

DaVita World Headquarters: New Corporate Office Tower Promotes Healthy Living

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The iconic Denver Millennium Bridge connects the DaVita World Headquarters with the city's 16th Street Mall and Commons Park in the Union Station neighborhood. Photos courtesy of MOA Architects

Situated at the base of Denver's Millennium Bridge, across from Denver Union Station, sits DaVita's new corporate headquarters. The iconic building, standing 14 stories in the Central Platte Valley District, has reshaped the downtown skyline and set a new precedent for world-class office accommodations. With the guiding principles of community and care in mind, DaVita set out to create something more than just office space. The new building is a place that promotes healthy living, enhances collaboration and reflects the company's core mission and values. In February 2013, it received the NAIOP Colorado Academy of Excellence 2012 Office Development of the Year award.

A Fortune 500 company and leading provider of dialysis care, DaVita boasts a teamcentric ethic, referring to DaVita, the company, as the "Village" and employees as "teammates." The company's corporate culture and philosophy of "community first, company second" was embodied throughout the design and development process, resulting in a striking 260,000-square-foot, Class A LEED Gold-certified office building.

Planning

To better serve its patients and customers, DaVita decided to move its headquarters from El Segundo, California, to a more central location. The company considered several cities throughout the U.S., including Dallas and Chicago, each of which offered unique amenities and benefits. After extensive research and careful consideration, DaVita chose Denver as its new home, because of the city's diverse talent pool, accessibility via mass transit, affordable cost of living, welcoming community and outstanding quality of life. Denver's central location also proved to be an ideal place for training DaVita teammates who come from across the U.S. to take classes at DaVita University.

After looking at several sites in both the suburbs and downtown, DaVita narrowed its search to the neighborhood around Denver Union Station, just northwest of the LoDo district in the Central Platte Valley. Once part of a former rail yard, the area had seen substantial growth in recent years and now offers residents and visitors a unique historical, retail and residential experience. DaVita executives considered, but ruled out, retrofitting an existing space. They wanted to make the building their own by including elements that emphasize the company's corporate culture into the design. It also proved more cost effective to build a new structure than to retrofit an existing one during the economic downturn.



DaVita boasts one of the largest rooftop terraces in Denver, which opens off of the DaVita Marketplace, a full-service cafeteria and dining room that offers healthy, affordable lunches. Open stairways featuring native Colorado greenery link floors, encouraging teammates to walk rather than take the elevators between floors.

At the same time, Trammell Crow Company (TCC) was creating plans to develop a second-phase office building on a vacant site in the Central Platte Valley. Seeing an opportunity to provide DaVita with a site

that matched the company's needs, TCC presented a pitch and entered into a design-build agreement, making this the first private sector build-to-suit project in downtown Denver since the mid-1980s.

Designing Around Site Challenges

Initial plans called for an expedited design and construction schedule due to various lease expirations. The selected site was part of a multiphase, mixed-use project that included a recently completed 400,000-square-foot speculative office building, 1900 16th Street. That building incorporated a single level of underground parking across the full site, including the structure and elevator and stair cores for a second, 275,000-square-foot office tower. Trammell Crow retained MOA Architects and Saunders Construction as master architects and general contractor, respectively, to design and build the new DaVita tower within these existing constraints. The project confronted additional challenges, including light rail tracks that ran adjacent and through the site, which needed to be realigned before construction of the northwest portion of the building could begin.

In order to stay on schedule, TCC and DaVita implemented a unique approach. "The northwest corner of the building had to be built on a different schedule, because the train track removal was on a different timeline than our building," said **Rebecca Griggs**, vice president of operations innovation with DaVita. "We did not want to compromise our timeline, so we built that portion of the building separately."

With train tracks on one side and existing or new development surrounding the balance of the site, TCC used a variety of strategic staging approaches, including off-site assemblage and in-tower crane operations. In addition, TCC also was developing the \$480 million Denver Union Station multimodal transportation project across the street. (See "Denver Union Station: A Transportation Model for Urban Revitalization," in the winter 2012 issue of *Development* magazine.) This made it easier for TCC to coordinate construction traffic and schedules, and ultimately meet DaVita's strict time requirements.

Accommodating Teammates

DaVita implemented several initiatives to keep teammates engaged throughout the design process, which involved more than 1,000 teammates from across the U.S. For example, one small group of teammates worked in a variety of different workspace setups over the course of a year and voted on the type of layout and materials they liked best. The preferred layout and materials then were incorporated into the cubicles in which many teammates work today.

MOA Architects, in partnership with interior architect and design firm Acquilano Leslie, incorporated several native Colorado themes and elements into the building's decorations and accents. Reclaimed beetle-kill wood is used as design accents throughout the building, creating a striking and warm impression for visitors. The first floor houses a Starbucks coffeehouse for teammates and guests, conference and auditorium space to accommodate larger groups, and a hands-on dialysis training center designed not to dialyze patients, but to train teammates. The seventh floor provides additional training space for the thousands of teammates who attend DaVita University classes each year.



DaVita's location provides teammates and visitors with easy access to several transit options, including light rail.

Design plans took advantage of the building's collaboration areas and open wall space to transform them into places where teammates and visitors can learn more about DaVita's mission, core values, history and culture. Several media displays and galleries are located throughout the building. Some feature photos or artwork, while others are interactive. Together, they create a sense of community and unity for teammates of all levels on every floor.

Unlike traditional office buildings that reserve the top floors with the best views for corporate-level offices, this building's top floor features the DaVita Marketplace, a full-service kitchen and dining area with panoramic mountain views and the largest rooftop terrace in downtown Denver. The DaVita Marketplace helps promote healthy lifestyle choices by offering healthy and affordable lunch options. In order to enable the marketplace to hold 800 teammates at once, the 14th floor had to include structural reinforcement and a top floorplate that could accommodate heavy foot traffic and additional exits, including elevators and stairwells, to accommodate life safety measures and allow for a constant flow of people.

Providing teammates with easy access to fresh air was an important aspect of the building design, which includes three separate outdoor terraces. The largest, located on the west side of the 14th floor with access to the marketplace through a garage-type roll-up door, is 6,000 square feet and provides teammates and visitors with dramatic views of downtown Denver and the Rocky Mountain Front Range, from Pikes Peak to Longs Peak. This outdoor space features traditional Colorado ecosystem landscaping and seating that allows teammates to work (using the buildingwide Wi-Fi system), hold meetings and eat outside. A second, smaller (about 200-square-foot) terrace is located on the northeast corner of the 14th floor; a third, 880-square-foot terrace on the seventh floor offers DaVita University students and visiting teammates from other DaVita locations unobstructed views of the Rocky Mountains.

DaVita World Headquarters Project Summary

Location	2000 16th St., Denver, Colorado
Type of Site	Urban
Development Type	Ground Up/New Development/ Build to Suit
Project Type	Corporate Headquarters and Training Center
Transportation Modes	Car, Transit (Light Rail, Bus), Pedestrian
Project Size	260,000 sq. ft., 14 floors
Structured Parking (Underground)	250 spaces
Development Team	
Developer	Trammell Crow Company
Project Architect	MOA Architects
Interiors Architect	Acquilano Leslie
General Contractor	Saunders Construction Company
Leasing Agents	Cresa Partners
Timeline	
Land Acquisition	July 2010
Start of Construction	December 2010
Project Completed	August 2012

Teammates do not have to be outside to experience the building's spectacular views. Careful consideration was taken during the design of the office floors to enable everyone to enjoy the views from their desks, and 98 percent of teammates have direct access to sunlight. Restrooms are situated toward the south edge of each floor, rather than in the traditional location at the core of the building, creating an even more open floor plan that is free from obstructions.

Additional amenities installed to help create a healthy and collaborative work environment include three two-story indoor atriums and a state-of-the-art fitness center. Each atrium is different; one contains a two-story water feature, another features towering aspen trunks and a third showcases a suspended ski gondola that doubles as an informal meeting place.

Enriching the Community

Completed in August 2012, DaVita's new world headquarters now houses more than 900 teammates. In keeping with the company's philosophy on the role corporations should play in America, DaVita encourages teammates to give back to the communities in which they work and live, and promotes teammate participation in volunteer days that the company calls Village Service Days. In addition, local foods are served or used as ingredients in the Marketplace, supporting local businesses and the Denver economy. Through these charitable contributions and dedication to community development, DaVita has made a significant positive impact in Denver.

Sustainability in Design

DaVita and Trammell Crow Company's commitment to environmental sustainability is demonstrated throughout the building, resulting in a LEED Gold-certified office building that uses less energy than a comparable non-LEED structure. DaVita will purchase renewable energy credits (RECs) to ensure that 70 percent of the building's energy is replaced on the electric grid by renewable sources. DaVita and the design team also sought to maximize the use of natural light, decreasing the need for electric lighting fixtures.

The building incorporates the following sustainable features:

- Energy-efficient lighting to reduce energy consumption.
- High-performance glass from Viracon, coated with a blue tint to symbolize DaVita's corporate colors, as well as to reflect sunlight and heat.
- A highly reflective white roof that reduces the urban heat island effect, resulting in a decrease in peak summer energy demand, air conditioning costs, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Low-emitting adhesives, sealants and paints that reduce concentrations of chemical contaminants, resulting in improved indoor air quality and reduced health-related illnesses.
- Additional energy-efficient systems throughout the building, including high-efficiency boilers, economizer systems, carbon dioxide monitoring and variable controls for nighttime heating and cooling.
- Low-flow plumbing fixtures (faucets and toilets) that greatly reduce indoor water use.
- Construction waste for the project was recycled, salvaged or reused, minimizing the environmental impact of new construction. The building features an extensive on-site composting program as well as a recycling program to encourage employees and visitors to collect paper, glass, cardboard, plastics and metals. Interior finishes incorporate high levels of recycled materials.