

SPECIAL REPORT

Commercial Construction and Design



Opening up

By Andrea Deckert

Modern design trends for commercial buildings include more open spaces for people to informally gather.

Story begins on page 26.

Modern commercial design transforming staid offices

'Collision' spaces, huddle areas add to workers' well-being

By ANDREA DECKERT

Whether located in the suburbs or the heart of downtown, modern commercial design focuses on open, collaborative spaces, ample seating, natural lighting and environmentally friendly fixtures, area designers say.

Gorbel Inc., an overhead crane manufacturer in Fishers, Ontario County, recently updated two of the buildings on its campus. The projects began in the summer of 2015 and wrapped up a year later.

"Our growth over the years has occurred at a brisk pace, and our attention was on keeping up with hiring and taking care of customers," says Brian Reh, Gorbel's CEO. "The time had come to clearly define our internal brand and transform the campus inside and out."

Allen Rossignol, founder and principal of Rochester-based Edge Architecture PLLC, and Joseph Twomey, a project manager at Edge, collaborated with Kelly Jahn Interior Architecture & Design PLLC to give Gorbel a more modern look. The intent was to create an inviting space that represents the industrial and technology company's products, identity and culture.

They introduced contemporary elements that include visual transparency between spaces, a central breakroom and a collaborative work environment for the three main departments—marketing, cus-



Gorbel Inc., in Fishers, recently updated two buildings at its Ontario County site. "The time had come ... to transform the campus inside and out," says Brian Reh, company CEO.

tomers service and application engineering.

Another focus in the office of today is what Rossignol and Twomey call collision spaces: areas in the hallways where workers can stop and chat with each other. At Gorbel, some of these locations are next to write-on walls where em-

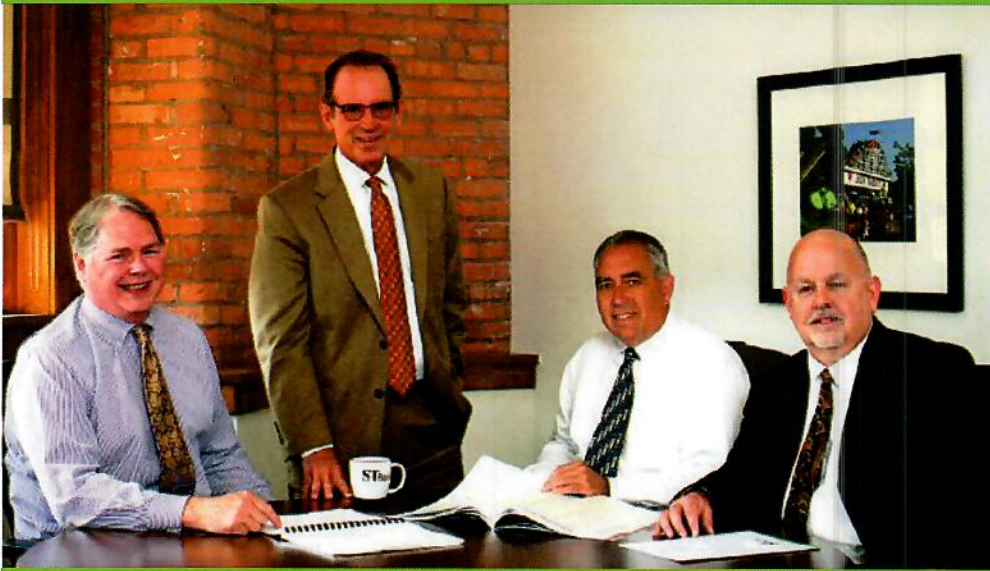
ployees can spontaneously share ideas, Twomey says.

The team also used environmentally friendly resources—another growing design trend—such as recycled materials, low volatile organic compound paints and water-efficient plumbing fixtures.

Gorbel's tagline, "A Class Above," and its crane manufacturing pedigree influenced the industrial design aesthetic and drove inspirational details, the designers say. One of Reh's favorite new features is the jib crane welcome sign, which was

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fabricated by Gorbel employees.

"I'm hopeful that our new look and feel helps increase the pride of our current employees while helping us attract the new," Reh says.

Another local firm that chose to incorporate modern design elements, Bergmann Associates, did so when designing its new offices at Tower280 at Midtown.

Gone are the days of stuffy work areas and cramped spaces, says Suzanne Lefebvre, an interior designer who was one of six Bergmann staffers on the office design team.

Bergmann now boasts an open space outfitted as a kitchen and eating area, complete with televisions and a coffee bar. The space also provides a relaxed atmosphere where employees, clients, contractors and other visitors can sit and talk business, Lefebvre says, with a style that leans more toward residential than office.

There is a game room at Bergmann as well, complete with a floor-to-ceiling chalkboard, where employees can gather and let off steam.

Both Bergmann and Gorbel took into account staff input on design and construction. At Gorbel, for example, each department manager was surveyed and worked with their teams to come up with needs and wish lists.

Bergmann's relocation from First Federal Plaza was a team effort from the start, guided by an internal committee of 25 employees who evaluated locations downtown considering many factors—building prominence, design, location, parking, safety, amenities and access to mass transit, among others.

After assessing work habits and the company brand, the committee sought a space that fit Bergmann's image and



Photo by Kimberly Simpson

Bergmann Associates, ensconced in new surroundings at Tower280, included a game room in the design. An internal committee of 25 employees spearheaded the firm's move from First Federal Plaza.

work styles.

Bergmann's interiors team, in response, designed a contemporary environment in which employees could interact professionally and socially, Lefebvre says. The design team's guiding principle was to support employees' overall performance, productivity and wellness, she adds.

They embraced this ideology by cre-

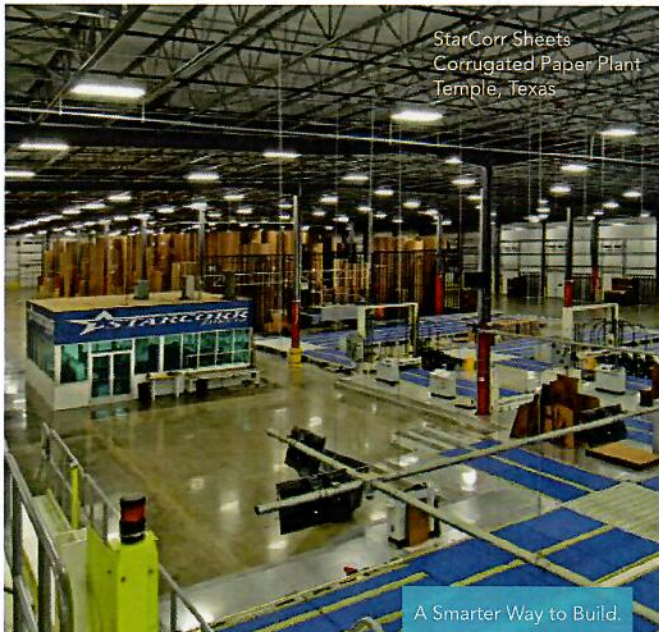
ating zones: distinctly different work spaces throughout the office that fit into four categories: collaboration, connection, mobility and focus.

Huddle areas are key components of the updated designs at Bergmann and Gorbel. They are open gathering spaces used for informal daily meetings, as are conference areas designed to accommodate large groups.

Another design trend at each project is the placement of tables and desks of varying heights throughout the offices, giving employees the option of sitting or standing while working.

The designers say longevity is a key component of modern interior design. "The focus is on timeless, durable design," Rossignol says.

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