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NOVEMBER 23, 2009 | BUSINESSWEEK.COM

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# Imaginative Designs That Change the Game

The 12th annual *BusinessWeek/Architectural Record* Awards showcase smart new retail and office spaces

By Reena Jana

The new Barbie Shanghai store is a bit far down the Huaihai Road shopping corridor, but it's hard to miss. An eight-story glass façade, printed with a lacy design of hearts and flowers, glows with pink lights at night. Opened in March, it's the first flagship shop devoted entirely to Mattel's iconic, 50-year-old doll. The goal: attracting Chinese consumers to help offset a worldwide decline in Barbie sales.

In its showiness, Mattel's temple to Barbie might seem out of sync with these back-to-basics times. But it has a practical side that fits right in. Indeed, Barbie Shanghai and the other seven winners of the 12th annual *BusinessWeek/Architectural Record* Awards show the value of new architecture even in a recession. From software maker Autodesk to retailer Urban Outfitters, companies are finding that carefully executed buildings can help reduce operating costs, boost staff output, and revive communities.

Imaginative building design might also speed their occupants to financial recovery and growth. "Employers need to find every advantage they can today," says Robert Ivy, editor-in-chief of *Architectural Record* and a judge of this year's contenders. "Effective design can result in creative environments that can yield higher worker productivity, marketing clout, higher profiles for companies, and employee satisfaction."

In addition to serving as a conventional store, the 35,000-sq.-ft. Barbie Shanghai was designed to be a laboratory where Mattel could experiment cheaply with retail tools that might be employed in other markets. Mattel worked with New York-based Slade Architecture over three years to create an attention-grabbing centerpiece: a circular staircase enveloped with wraparound clear shelves housing 800 Barbie dolls. This fall some of the store's cube-shaped displays and shelves have been copied in a temporary Barbie store in the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., which will be open through next March.

The \$10 million structure also houses a Barbie-themed restaurant and a beauty parlor to generate repeat visits. Mattel reports having 17,000 visitors on opening weekend and about 20,000 shoppers each week since. About 10% of visitors buy "Barbie Passports,"

or loyalty cards that provide discounts on purchases, meals, and haircuts. "The Barbie Shanghai store was about remaking Barbie for the world, and not just for China," says Richard Dickson, general manager of the Barbie brand.

Autodesk had a slightly different agenda when it hired architects KlingStubbins of Cambridge, Mass., to design a headquarters for its 175 employees in its Architecture, Engineering & Construction Solutions (AEC) office in Waltham, Mass.

**AUTODESK**  
Waltham, Mass.  
KlingStubbins  
AEC Division

The company's 175-employee AEC unit features private meeting rooms with transparent yellow glass walls so other employees can see the goings-on



**BARBIE STORE**  
Shanghai  
Slade Architecture  
Mattel

A circular staircase enveloped with wrap-around clear plastic shelves holding 800 Barbie dolls provides an attention-grabbing centerpiece



The software maker wanted a building that would foster both creativity and productivity. Autodesk began by asking employees what would help. The 60,000-sq.-ft. building features undulating interior canopies over tables and chairs that are set up in high-traffic sections to encourage chance brainstorming sessions. There are also private meeting rooms with floor-to-ceiling yellow glass walls so employees can see the goings-on.

In addition, the AEC building fea-

tures a 5,000-sq.-ft. gallery and meeting space where staff members can bring clients, an element that Autodesk's previous offices didn't have. In the gallery, clients look at videos and models of buildings made with Autodesk software, which include the AEC structure itself. Jay Bhatt, who heads the AEC division, says that sales representatives are "bringing in more customers than ever" in the new location, although he won't disclose sales figures.

Urban Outfitters was a pioneer when it moved in 2008 to a new \$100 million headquarters in the Philadelphia Navy Yard, a down-on-its-luck district. Today, the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corp. is trying to fill the area with energy-related startups.

The retailer's 285,000-sq.-ft. campus isn't just an urban renewal tool, however. It consolidates offices for the company's five brands of clothing and housewares that had been scattered across Philadel-

phia. Housing more than 1,000 employees in a single site, the company hopes, will improve communication among staff and trim costs.

The Urban Outfitters campus was designed and completed in only 20 months, in part because many of the Navy Yard's original materials were repaired and reused. To hurry things along, David Ziel, the retailer's chief development officer, also pushed architects Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle of Minneapolis to design the structure as it went up. Construction began on the exterior, for instance, while designers were just starting on interior drawings. The company is betting further on architecture: Ziel says Urban Outfitters recently signed an option on five more buildings at the Navy Yard, anticipating future growth. |BW|

**URBAN**  
**OUTFITTERS**  
Philadelphia  
Navy Yard  
Meyer, Scherer  
& Rockcastle

Housing more than 1,000 employees on a single site, the new headquarters makes use of many of the Navy Yard's original materials and structures



**BUSINESSWEEK.COM** For a video on the three buildings featured here and a slide show on all eight winners, go to [businessweek.com/go/09/architecture](http://businessweek.com/go/09/architecture)

(TOP TO BOTTOM) IWAN BAAN, JEFF GOLDBERG/ESTO

(FROM TOP RIGHT) IWAN BAAN, LARA SWIMMER