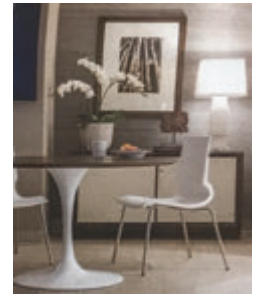




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The 12 Coolest Offices in Chicago 2019



By Jackie Bender

What makes an office cool? We use the term as a catchall for a well-designed workplace that's a good representation of the business and allows employees to work comfortably and efficiently. After that, opinions diverge. Should they be homelike, with lounges, table tennis and the like? (No, says judge Richard Wright of Wright Auctions.) Wright, along with interior designer Michael Del Piero and Crain's assistant managing editor Jan Parr (a longtime design magazine editor in a previous life), chose 12 offices out of 78 submissions for this year's crop of Coolest.

Best Adaptive Reuse - Cristo Rey St. Martin College Prep

This winning workplace involved a total reimagining of an untraditional space. In the case of Cristo Rey College Prep in Waukegan, Juan Gabriel Moreno Architects converted a former Kmart store into a light and bright office and school space. Completed last spring, Cristo Rey has become a colorful showpiece for the community with new windows, glass walls, skylights and impossibly high ceilings that set a literal "sky's the limit" example for students.



In the depressed economic community of Waukegan, the school sees possibilities where others may see limitations. "Our space defies expectations in the same way students defy society's expectations," said Preston Kendall, the school's president.

Bright blue and green paint infuses the space with youthful energy, and the layout maximizes visibility and communication. Classroom activity can be seen from the hallways through glass walls. Everything is on one floor, which makes inter-classroom communications extra convenient. All in all, it was "a huge design challenge achieved by light, color and thoughtful space-planning," said judge Richard Wright.

