The Future of the Suburban Workplace: Learning from the Bay Area

Room: E353AB, Level 3
Date: Sunday, November 08, 2015
Time: 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Speakers:
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Laurie Olin, FASLA, OLIN, Professor, University of Pennsylvania
Chris Guillard, ASLA, CMG Landscape Architecture
Lynn Richards, President & CEO, Congress for New Urbanism

Rethinking suburban design is essential to creating sustainable, livable metropolitan regions. This session discusses and evaluates the surge of redesigned suburban workplaces appearing in the San Francisco Bay Area including the Apple II campus and the Facebook headquarters, and the opportunities and challenges they present for landscape architects.

Learning Objectives:
- Understand current trends and innovations in the landscape architecture of suburban workplaces and how are they different or the same from their historical predecessors
- Evaluate the model of the large, single use, auto-dependent development in the context of the need for a more compact, pedestrianized, mixed-use pattern of urbanization
- Examine the opportunities in the redesign of suburban workplaces to contribute to the public realm in building towards sustainable metropolitan regions
- Explore future challenges of in the planning and design of suburban workplaces and the relationship between public interest and private investment

Introduction: History and Current context of the Design of Suburban Workplaces
- Panel participants and purpose
- Corporate campuses, corporate estates, and office parks and their evolution
- The suburban development of the Silicon Valley
- Current issues in suburban office design in the Silicon Valley
  - Sea level rise and open space preservation
  - Changing workforces
  - Increasing land values
  - Transportation pressures
  - Recycling of suburban sites
  - Concerns for sustainability
Case Studies:

- **Apple 2 Campus, Cupertino, California** – the new corporate estate

  Designed by OLIN with architecture by Foster + Partners and currently under construction in the heart of the Silicon Valley in the northeast corner of the City of Cupertino. The 172 acre site is surrounded by one-story single family residential neighborhoods, strip malls, and I-280, which connects to San Francisco to the north, and San Jose to the south. It is a mile from the existing Infinite Loop, the current corporate headquarters of Apple. Completion is expected in 2017.

  Hewlett-Packard research and development offices previously occupied the site. The H-P offices consisted of two-story buildings of 2,660,000 sf floor area with a 1,400,000 sf footprint and surface parking totaling to 130.4 acres of impervious surfaces and 42.6 acres pervious area. Current Apple 2 Campus site plan reduces the impervious acreage to 74 acres increases the pervious area to 98 acres. This includes 7034 new trees compared to the previous 4438 trees on site. The new plan also reduces the building footprint to 1,000,000 sf while increasing the Apple site gross floor area to 3,630,000sf. The Apple 2 campus is expected to accommodate 12,000 employees plus visitors from other Apple facilities and outside firms.

  Apple 2 Campus is a work place set within a park that is intended for the benefit of its employees and visitors, for their health, fitness, socialization, relaxation, a place to
meet, dine, and work under different conditions than indoors. The underlying spirit of the site design is that of the former Santa Clara valley, its natural topography, ecology and agriculture. As with all such corporate research and development facilities, headquarters, and manufacturing and media facilities in general, it is internalized and security is an issue.

Site design incorporates native vegetation and appropriate intermountain-west and Mediterranean species more adapted to current (recent) and future conditions resulting from global climate change, specifically in response to reduced water usage, and to take advantage of recycled water from Santa Clara water district. The design also anticipates future increase in pedestrian and bicycle access and increase in nearby residential and commercial development.

- **The Hills at Vallco** - the suburban office reimagined within mixed use

In recent years the City of Cupertino redrafted its comprehensive plan, specifically to increase the total amount of office, retail, commercial and residential development allowable within the city. Property owners and developers were encouraged to come forward with proposals to achieve this increase in density, activity, and tax revenue as a response to the perceived demand to accommodate the job growth in the high-tech industry. The city also expected that the new development would reduce commutation and traffic to, from, and within Cupertino.

Sandhill Properties of Palo Alto, acquired an outdated and failing shopping center known as Vallco, located at the intersection of Stevens Creek Boulevard and Wolfe Road, adjacent to exit/entry ramps to I-280 immediately across the freeway from the Apple 2 Campus site, and near the Infinite Loop site. The City of Cupertino has recently granted entitlements for the site and Rafael Vinoly Architects with OLIN have prepared and submitted a concept plan for planning approval.

The concept plan comprises a vertically layered landscape with interior and perimeter streetscapes, and two town squares generously lined in native trees and shrubs. Above this floats an undulating landscape-over-structure roofscape composed of the native, drought tolerant vegetation that once dominated the rolling hills and valleys of Santa Clara. Of the roughly 50 acres of property, approximately 30 acres of planting over structure will replace what was primarily impervious surface. The majority of existing healthy trees on the property perimeter will be protected and over 1000 additional trees, 70% of which are native to California, will be planted on site.

The accessible upper landscape park will include orchards, a vineyard, playground, beer garden, wine bar, café, community center, jogging trail, walkways, and a wildlife zone with native vegetation. Uses included in the development beneath the park are restaurants, cafes, major and local retail stores, a food market/hall, two ice hockey rinks, a bowling alley, a cinema multiplex, 800 residential units, 2,000,000 sf of office,
and 9,000 parking spaces (all off street in structure, largely below grade) and what amounts to a transit hub. This development is 10 minutes walk from the Apple 2 Campus site across I-280 and is connected by a bridge on Tantau Avenue currently used by Apple personnel, consultants, and construction workers for pedestrian access to lunch places adjacent to the Vallco site.

- **The Hamptons** - integrated housing redesigned for density

In between the Apple 2 Campus site and Vallco Hills lies a 12.8-acre site of residential apartments owned by the Irvine Company. OLIN and Arquitectonica Inc. have recently completed planning and concept design documents to redevelop this site from 342 units to 942 units, increasing the density by almost three-fold. The City of Cupertino has approved this increase in use and density as part of their updated comprehensive plan. The development consists of four to seven story buildings framing a series of garden courts, the largest of which contains community amenities, services, and recreation. This complex includes a perimeter recreational trail containing a playground, dog walking area, fitness/exercise facilities, along with a public paseo with a small square, bistro, wine bar, café, and bicycle hotel. As with the two other projects, this is to be planted with vegetation native to northern California and naturalized Mediterranean plants, designed for low and recycled water usage.

- **Facebook East Campus, Facebook West Campus, and Expansion** - retrofitted and redeveloped office parks

The Facebook headquarters is located along the San Francisco Bay edge in Menlo Park, California along the Bayfront Expressway. Initially Facebook took over a site formerly occupied by Sun Microsystems; CMG Landscape Architecture redesigned the interior landscape space, now known as the Facebook East Campus. Since that initial project, Facebook has acquired two adjacent sites: the the TE Connectivity site on which Facebook West Campus designed by Frank Gehry and CMG Landscape Architecture is currently under construction, and a new acquisition of an adjacent parcel known as the Prologis site presently undergoing initial planning. The Facebook East campus comprises 1 million sq ft of retrofitted office space and, at buildout, the new buildings at the Facebook West Campus will comprise a total of 1,397,000 sq ft of new office space.

The design for the Facebook Campuses takes the company’s culture as a starting point to create a framework for social interaction, sharing and exchange of ideas with a focus on food, indoor/outdoor spaces, walking meetings, and events. As a dynamic and constantly evolving environment, the campus design and programming reflect the unfinished and fast paced ethos of the company and invites participation by employees. It combines urban, industrial and ecological landscape types to create a variety of environments.
Although a suburban campus, the Facebook Headquarters is essentially a land reuse and brownfield remediation project with repurposing of existing building stock on the former Sun Microsystems site and remediation and reuse of the TE Connectivity site. The project includes an aggressive transportation program that reduces car trips by 50% through the use of buses, shuttles, mass transportation and bicycling. The isolated suburban location and security requirements combine to create a campus that has many internally oriented “public” spaces and employee amenities but lacks a true public realm. In many respects this is the clearest distinction between a suburban and an urban campus.

While the projects do contain parking, part of the existing surface parking of the Facebook campus has been slated for residential development in a proposed amendment to the Menlo Park General Plan and an adjacent abandoned rail right-of-way has the potential to provide a transit corridor connection. Facebook is currently working with the City of Menlo Park the general plan amendment that will provide greater connectivity, public uses, and a mix of housing and retail on the Facebook properties.
Questions and Challenges for the Future

- Why do companies whose businesses are predicated on networks, mobility, and social media continue to aggregate their workforce and core business functions in physical campuses? What does this say about the importance of place, culture, and social interaction to innovation and productivity? How do these much grander, permanent workplaces fit into the rapid entrepreneurial cycle typical of the Silicon Valley?

- Corporate campuses and headquarters serve a wide variety of business goals; on one hand they serve as icon and symbol extending the brand and projecting a corporate identity, they are also critical parts of employee recruitment and retention, hence the nexus between campus design and the global search for talent. Can workplace amenities be redefined and redesigned to serve the community as well as workforces? Can they truly contribute to the public realm?

- The suburban corporate model—can it evolve to meet the challenge of sustainable metropolitan regions? The American systems of local land use control and limited regional planning authority present continued challenges. In the Bay Area competition for land and development rights has spiked to new levels, companies continue to expand while regional transportation and housing needs continue to fall short. While this is very acute in the Bay Area, it is common to metropolitan regions around the country. The question is how can the gap between local governance and the need for regional planning and infrastructure investment be closed?

- How can rebuilding of suburban workplaces help create walkable, livable, and more resource efficient places? While private transportation systems (buses and shuttles) have significantly reduced traffic and environmental impacts they also shift the focus from regional solutions and investments that would benefit a wider segment of society.

- Research consistently concludes that mixed uses—is a key characteristic for creating places for people and businesses thrive and prosper. How do single use office redesigns—like the Apple 2 Campus—reconcile this? Even if Facebook and Vallco represents the wave of the future for corporate campuses in terms of density and mixed use, it is still and enclave for elite corporate workers. The Bay Area has breathtaking income disparities, growing worse by the day. What happens to neighborhoods of small businesses and less socially and economically enfranchised residents in the metropolitan periphery?

- What is the role of the public sector in partnering and guiding these massive suburban redevelopments? How can landscape architects be most effective in that discussion?
Resources:

History of suburban offices:


Apple 2 Campus:

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/apple-campus2-project/Renderings_Submittal7.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/apple-campus2-project/Renderings_Submittal7.pdf)

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/apple-campus2-project/Site_Plan1_Submittal7.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/apple-campus2-project/Site_Plan1_Submittal7.pdf)

Facebook Campus East:


Facebook Campus West:

[https://stories.californiasunday.com/2015-03-01/facebook-expansion](https://stories.californiasunday.com/2015-03-01/facebook-expansion)


Google’s Mountain View proposal:

[https://plus.google.com/photos/+google/albums/6120564551779148881](https://plus.google.com/photos/+google/albums/6120564551779148881)

The Hills at Vallco:
