

Los Angeles Edition

CALIFORNIA CONSTRUCTION REVIEW

California's Most Challenging & Unique New Construction Projects

value engineering
site planning
network sourcebook

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Photo courtesy of CommonWealth Partners, Nick Merrick

AT&T Wireless

The new call center for AT&T Wireless in Cerritos, Calif., is located on a 9.5-acre site. The seven-story, 221,968-square-foot class A office building and a four-level parking structure were completed in September 1999.

"The Cerritos Town Center, where the building is located, is a mixed-use environment with 600,000 square feet of retail, a hotel, and the \$65-million Cerritos Performing Arts Center," said Michael Croft, president and CEO for CommonWealth Partners, the project's developer. "We were trying to create a corporate headquarters [type of] environment with the building. We wanted an appealing project that was architecturally attractive. AT&T hoped the new building

would attract and retain employees."

Originally intended as the headquarters for LA Cellular, the project instead became a call center for AT&T Wireless during the planning stages when BellSouth released its majority ownership of LA Cellular.

Pam Light, IIDA, vice president and interiors principal designer for Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum, Inc. (HOK), the project's architect, said, "The interior design team interviewed the end users extensively through questionnaires, personal interviews and an evening facilitated session where we discussed with the executive management group its business goals and visions for the project and talked about other successful projects."

With this knowledge in hand, the design team was able to determine current needs along with projected needs. Light said the space design successfully supports rapid growth, high mobility and frequent restructuring.

concept to completion

The Need:

A technologically state-of-the-art office building to attract and retain employees

The Challenge:

Reconfiguring the space for a different tenant during the planning stages

office buildings/company headquarters



Photo courtesy of CommonWealth Partners, Nick Merrick

office buildings/company headquarters



Photo courtesy of CommonWealth Partners, Nick Merrick

"Many of the project items changed, and the flexibility of the building was tested before the first move-in," said Light. "The client was extremely pleased at how easily the area could be reconfigured. The project was still completed on the planned-for date and was completed under budget.

"We helped [the owner] select a furniture system that changed the cost of the reconfiguration from \$3,000 per person per change to less than \$100 per person per change," she said.

"We negotiated a great price from Bentley on quality carpet and then installed it in bands so future changes would be less noticeable if there was a dye-lot variation," she explained.

"The concept of the building was a timeless corporate headquarters," she said. "The color scheme is based on natural colors to add tranquility, ease stress and support the ageless quality of the space." Soft lighting with indirect fixtures to control glare is used throughout the facility with additional lighting on the interior walls so the open space is lit.

Amenities for employees include an extensive training facility, a gym, a restaurant and outdoor patio space.

A computer room tracks all AT&T Wireless cell phone activity in Southern California. The complex computer area has backup generators and other state-of-the-art technology, designed as a wireless facility with the capability of receiving wireless or cellular calls. "This is a fully integrated wireless high-rise," said Light. "I was surprised by the minimum number of extra items such as antennas and coax required to accomplish this. It's a pleasure to walk through the space from the garage through the elevators and not drop a [wireless phone] call."

The design team sized the building, including bay depths and column spacing, to determine the most efficient and flexible layout. "We organized the space around a service core [including lunchrooms, copy rooms, mailrooms and storage], and low-maintenance finishes were selected for long-term low facility costs," Light said.

"A split core configuration makes for an extremely efficient building layout, both in mathematical and leasing terms and in creating a social work environment," said Paul Nagashima, AIA, vice president and project designer for HOK. "This design opens up the middle of the building, as opposed to the conventional core layout that separates one half of the building from the other. This, combined with an integral braced core design, allows the building to handle lateral forces without creating the wasted or hard-to-use space that a conventional braced core design would."

According to Nagashima the floor plate design is efficient and flexible when combined with the split core/integral braced core design and goes beyond structural requirements. This design is good for multitenant situations in which giving an owner in a high volatility business an exit strategy is desirable.

"It was a 12-month project from start to finish, which included build out," said Dick Baptie, vice president and project

office buildings/company headquarters



Photo courtesy of CommonWealth Partners, Nick Merrick

office buildings/company headquarters

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executive for Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction Company, the general contractor for the project. "It is a stone on precast [concrete structure] with punched windows and accent curtain areas. It is a high-quality building."

The exterior of the building is rendered in limestone-colored precast concrete panels, a variety of high-performance glazing in both punched openings and curtain wall zones, and a base of charcoal-colored granite and French limestone. These materials are composed in a way that articulates a simple box mass into solid forms interlocked in a yin-yang manner, expressing the split core within and responding to the different sides of the site. The cladding on one half of the building is the same as the other half, allowing for economy.

The exterior of the parking garage is designed so the cast-in-place concrete shear walls and precast concrete spandrels reflect the interlocking forms of the office building,

at the same time disguising the sloped-floor structure behind.

According to Baptie, his firm was brought in early on the project and helped advise on the value engineering items. "We had a good working relationship with the architect. We were able to get submittals through quickly in a cooperative, team-oriented spirit," he said.

"Value engineering was incorporated in the design process from day one," added Nagashima. "There really wasn't a distinct phase of value engineering. It affected the building's layout, dimensions, image and finishes."

"We had good subcontractors and strong management as well," said Baptie. "AT&T has a long-term lease on the building, so it was like a build-to-suit project."

"This project demonstrates how much innovation can occur without forfeiting budget or design constraints when designing from the inside out," said Nagashima. ●

— J.S.

facts & figures

Name:

AT&T Wireless

Location:

Cerritos

Owner:

Cousins/Cerritos I, L.L.C.

Type of Project:

Construction of a new call center building

Developer:

CommonWealth Partners, LLC, Los Angeles

Architect:

Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum, Inc.,
Culver City

General Contractor:

Hathaway Dinwiddie Construction
Company, Los Angeles

Size:

221,968 square feet (building);
1,600-space parking structure

Construction Time:

July 1998 - September 1999