

OFFICE PARK'D

SOM plans to update vintage Craig Ellwood in Los Angeles.

Mimi Zeiger | January 26, 2016



WITH A SUNLIT ATRIUM AT THE HEART OF ELLWOOD'S FORMER XEROX HQ, SOM HOPES TO ATTRACT CREATIVE OFFICE TENANTS. COURTESY SOM

Much has been written about the changing nature of workplace. In the last decade, cubicles have been banished, warehouses converted, and foosball tables over-referenced. But what to do with the office buildings that once housed the man in the gray wool suit? A recent design by SOM's Los Angeles office reinvents Craig Ellwood's tailored office building at 777 Aviation Boulevard, converting the late 1960s steel and glass structure that once was Xerox's headquarters (previously Scientific Data Systems) into a multi-tenant campus that appeals to El Segundo's ever-expanding tech set. Suits out, bike racks in.

Clients Embarcadero Capital Partners and Westbrook Partners tasked the architects with bringing daylight into the three-story, 310,000-square-foot building without losing leasable square footage on each of the 103,000-square-foot floor

plates. Carlos Madrid, the project designer at SOM, described the firm's approach as a counterpoint to Ellwood's buttoned up design. "It's Mies van der Rohe and California Modernism together," he explained, emphasizing the desire to blur the boundaries between indoors and outdoors.

To get light deep into the heart of the structure, the team's proposal shows an enlarged atrium. Sawtooth skylights will pour light across a new 40-foot-wide stadium stair (for hanging out or assemblies) and into the surrounding offices, which have windows that look into the space. There are plans for new interior and exterior balconies on the second and third floors plus amenities that are now typical for creative offices: a cafe, a gym (with showers and lockers), and a bike rental program. Finishes will complement and contrast Ellwood's bronzed steel.

Expected to be complete in 2017, perhaps the most striking update to Ellwood's structure will happen outside the building itself with the development of a campus-like landscape. "This type of classic office building is quite passive—it just sits in its parking lot," noted Madrid. "We are collaborating with the landscape architects to create a design that activates the whole site." SOM is working with Culver City-based LRM Landscape Architecture on the design. George Sugarman's brightly painted aluminum sculptures (created for Xerox in 1969) will remain, while additions include outdoor work spaces, fire pits, and even a dog park.

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