Create an office space that engages and inspires

Great office design speaks volumes about a company – it conveys the firm's personality while creating a welcoming space that encourages productivity and engages the community.

As part of its annual awards, Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® (LeadingRE) presents an award for Most Innovative Office Design, recognizing a member from its global network of 565 independent firms that has achieved distinction in this area. This year, two stand-outs were recognized: Gardner Realtors (Metro New Orleans, Greater Baton Rouge, and Southern Miss.) and Meybohm Real Estate (Augusta, Ga. and Aiken, S.C.).

Gardner Realtors undertook a labor of love when restoring its flagship office space, a circa-1871 building in Uptown New Orleans that was handpicked by the company's founder, Gertrude Gardner, in the 1940s and has been in constant use ever since.

Crystal Gardner Phillips, Gardner Realtors vice president, shares the company's goals for the project. "We wanted to create a client-centric space that inspires our Realtors and where people feel comfortable stopping in and saying 'hi.' The design preserves this piece of New Orleans architectural history, while providing all of the modern conveniences and innovative technologies in a beautiful, professional space that resembles a St. Charles New Orleans residence," Gardner Phillips said.

Local interior designers and artists were enlisted to transform the 4,700 square-foot office into a bright and airy space, mixing traditional and contemporary pieces. Ceilings were raised, dark wood flooring was installed, and systems were put in place to declutter.

Architectural details include a partially-exposed brick wall in the lobby and the original bargeboard wall in the “Gertrude Room.” Three distinct meeting rooms feature modern glass walls for openness, yet privacy – each with a round table, “reminiscent of comfortable gatherings around the kitchen table,” according to Gardner Phillips.

To foster innovation and adoption of company tools, the new space features Ninja Success Principle posters, as well as TV monitors in all rooms that communicate company announcements, feature classes from LeadingRE Institute, or share market statistics.

The second winner for Most Innovative Office Design, Meybohm Real Estate, was celebrated for its new office, which was created as part of the company’s partnership with the local government to lay the foundation for what would be a new downtown in Columbia County (Evans, Georgia), a suburb of Augusta, Georgia.

According to Meybohm’s President and CEO Mike Polatty, “With increasing growth in our area,

we needed a place to live, work, and play all together. The Plaza at Evans Towne Center suited those needs, and Meybohm was chosen as the developer."

As a core contributor to the development, it was only natural that Meybohm's office should reflect the modern, multi-use mission of the project. The company's 16,000 square-foot space, which opened in fall 2018, houses one of Meybohm's residential sales offices, as well as its new construction office, relocation office, and Success Center and Training Center.

Polatty says it is one of the first multi-use buildings in the area to boast "state-of-the-art technology, a modern and open vibe, and incredible views of a huge park and outdoor concert venue."

Design elements include soaring ceilings with industrial-inspired lines, a grass-textured wall in the welcome area, a multi-function outdoor space, and a break room ideally suited for hospitality events. Meeting rooms are bright and inviting, with accent walls in a soft palette and art sourced from local artists that reflect the area's culture and landscape.

Gardner and Meybohm have both demonstrated that when design is approached intentionally, in a way that reflects the character of the company as well as the values of the community, companies

can create environments that cultivate innovation, collaboration and engagement.

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