



EXPO-NENTIAL GROWTH

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It's boom time for new development along Santa Monica's metro line

Written by Alex Abramian | Photos Courtesy of New Urban West

Once a forlorn-looking area of light industrial buildings and hush-hush production studios, like J.J. Abrams' Bad Robot, a certain section of Santa Monica is experiencing a serious comeback—call it the Expo factor. With the long-anticipated extension of the metro line from Culver City to Santa Monica, a flurry of commercial and residential development is taking place around its path.

Among those is a mid-century building that has just emerged from a six-month makeover at the hands of Culver City-based Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects. Located at 1301 Colorado Avenue, the newly updated 17,000 square foot creative office space is a five-minute walk to the 17th Street Expo

Line station, and a six-minute ride from the Line's last stop, Santa Monica Beach. Developed by New Urban West, it will join the ranks of nearby creative office spaces housing a mix of high-power, high-tech and entertainment companies such as Hulu, Universal Music Group and Innovative Artists.

"We love the challenge of bringing new life to under-utilized, tired buildings," says Steven Ehrlich, founding partner of Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects and 2015 AIA National Firm Award winner. "We designed in abundant transparency on the Euclid Street façade, maximizing visual connections to the surrounding community."

Ehrlich and his team masterminded the makeover that resulted in a LEED-targeted space with polished concrete floors, soaring 17-foot ceilings and huge west-facing glass roll up doors. Floor-to-ceiling glass walls and an almost entirely uninterrupted interior floor plan make for a light-flooded environment tailored for creative office tenants.

To further enhance its connection to community, the building debuted on May 20, the same day the Santa Monica Expo Line officially opened to the public. New Urban West partnered with ArtCenter College of Design to unveil a series of large-scale "popup murals" commissioned to celebrate the opening. Created by artist Brian Rea, illustrator of The New York Times' Modern Love column, and Clive Piercy, principal at design agency Air Conditioned, the series of boldly colored creations were on view for two weeks after the building's inauguration. "The explosion of creative office and activity around the metro line extension made this project an exciting one for us," says Ehrlich.

Other Expo Line-Adjacent Newcomers to Silicon Beach

1. Pop-up shopping concept store WithMe has just opened in the former Kitson location at Santa Monica Place. Call it a discount store for high-fashion finds, featuring merchandise from Jimmy Choo, Fendi, Lanvin and the like in what the company calls "pre-fabricated retail environments." *With.Me*
2. Recently approved plans will make way for a seven-story building at the site of the former Fred Segal in downtown Santa Monica. The development calls for ground-floor commercial space, approximately 250 rental units, and four levels of subterranean parking. While construction has yet to begin on the project, it's nearing the finish line at a nearby Courtyard by Marriott, also on 5th street, which is scheduled for completion in summer or fall this year.
3. Santa Monica's Co-opportunity National Foods has been an organic food staple in the community for four decades. Located at 16th St. and Olympic, it now finds itself conveniently located right next to the Expo Line. The natural food purveyor recently announced plans to open its second location in Culver City, also located less than two blocks from the Expo Line station.

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