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Authors:	Michael George, Regional Director, Head of Premium Asset Group, Asia Pacific, JLL Richard Fennell, International Director, Australian Head of Property & Asset Management, Head of Client Service, Asia Pacific, JLL Eric Lee, International Director, Head of Operations, Property & Asset Management, Greater China, JLL
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# Global Best Practice for Creating Socially Engaging Tall Buildings within Their Communities



**Michael George**  
Regional Director, Head of  
Premium Asset Group, Asia Pacific  
JLL,  
Sydney, Australia

Mike George has worked at JLL for more than 15 years in various engineering and management roles, in the provision of property / asset management of Australian tall buildings. Based in Sydney, Mike has recently assumed an Asia Pacific role to facilitate the delivery of premium service levels, with a focus on the emerging supertall building speciality. Mike is a degree qualified Electrical Engineer with a background in building automation, building engineering and operational management. Mike chairs the JLL Regional Premium Asset and Tall Buildings Group and is a member of the Global PAG Workgroup.



**Richard Fennell**  
International Director, Australian  
Head of Property & Asset  
Management, Head of Client  
Service, Asia Pacific  
JLL,  
Sydney, Australia

Richard has 20 years' experience within Property and Asset Management. He has for the last 4 years been the Head of Property and Asset Management Services for Australia and has been for the last 7 years the Head of Client Services for Asia Pacific. In the Asia Pacific role, Richard was tasked with delivering and expanding the Asset Management Services platform throughout the region, creating connections for clients and assisting clients tailor services for local market conditions including Premium Grade Assets and Tall Buildings.



**Eric Lee**  
International Director, Head of  
Operations, Property & Asset  
Management, Greater China  
JLL,  
Hong Kong, China

Eric Lee is the Head of Operations, responsible for delivery of property and asset management services in Greater China, with special focus on strategic management consultancy, due diligence, transition management and risk mitigation. A certified facility manager and chartered building engineer based in Hong Kong, Eric has worked at JLL for 30 years being instrumental in the establishment of operations in South Korea, Thailand and Philippines. Eric leads the JLL Supertall Building Committee in Greater China and has recently been appointed as board member of CTBUH (China) Office to support the development of best practices in management of supertall buildings.

## Abstract

*Driven by diverse factors that include the constant march of urbanisation, the changing demographic of the workforce, changes to the nature of city working, the continual blurring of our personal and professional lives and emerging expectations of the workplace experience, the nature of property, and the roles of property professions are rapidly evolving. The focus is changing from the fabric of buildings and their performance, to how they support people in all aspects of their lives and how they foster communities through engagement and social connection.*

*This paper seeks to provide insight into global best practice in the management and operation of large scale urban renewal developments and existing tall building stock which at their core, focus as much on creating and sustaining interesting, well-engaged places as they do on seeing their investment objectives realized.*

**Keywords: Customer experience, engagement, global corporates, placemaking, property ownership/management, social connectivity**

The urbanization of mankind continues apace with an estimated 1 million people each week moving into cities across the globe. Consider that (United Nations, 2014):

- 54% of the world's population live in urban areas;
- By 2050, this will increase to 66%;
- By 2030, the world is expected to have 41 mega-cities with populations of more than 10 million;
- The world's urban population is expected to increase by 2.5 billion inhabitants by 2050.

This unprecedented yet well entrenched mass migration is creating a significant burden on the infrastructure and social integrity of most cities, regardless of their location, state of development or socio-economic status.

The rapid population growth of cities is inciting the re-assessment of the fabric of our cities and the essence of how we use the spaces and services within them. Indeed, new cities are being established globally which are setting ambitious targets for the way the cities function and perform, as well as how people will live, work and play.

In well-established cities globally, opportunities are being embraced to re-generate and revitalize areas which have fallen into decay, often reflecting the city's evolution and departure from its industrial past. Wide-scale urban renewal projects such as Barangaroo, Sydney, are providing blank canvasses for the development of globally significant investment grade assets, yet which also embrace the social, economic and vocational needs of the cities and their people.

The scale of these urban renewal projects require significant financial strength to fund their development, usually involving partnerships between the public and private sectors, yet according to JLL Research, with the private sector carrying the bulk of the financial burden for many projects throughout the world. The scale of the financial commitment, and the rare investment opportunities these projects represent, result in keen interest from the global investment community. A natural affinity between these projects and global investors exists as a result of the weight of funds they have available, their common mandates to invest in direct property and their imperative to mitigate risk through cross-border investment.

In established markets, the demographic shift of the urban workforce, and the ever-present threat of new tall building supply, is fueling defensive investment strategies to maintain the relevance and returns of existing stock. Globally, tall building owners are seeking to protect the attraction of their assets to corporate occupants. While their strategies vary, they frequently share common themes:

## International Towers Sydney, Barangaroo Sydney, Australia

Case Study

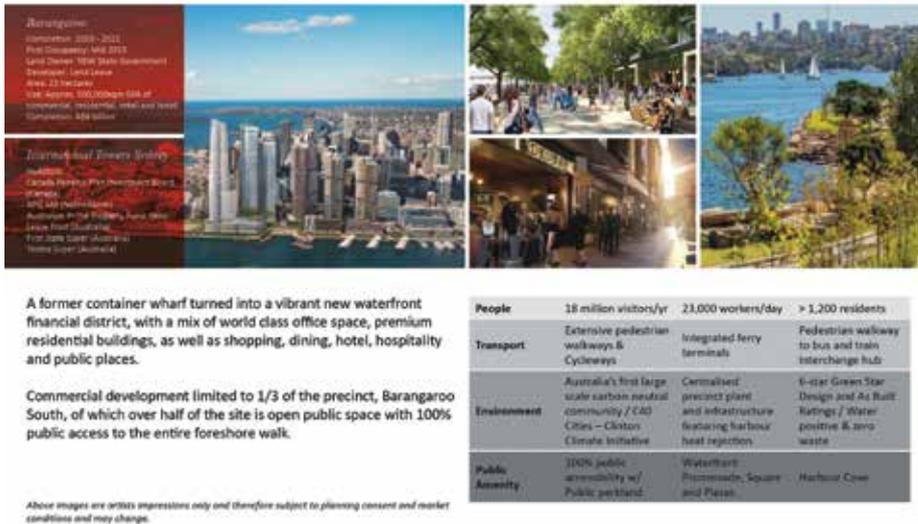


Figure 1. International Towers Sydney, part of the Barangaroo Urban Renewal project which is set to bolster the city's reputation as a World-Class city (Source: JLL)

- The provision of high performing, efficient, environmentally sustainable space;
- The availability of services and amenities to support both the corporate entity and, vitally, their personnel base, with a focus on lifestyle and convenience;
- Integration with the local community.

This paper seeks to provide insight into global best practice in the management and operation of urban renewal developments and existing tall buildings which at their core, focus on creating and sustaining interesting, well-engaged places that are commercially successful and so realize their investment objectives.

### Global Capital Flows and Social Responsible Investment

Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) principles are well accepted by the global property investment community. Of the more than 1,300 signatories of the UN Principles of Responsible Investment framework, asset and investment managers with real estate investment charters are strongly represented.

In the majority of cases, Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWF) subscribe to the Santiago Principles, a suite of voluntary investment

principles and practices to which they comply or aspire to comply. The need for SWFs to ensure high standards of corporate governance increasingly influences their investment strategies to recognize societal and environmental responsibilities.

Pension funds and SWFs have investment mandates to fund national population liabilities and their future generations. As such, they tend to have longer term investment horizons than typical investors. These investors are highly discerning as to the projects and properties into which they invest, looking to deliver sustained returns over longer time frames. As a consequence, they have a propensity to pursue and acquire the highest standard of investment grade property globally. These trophy assets, particularly tall buildings in the world's strongest investment markets, once acquired, are tightly held and rarely traded.

The Barangaroo project, Sydney is a development of global significance which showcases some of the world's best urban renewal and investment grade property. This active project has attracted global capital investment interest (from the Pension fund investment community particularly) and will leave a lasting legacy for Sydney with its integration of waterfront public and cultural activity spaces; diversity of commercial office spaces across the International Towers Sydney tall buildings trio and low

rise heritage offerings; expansive food, beverage, convenience and entertainment retail offerings; international hotel resort and; harbourside, inner city luxury residential living - all connected by multiple public transport options (see Figure 1).

The predominance of tall building development globally is in the Middle East and in China, with fourteen of the top twenty tallest buildings located in these two regions (CTBUH, 2015).

In the Middle East, sovereign capital provides the overwhelming source of funding for the development of these assets, generally as part of new or vastly expanded and improved cities, with the principle objective of national wealth diversification for a time beyond the oil economies.

In China, the development of tall buildings is principally being undertaken and funded by domestic developers and corporations who seek to project their size and capabilities. These buildings are used to profile individuals and their corporations, serving as flagships and signaling the arrival of many sub-first tier cities onto the world stage.

Investors from the Middle East and China continue to be highly active in direct property investment globally. While these investors have an eclectic property investment appetite, large scale projects and trophy tall buildings in traditional property investment markets remain highly sought after and reflective of many successful acquisitions.

Figure 2 shows the diversity and volume of global capital flows in real estate for Q1 2015, with Figure 3 showing the top global cities for investment.

JLL research data shows that although there is a large amount of available capital in the market seeking investment properties, the number of transactions globally involving tall buildings for the past few years is minimal.

One of the explanations is that, in reality, due to the size of a landmark tall building deal, the number of investor groups able to execute on these types of assets is limited. Furthermore, the vast majority of these tall buildings are owned by institutional investors or the original developers, who favour their iconic status and hence they rarely change hands.

## Europe remains the lynchpin in capital flows

Inter-Regional Flows, Q1 2015



Figure 2. Global Cross Border Capital Flows in Q1/2015 (Source: JLL)

Rank Q1 2014	Rank Q1 2015	City	Q1 2015 (US\$bn)	Q1 2014 (US\$bn)
3	1	New York	13.0	6.9
2	2	London	10.4	8.5
1	3	Tokyo	8.5	10.1
5	4	Los Angeles	4.0	3.6
9	5	San Francisco	3.8	2.0
6	6	Washington, DC	3.7	3.3
22	7	Seattle	3.4	1.3
7	8	Chicago	2.8	2.6
4	9	Paris	2.7	4.4
21	10	Silicon Valley	2.0	1.3

Figure 3. Top 10 Global Cities Transaction Volumes Q1/2015 reflecting the continuing attraction of leading world cities for investment (Source: JLL)

## The Place of Placemaking in Tall Buildings

We tend to think of cities as collections of buildings and roads, but they are, first and foremost, collections of people. Successful cities are cities that not only meet our material human needs, but promote the social connectedness and relationships that are critical to our well-being. These principles apply equally at a more granular level, within city precincts and individual tall buildings.

*"There is no doubt whatever about the influence of architecture and structure upon human character and action. We make our buildings and afterwards they make us. They regulate the course of our lives."*

- Winston Churchill, 1924

In most cities globally, people are embracing the idea of exchanging urban sprawl and traffic congestion for life in high-density communities. Life in a global city is both enchanting and problematic, with escalating evidence of obesity, diabetes, depression,

loneliness and anxiety. As a result, demand is growing for well-planned public spaces, including community gardens, pocket parks, rooftop gardens, and reclaimed and repurposed industrial land.

To this end, researchers assert that tall buildings need to reach out more assertively and effectively to the public in creative ways.

The importance of well-being and the role that active placemaking plays in fostering and realizing its success, is a phenomenon that has transitioned from fringe to mainstream in only a few short years. Once the sole realm of town planners and altruistic developers alone, placemaking is now actively embraced throughout the property industry, and is strongly represented in tall buildings and considered an imperative.

Only five years ago, placemaking was most often associated with situational, tactical activities that provided a commercial tower, retail centre or public space with

some form of entertainment, community spirit or recreational activity. Placemaking is now defined as a holistic, integrated and cross-disciplinary tool to future-proof a tall building. It is a continually evolving program of interactions, enhancements and community focused initiatives that work toward the enhancement of the lives of the occupants and surrounding environment.

Active placemaking at precinct and tall building level creates a sense of community, which is essential to human connection and engagement. In an increasingly digitally connected and technology enhanced world, never have so many in our communities been so disconnected and isolated from human interaction. To many, social media is inherently anti-social. People fundamentally need people; they need a sense of belonging and a sense of community. Studies (Holt-Lunstad, et al. 2010) have shown direct links between loneliness and poor health and wellbeing. Loneliness is recognized as having a significant impact on life expectancy.

Traditionally, these needs have not been embraced by the property investment community. Yet, with the blurring of the boundaries between our personal and professional lives, property is playing a role to engage with and support the lifestyles of the property occupants.

The trend of tall buildings, especially in the Middle East and China, to be multi-purpose, frequently incorporating office, retail, hotel and residential elements, intensifies the need for active placemaking from conception through delivery and long term management. At any given time, these buildings accommodate many people. The Burj Khalifa, Dubai, for example, has capacity for 35,000 at any one time. For some individuals, these tall buildings become their villages, with all of their needs accommodated within. To promote the social adhesiveness, health and wellbeing of the community within these



Figure 4. The Property Management team of Guangzhou International Finance Centre co-ordinate an extensive program of activities and events to connect and engage the building community (Source: JLL)



Figure 5. The Plaza of the Hyatt Centre, Chicago - a vital space in the local community for hosting events such as concerts (Source: JLL)

vertical villages, spaces are created, and activities and events are curated to stimulate engagement and interaction. The Guangzhou International Finance Centre, China (see Figure 4), has an extensive array of amenities and facilities, coupled with an active events calendar, to support the daily community of 15,000 occupants.

The role of biophilic architectural principles is increasingly evident in tall building design and construction globally. This principle acknowledges the vital role that nature plays in the emotional and psychological well being of people, and so is being embraced as a foundation of the design process for tall buildings. Many tall buildings now feature extensive natural spaces such as sky gardens, water features, naturally ventilated and lit areas, and the use of natural materials, to enhance connections to nature.

The soon to be completed multi-use Shanghai Tower, which will be China's tallest building at 632m, will feature an innovative

double façade. The space between the facades will accommodate landscaped public gardens throughout the building, with the intent to improve air quality and to provide a place for occupants to interact and embrace natural elements.

Design must celebrate the tall building, not merely as private space for corporations or residential occupants, but also as public space for communities. Increasingly, tall buildings are being called upon to engage more meaningfully in the life of cities, and this call is being heeded by many tall building owners and managers. Buildings such as the Hyatt Centre, Chicago (see Figure 5) and Central Park, Perth (see Figure 6) engage with their internal and external communities through activation of their public spaces, staging events such as concerts, cultural ceremonies and farmers markets.

*"It is difficult to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished."*

- William H Whyte, 1980

### Changing Workplace Expectations

Increasingly, the global workforce expects to work where, when and how they want. This expectation will continue to rise as Millennial representation in the workforce grows.

By 2025, Millennials (those born from 1982-2004) (Howe and Strauss 1992) are expected to make up 75% of the total workforce globally (Deloitte Millennial Survey January 2014), by which time, the Baby Boomer generation will be well into retirement. Thanks to the internet and an accelerating rate of globalisation, Millennials are developing as a highly connected and fast-paced demographic. The constant transfer of new information and communication is what this group is accustomed to. Technological changes will have major implications for the way we live and work, as well as on the property needs of major corporations.

Millennials strive for work-life balance, seemingly by breaking down the



Figure 6. The public park of Central Park, Perth is a focal point for building occupants and the community, hosting a wide range of activities and events (Source: JLL)



Figure 7. The Porter in 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney, provides a collection of different working spaces exclusively for the building community (Source: JLL)

**Company Expectations of Productivity Outcomes from Real Estate**

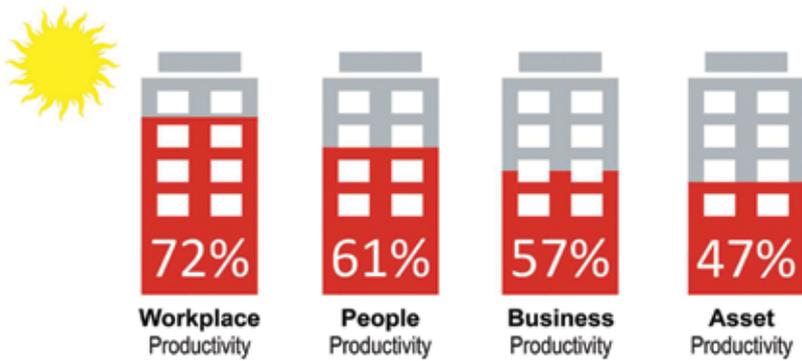


Figure 8. Occupant Executives responding in the 2013 JLL Global Corporate Real Estate Trends Survey rated their expectations for better productivity from their real estate (Source: JLL)

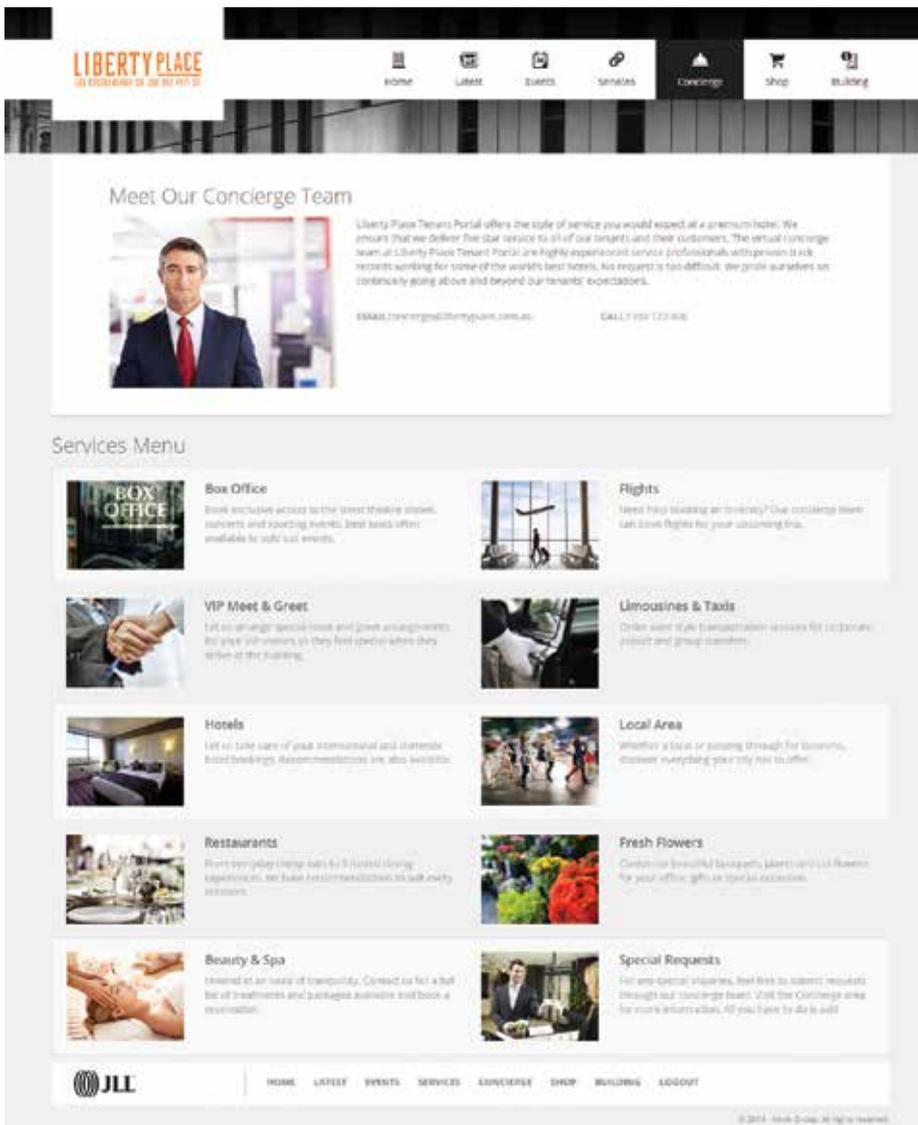


Figure 9. An Example of Virtual Concierge Services and Online Community Engagement, the application of virtual placemaking (Source: JLL)

traditional boundaries between these facets of their lives. The Millennial-led global workforce is demanding workplace flexibility, customized, technology delivered information, and community engagement (both physical and virtual) throughout their day – regardless of where they are.

Communal spaces available to occupants in and around traditional tall buildings are providing rich and valuable points of difference to support evolving workplace expectations. Formal and informal spaces to work in isolation, or to meet and collaborate with colleagues or new acquaintances, are transitioning from the surprising exception to the expected amenity within buildings.

Tall building owners are heeding the call to create new and exciting spaces, well serviced by technology, to enrich the working experience of the occupant base. In many cases, property owners are successfully converting commercially challenged spaces with little appeal in a traditional workplace context, into spaces which resonate creativity, intimacy, connectivity, community, engagement and fun.

In a cost neutral commercial collaboration, a commercially unappealing space in 1 O’Connell Street, Sydney has been transformed into a multi-purpose collaborative space for exclusive use by the building occupants. The Porter (see Figure 7), is a hosted, technology rich collection of spaces to support different working styles.

Common spaces available to all occupants that enable people to meet, eat, learn, create, recharge and work in different ways, will be a feature of 22 Bishopsgate, London when completed in 2019. This resurrected development has been designed to the Delos WELL being standard, reflecting the growing acknowledgement to create buildings that promote health and wellbeing.

The real estate function of global corporations is now focused more on their people than on the ‘bricks and mortar’ of property. Corporate Real Estate executives are demanding the development of programs and services which will aid personnel engagement, support the ways in which their workforce prefers to work and collaborate and, contribute to the successful pursuit of the eternal work/life balance conundrum (see Figure 8).

Supplementing the sense of community delivered through physical spaces, virtual property communities are also being established to foster engagement, interconnection and collaboration within the occupant base of properties. Online portals are being established (see Figure 9) to support social media channels, enabling people to connect, interact and engage with each other in buildings and within local communities.

**Employee Choice: the Importance of Workplace**

A global challenge for all organizations is the much hyped but nonetheless very real ‘war for talent’. In most developed economies, the ‘war’ rages constantly to attract and retain well educated and skilled people. For most organizations,



Figure 10. Rooftop Vegetable Garden on Bank of America Tower, Hong Kong provides a unique place which engages the building and local community, with the harvest donated to charity (Source: JLL)



Figure 11. Design to exceed the needs of customers and the market, Aurora Place, Sydney has developed new 5 Star hotel quality amenities (Source: JLL)

people represent the largest single cost to business. Any factors which can aid the recruitment and retention strategies of an organization, and in so doing, reduce costs, are well-regarded.

A growing trend of technology companies worldwide, is a change in location focus from fringe to mainstream city centres. These companies are now competing for talent with the traditional 'big-end of town' employers in financial services, insurance, law and the like. Thus, they are locating close to city living, public transport, shopping, entertainment, restaurants and bars.

According to an article in the Harvard Business Review (June 2011), loyal and engaged employees are more aligned to customer's needs, generate higher sales and are more productive on average. They also exhibit far less absenteeism. It's perhaps obvious to extrapolate that happy, loyal and productive employees will remain with their employer for longer and will greatly influence customer loyalty which in turn can drive profitability.

A significant factor to employee satisfaction is the working environment, both within the work space provided by the employer, and also the environment created and maintained within the building and its immediate surrounds. The building, its amenities, the lifestyle preferences it supports and the community it fosters, can be an aid to employee recruitment and retention strategies.

Of course, in turn, organizations with happy employees who are well-engaged with the

building and local community and whose lives are supported by these communities, are pre-disposed to remain as occupants in these buildings for longer. Thus, it makes commercial sense for the tall building owner to invest in amenity and community to bolster occupant retention, and in so doing, minimize the costs of occupant churn.

The rooftop vegetable gardens atop the Bank of America Tower in Hong Kong, provides a unique place enjoyed by the building's occupants and the local community (see Figure 10).

In supporting the lifestyles of occupants, many properties include fitness centres and other amenities to promote activity, health and well-being. These facilities enable occupants to fit exercise and physical activities into the working day. Many buildings offer activity programs and classes throughout the day, providing variety and flexibility in balancing personal well-being with professional obligations.

To meet the health and lifestyle needs of the occupants, tall building owners and managers are investing in facilities akin to 5-star hotel gyms and private clubs. The best of these facilities (see Figure 11, Aurora Place, Sydney) incorporate 'club room' areas with ample showers and lockers, fresh towel services, personal grooming facilities, secure equipment (e.g. bicycle) storage areas, clothes drying and airing spaces and smart device power charging facilities.

### The Customer Service Revolution

In the recent past, the language of property referred to the occupants as tenants, reflecting the commercial arrangement in place for the corporate entity to secure space from the property owner. The tenant was the corporate entity – the business, not the people.

In the same vein, property management has traditionally been about the building and its services, with little consideration of those who occupy the building. Yet the winds of change are blowing, bringing a new, fresh approach and attitudes which are producing a new style of management. No longer is the tenant the enemy!

The businesses who occupy property are now frequently regarded as guests, and their staff, as customers. Yet this is more than just a change of language or labels. This is a bellwether for the evolution of management and its focus on people. The buildings remain important of course, but property is first and foremost about people. And so, people are now front and centre in the minds and actions of the best tall building managers.

This is not an altruistic pursuit alone – this change of attitude and service focus is rooted in commercial commonsense. Rather than the property manager forging relationships with only the few decision makers of the occupant businesses, they now seek to establish relationships with every customer who resides in their building every day. They seek to establish an emotional connection to the tall building



Figure 12. The Cube at Asia Square, Singapore is an all-weather space used to engage the internal and external community through its active events program (Source: JLL)

across the customer base. If the building supports the customers' lifestyles through the services, amenities and community they offer, then the customers can be the greatest advocate of the building, exerting influence within their businesses to remain as long term occupants. Anecdotally, this is proving to be a strong suit of the retention strategies in buildings who have adopted this customer-led focus.

### The Role of the Property Manager

In the context of precinct and property management, the creation and maintenance of functionally diverse, engaging and interesting spaces can offer unique points of difference and appeal. Engaged tall building owners and managers understand the importance of placemaking in driving the attraction and retention of occupants.

Property managers of investment grade tall buildings need to create 'invitations' for the occupants of buildings to engage and socialize in public areas, whether on the ground floor plane of the building or in adjacent public spaces.

The public space in and around buildings are critical for the local community, vital

for fostering a sense of vibrant, healthy and connected society. The space is not work, it's not home but is the place where 'community' happens, for both the building community and the local community in which the property is located.

Across the global property market, the role of the property manager as the curator of interesting and engaging spaces, as the facilitator of lifestyle options and as the provider of personal convenience and amenity is emerging, with those as custodians of tall buildings leading the way.

In the creation of engaging places, property managers need to let people socially interact in new, exciting un-orchestrated ways. Experience has shown this is best achieved through programming that relates to the people in the building community. These programs often include:

- ARTS
- MUSIC
- FILMS
- DANCE
- Places to EAT
- Places to READ
- Places to RELAX

- Places to MEET
- Places to PLAY
- Places to be ACTIVE

Property managers can enhance occupant happiness by making their building somewhere that people want to be. Creating activity, fostering energy, being passionate, getting excited about events and activities within the community and embracing opportunities has a substantial impact on occupant culture, satisfaction, engagement and, ultimately, retention. The most engaged building communities include the new breed of managers who actively look for ways to get involved.

*"Great public spaces are where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges take place, friends run into each other, and cultures mix... When the spaces work well, they serve as a stage for our public lives"*

### Projects for Public Space

The Cube at Asia Square, Singapore, is a modern public town square in this mixed use property comprising twin tall buildings of office, retail and hotel amenities. The property management team co-ordinate an active program of eclectic events which engage the building customers and the local community, servicing as the social

focal point of the property. The space is used for events as varied as fitness classes, charity fund raising, community forums, cultural ceremonies, concerts and creative exhibitions (see Figure 12), setting the standard for interaction and engagement in the Singapore market.

## Conclusion

As demonstrated through numerous examples from the global market, the role of property and facilities managers is changing to keep pace with evolving societal expectations and the unique challenges that the burgeoning tall building landscape demands. The traditional foundations are as relevant and important as ever, however, no longer is the focus just about the building and its hard services. Now, the role is as much about managing people and communities as it is about managing buildings.

The role of tall buildings in creating and sustaining environments which foster community engagement, social interaction, personal and professional collaboration, and lifestyle choices, is the new standard expected by occupants, be they office workers, residents or the general public. The recognition that this is an imperative for tall buildings is becoming entrenched and mainstream.

Tall buildings are uniquely placed to create lasting positive legacies for our global cities. From green-fields locations, to urban renewal projects, to existing tall buildings in established markets, opportunities exist and are being actively embraced to greatly enhance the experience people have with property. Tall buildings increasingly dominate the skylines of global cities, and thus all stakeholders are well placed and have the ability to enhance the personal experience of our city dwellers, communities and societies.

A new paradigm in property and its role beyond being solely a part of a diversified investment strategy is being embraced by the global investment community. This new paradigm accepts the importance of Socially Responsible Investment (SRI), and the unique opportunities that exist and should be embraced to create a lasting legacy for society. It is also well recognized that placing SRI at the fore in property investment makes good business sense, and can actually bolster property value and investment returns over the longer time horizon.

Working in collaboration, property architects, builders, investors and managers can ensure that the potential of tall buildings is fully realized by maximizing their ability to connect people and communities and to enrich their daily lives and experiences, now and for the benefit of future generations for whom we all hold great responsibility.

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