

Google opens futuristic Mountain View campus where 4,000 will work

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Google this week opened its Bay View canopy campus at NASA Ames in Mountain View, saying 4,000 people will work at the futuristic green complex powered by solar panels that resemble dragon scales.

The three-building development, along with Google's Charleston East project in Mountain View that's set to open in 2023, represents a change for the tech titan.

"This marks the first time we developed one of our own major campuses," said David Radcliffe, vice president of real estate and workplace services. "The process gave us the chance to rethink the very idea of an office."

The result is an eye-catching [campus](#) that has sprouted on the grounds of the NASA Ames Research Center, a group of buildings that are poised to offer new ways for people to work and employees to interact in a world turned upside down by the onset of the coronavirus.

Google began construction of the complex in 2017, a few years before the coronavirus struck in 2020, launching a pandemic that dramatically altered attitudes about in-person office work—as well as the very nature of how those offices would be designed and operate.

With vaccines available and fears arising from the deadly virus starting to ebb, tech titans such as Google have gradually pulled workers back to the office. The companies tout the value of face-to-face collaborations.

The new campus totals 1.1 million square feet, consisting of two big office buildings, a 1,000-person events center and a four-building lodging complex with 220 rooms that will accommodate short-term stays for employees.

Mountain View-based Google says that it crafted the campus—which was designed in collaboration with world-renowned architects Bjarke Ingels Group and Heatherwick Studio—with the needs and wishes of employees first and foremost.

"For those coming into the office, it was designed to balance Googlers' desire to come together as teams with the need for an environment that enables deep-focus work," Google said.

The insides of the buildings feature a combination of wide-open spaces with 30 courtyards or atriums, as well as small rooms where people can break out into individual workspaces.

"Team spaces are on the upper level and gathering spaces are below, separating focus and collaborative areas while still providing easy access to both," Google said in an email to this news organization.

The second-floor design has variations in floor plates to give teams a designated "neighborhood" area that is highly flexible to change with their needs, according to Google.

The interiors include big sections in the upper levels that allow plentiful natural light inside the buildings.

"We want people to have daylight but not too much direct glare from the sun," said Michelle Kaufmann, director of real estate and workplace services, research and development.

The campus will use [solar panels](#) reminiscent of a dragon's scales on its canopy rooftop in harmony with geothermal piles beneath the office complex to create an energy arrangement that can cool the vast structure in hot weather and heat it during cold weather.

"This is the largest geothermal energy pile system in North America," said Asim Tahir, director of real estate and workplace services, energy and carbon.

An estimated 50,000 dragon scale solar panels have been installed on the

exterior of the building.

Local residents will also be able to benefit from the new Bay View campus in multiple ways. Among them: [public access](#) to expanded trails with panoramic views of the Bay, improved bike connections to the Stevens Creek and Bay trails, and expanded car lanes and new bike lanes with the widening of R.T. Jones Road.

The campus includes 17.3 acres of high-value natural areas, including wet meadows, woodlands, and marshes, that contribute to Google's broader efforts to reestablish missing essential habitats in the Bay Area.

The complex also creates a workspace that dovetails with the new world of post-pandemic work.

The upper floor is broken down into smaller neighborhoods separated by courtyards and connected via ramps that gradually rise as people move to the center of the building.

This variation in the floor plates gives teams a designated area that changes with their needs. But the design also keeps people close to their larger work community.

"The result is a building where you can feel connected to people, whether they're in your larger organization of 2,000 people, your team of 50 people, or your immediate working group of 10 people," Radcliffe said in a blog post about the campus.

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