring design with sustainable features, appealing amenities and activated green spaces will be essential to stay top of mind with companies.



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